

Torquatus' Statement of the Epicurean View Of The Ultimate Good In "On Ends"

Post by "Cassius" of September 28, 2021 at 5:35 AM

Current "best version" in our Core Texts section: [Cicero's "Torquatus" Presentation of Epicurean Ethics - from "On Ends"](#)

Of all the remaining texts, Torquatus' statement at XII - 40 of Book One of On Ends might be the most clear, direct, and practical statement of the Epicurean view of the "ultimate good" - and how to achieve it - that survives to us. Until now I don't think we have a thread focusing directly on this passage so this is to serve that purpose.

It seems to me that almost every phrase of this formulation is packed with meaning, and it is well worth going through the Latin in detail. I will look for that an post it too. This is the Rackham translation from Loeb. [Cicero, M.T. (45 BCE). On Ends. Translated by H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1914,1931.] One well-formatted internet presentation is [here](#).

Raw English Text:

XII. The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement.

Suppose on the other hand a person crushed beneath the heaviest load of mental and of bodily anguish to which humanity is liable. Grant him no hope of ultimate relief in view also give him no pleasure either present or in prospect. Can one describe or imagine a more pitiable state? If then a life full of pain is the thing most to be avoided, it follows that to live in pain is the highest evil; and this position implies that a life of pleasure is the ultimate good. In fact the mind possesses nothing in itself upon which it can rest as final. Every fear, every sorrow can be traced back to pain; there is no other thing besides pain which is of its own nature capable of

causing either anxiety or distress.

Pleasure and pain moreover supply the motives of desire and of avoidance, and the springs of conduct generally. This being so, it clearly follows that actions are right and praiseworthy only as being a means to the attainment of a life of pleasure. But that which is not itself a means to anything else, but to which all else is a means, is what the Greeks term the *Telos*, the highest, ultimate or final Good. It must therefore be admitted that the Chief Good is to live agreeably.

Alternate Versions:

[1812 Version by S. Parker](#)

[1853 Version by Charles Duke Yonge](#)

[1883 Version by Reid](#) ([Google Books Download link](#))

Post by “Cassius” of September 28, 2021 at 5:51 AM

Here is a link to [the Latin at Perseus](#):

[40] Extremum autem esse bonorum voluptatem ex hoc facillime perspici potest: Constituamus aliquem magnis, multis, perpetuis fruente[m] et animo et corpore voluptatibus nullo dolore nec impediante nec inpendente, quem tandem hoc statu praestabiliorem aut magis expetendum possimus dicere? inesse enim necesse est in eo, qui ita sit affectus, et firmitatem animi nec mortem nec dolorem timentis, quod mors sensu careat, dolor in longinquitate levis, in gravitate brevis soleat esse, ut eius magnitudinem celeritas, diuturnitatem allevatio consoletur.

[41] ad ea cum accedit, ut neque divinum numen horreat nec praeteritas voluptates effluere patiatur earumque assidua recordatione laetetur, quid est, quod huc possit, quod melius sit, accedere? Statue contra aliquem confectum tantis animi corporisque doloribus, quanti in hominem maximi cadere possunt, nulla spe proposita fore levius aliquando, nulla praeterea neque praesenti nec expectata voluptate, quid eo miserius dici aut fingi potest? quodsi vita doloribus referta maxime fugienda est, summum profecto malum est vivere cum dolore, cui sententiae consentaneum est ultimum esse bonorum cum voluptate vivere. nec enim habet nostra mens quicquam, ubi consistat tamquam in extremo, omnesque et metus et aegritudines ad dolorem referuntur, nec praeterea est res ulla, quae sua natura aut sollicitare possit aut angere.

[42] Praeterea et appetendi et refugiendi et omnino rerum gerendarum initia proficiscuntur aut a voluptate aut a dolore. quod cum ita sit, perspicuum est omnis rectas res atque laudabilis eo referri, ut cum voluptate vivatur. quoniam autem id est vel summum bonorum vel ultimum vel

extremum—quod Graeci τέλος nominant—, quod ipsum nullam ad aliam rem, ad id autem res referuntur omnes, fatendum est summum esse bonum iucunde vivere.

With links to word definitions:

XII

[40] Extremum autem esse bonorum voluptatem ex hoc facillime perspici potest: Constituamus aliquem magnis, multis, perpetuis fruentem et animo et corpore voluptatibus nullo dolore nec impediante nec inpendente, quem tandem hoc statu praestabiliorem aut magis expetendum possimus¹ dicere? inesse enim necesse est in eo, qui ita sit affectus, et firmitatem animi nec mortem nec dolorem timentis, quod mors sensu careat, dolor in longinquitate levis,² in gravitate brevis soleat esse, ut eius magnitudinem celeritas, diuturnitatem allevatio consoletur.

[41] ad ea cum accedit, ut neque divinum numen horreat nec praeteritas voluptates effluere patiatur earumque assidua recordatione laetetur, quid est, quod huc possit, quod melius sit, accedere? Statue contra aliquem confectum tantis animi corporisque doloribus, quanti in hominem maximi¹ cadere possunt, nulla spe proposita fore levius aliquando,² nulla praeterea neque praesenti nec expectata voluptate, quid eo miserius dici aut fingi potest? quodsi vita doloribus referta maxime fugienda est, summum profecto malum est vivere cum dolore, cui sententiae consentaneum est ultimum esse bonorum cum voluptate vivere. nec enim habet nostra³ mens quicquam, ubi consistat tamquam in extremo, omnesque et metus et aegritudines ad dolorem referuntur, nec praeterea est res ulla, quae sua natura aut sollicitare possit aut angere.⁴

[42] Praeterea et appetendi et refugiendi et omnino rerum gerendarum [p. 19] initia proficiscuntur aut a voluptate aut a dolore. quod cum ita sit, perspicuum est omnis rectas res atque laudabilis eo referri, ut cum voluptate vivatur. quoniam autem id est vel summum bonorum¹ vel ultimum vel extremum²—quod Graeci τέλος nominant—, quod ipsum nullam ad aliam rem, ad id autem res referuntur³ omnes, fatendum est summum esse bonum iucunde vivere.

Post by “Cassius” of September 28, 2021 at 6:00 AM

Rackham 1931

Parker 1812

Yonge 1853

Reid 1883

Latin Library
Edition

[40] "The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity.

Further, to make it plain that pleasure is our utmost good, let us represent to ourselves the condition of a man perpetually regaled with all the variety conceivable of the most ravishing pleasures incident either to the mind or body, without the least alloy of pain, either present or approaching: can any condition of life be more advantageous, or more desirable than this? Especially since it must include such a firmness of soul as renders it proof against the fears of death or pain; death being a loss of all sensation, and pain either long and moderate, or acute and short; so that which ever it proves, there is room for comfort;

But that pleasure is the boundary of all good things may be easily seen from this consideration. Let us imagine a person enjoying pleasures great, numerous, and perpetual, both of mind and body, with no pain either interrupting him at present or impending over him ; what condition can we call superior to or more desirable than this? For it is inevitable that there must be in a man who is in this condition a firmness of mind which fears neither death nor pain, because death is void of all sensation ; and pain, if it is of long duration, is a trifle, while if severe it is usually of brief duration so that its brevity is a consolation if it is violent, and its trifling nature if it is enduring.

XII. Again, the truth that pleasure is the supreme good can be most easily apprehended from the following consideration. Let us imagine an individual in the enjoyment of pleasures great, numerous and constant, both mental and bodily, with no pain to thwart or threaten them; I ask what circumstances can we describe as more excellent than these or more desirable? A man whose circumstances are such must needs possess, as well as other things, a robust mind subject to no fear of death or pain, because death is apart from sensation, and pain when lasting is usually slight, when oppressive is of short duration, so that its reconciles us to its intensity, and its slightness to

[40] Extremum autem esse bonorum voluptatem ex hoc facillime perspici potest: Constituamus aliquem magnis, multis, perpetuis fruentem et animo et corpore voluptatibus nullo dolore nec impediante nec inpendente, quem tandem hoc statu praestabiliorem aut magis expetendum possimus dicere? Inesse enim necesse est in eo, qui ita sit affectus, et firmitatem animi nec mortem nec dolorem timentis, quod mors sensu careat, dolor in longinquitate levis, in gravitate brevis soleat esse, ut eius magnitudinem celeritas, diuturnitatem allevatio consoletur.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2213-torquatus-statement-of-the-temporairiness-of-the-ultimate-good-in-on-ends/>

<p>Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, — and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement. Suppose on the other hand a person crushed beneath the heaviest load of mental and of bodily anguish to which humanity is liable. Grant him no hope of ultimate relief in view; also give him no pleasure either present or in prospect. Can one describe or imagine a more pitiable state?</p>	<p>though to finish the felicity of it, it is necessary that the dread of a Deity be forgotten, and the sweetness of past pleasures very frequently recollected. Again: let us imagine a man afflicted with the saddest agonies and tortures of mind and body, utterly despairing of any relief or relaxation, and wholly lost as well to the remembrance of past, and the expectation of future, as the fruition of any present pleasure; what could we call him but the very accomplishment and idea of misery itself?</p>	<p>And when there is added to these circumstances that such a man has no fear of the deity of the gods, and does not suffer past pleasures to be entirely lost, but delights himself with the continued recollection of them, what can be added to this which will be any improvement to it. Imagine, on the other hand, any one worn out with the greatest pains of mind and body which can possibly befall a man, without any hope being held out to him that they will hereafter be lighter, when, besides, he has no pleasure whatever either present or expected ; what can be spoken of or imagined more miserable than this?</p>	<p>When in addition we suppose that such a man is in no awe of the influence of the gods, and does not allow his past pleasures to slip away, but takes delight in constantly recalling them, what circumstance is it possible to add to these, to make his condition better? Imagine on the other hand a man worn by the greatest mental and bodily pains which can befall a human being, with no hope before him that his lot will ever be lighter, and moreover destitute of pleasure either actual or probable; what more pitiable object can be mentioned or imagined?</p>
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[41] ad ea cum accedit, ut neque divinum numen horreat nec praeteritas voluptates effluere patiatur earumque assidua recordatione laetetur, quid est, quod huc possit, quod melius sit, accedere? Statue contra aliquem confectum tantis animi corporisque doloribus, quanti in hominem maximi cadere possunt, nulla spe proposita fore levius aliquando, nulla praeterea neque praesenti nec expectata voluptate, quid eo miserius dici aut fingi potest?

If then a life full of pain is the thing most to be avoided, it follows that to live in pain is the highest evil; and this position implies that a life of pleasure is the ultimate good. In fact the mind possesses nothing in itself upon which it can rest as final. Every fear, every sorrow can be traced back to pain; there is no other thing besides pain which is of its own nature capable of causing either anxiety or distress.

If therefore a life of torment is the most detestable, undoubtedly it is the greatest evil, and consequently a life of pleasure must be the greatest good, on this side whereof the mind of man finds nothing for it finally to fix upon; as there is nothing besides pain, as that comprehends all sorts of terrors and molestations, which simply and from itself can either disturb or shatter us.

But if a life entirely filled with pains is above all things to be avoided, then certainly that is the greatest of evils to live in pain. And akin to this sentiment is the other, that it is the most extreme good to live with pleasure. For our mind has no other point where it can stop as at a boundary ; and all fears and distresses are referable to pain : nor is there anything whatever besides, which of its own intrinsic nature can make us anxious or grieve us.

But if a life replete with pains is above all things to be shunned, then assuredly the supreme evil is life accompanied by pain; and from this view it is a consistent inference that the climax of things good is life accompanied by pleasure. Nor indeed can our mind find any other ground whereon to take its stand as though already at the goal; and all its fears and sorrows are comprised under the term pain, nor is there any other thing besides which is able merely by its own character to cause us vexation or pangs.

quodsi vita doloribus referta maxime fugienda est, summum profecto malum est vivere cum dolore, cui sententiae consentaneum est ultimum esse bonorum cum voluptate vivere. nec enim habet nostra mens quicquam, ubi consistat tamquam in extremo, omnesque et metus et aegritudines ad dolorem referuntur, nec praeterea est res ulla, quae sua natura aut sollicitare possit aut angere.

		Moreover, the beginnings of desiring and avoiding, and indeed		In addition to this the germs of desire and aversion and generally of action originate either in pleasure or in pain. This being so, it is plain that all right and praiseworthy action has the life of pleasure for its aim. Now inasmuch as the climax or goal or limit of things good (which the Greeks term <i>Telos</i>) is that object which is not a means to the attainment of anything else, while all other things are a means to its attainment, we must allow that the climax of things good is to live agreeably.
“Pleasure and pain moreover supply the motives of desire and of avoidance, and the springs of conduct generally. This being so, it clearly follows that actions are right and praiseworthy only as being a means to the attainment of a life of pleasure. But that which is not itself a means to anything else, but to which all else is a means, is what the Greeks term the <i>Telos</i> , the highest, ultimate or final Good. It must therefore be admitted that the Chief Good is to live agreeably.	In short, pleasure and pain are the first occasions and springs of all affection, aversion, and action ; whence it is evident, that all the concerns of wisdom and virtue are to be reckoned into the account of a life of pleasure. And thus while we convince ourselves, that when we have said all, a life of jollity and pleasure is the summum bonum, the last and the completest good, into which all others must be resolved, and itself into none;	altogether of everything which we do, take their rise either in pleasure or pain. And as this is the case, it is plain that everything which is right and laudable has reference to this one object of living with pleasure. And since that is the highest, or extreme, or greatest good, which the Greeks call <i>Telos</i> , because it is referred to nothing else itself, but everything is referred to it, we must confess that the highest good is to live agreeably.		[42] Praeterea et appetendi et refugiendi et omnino rerum gerendarum initia proficiscuntur aut a voluptate aut a dolore. quod cum ita sit, perspicuum est omnis rectas res atque laudabilis eo referri, ut cum voluptate vivatur. quoniam autem id est vel summum bonorum vel ultimum vel extremum—quod Graeci τέλος nominant—, quod ipsum nullam ad aliam rem, ad id autem res referuntur omnes, fatendum est summum esse bonum iucunde vivere.

Post by “Cassius” of September 28, 2021 at 6:05 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2213-torquatus-statement-of-the-epicurean-view-of-the-ultimate-good-in-on-ends/>

I have always been more than a little concerned with Rackham's translation, and the absence of many others to which to compare it. If others can find other versions (or want to make their own!) please post in this thread.

Look at this for example: In the final sentence the latin is *jocunde* - of which "agreeable" is one translation, but of the options listed at Perseus "agreeably" is probably the least appropriate. Since we are talking clearly about pleasure in this passage, why not use the more applicable "PLEASANTLY" or "DELIGHTFULLY" or "PLEASINGLY"? See [Perseus](#)

Post by “Cassius” of September 28, 2021 at 6:22 AM

OK I will be more plain: we need [Don](#) and [Joshua](#) versions of these three passages! 😊

Post by “Cassius” of September 28, 2021 at 6:40 AM

The [1812 Version by S Parker](#)

to make it plain that pleasure is our utmost *good*, let us represent to ourselves the condition of a man perpetually regaled with all the variety conceivable of the most ravishing pleasures incident either to the mind or body, without the least alloy of pain, either present or approaching: can any condition of life be more advantageous, or more desirable than this? especially since it must include such a firmness of soul, as renders it proof against the fears of death or pain; death being a loss of all sensation, and pain either long and moderate, or acute and short; so that which ever it provè, there is room for comfort: though to finish the felicity of it, it is necessary that the dread of a Deity be forgotten, and the sweetness of past pleasures very frequently recollected. Again: let us imagine a man afflicted with the saddest agonies and tortures of mind and body, utterly despairing

to the remembrance of past, and the expectation of future, as the fruition of any present pleasure ; what could we call him but the very accomplishment and *idea* of *misery* itself? If therefore a life of torment is the most detestable, undoubtedly it is the greatest evil, and consequently a life of pleasure must be the greatest good, on this side whereof the mind of man finds nothing for it *finally* to fix upon ; as there is nothing besides pain, as that comprehends all sorts of terrors and molestations, which simply and from itself can either disturb or shatter us. In short, pleasure and pain are the first occasions and springs of all affection, aversion, and action ; whence it is evident, that all the concerns of wisdom and virtue are to be reckoned into the account of a life of pleasure. And thus while we convince ourselves, that when we have said all, a life of jollity and pleasure is the *summum bonum*, the last and the completest good, into which all others must be resolved, and itself into none ; there

Post by “Cassius” of September 28, 2021 at 6:45 AM

[Yonge version:](#)

pleasure.

XII. But that pleasure is the boundary of all good things may be easily seen from this consideration. Let us imagine a person enjoying pleasures great, numerous, and perpetual, both of mind and body, with no pain either interrupting him at present or impending over him; what condition can we call superior to or more desirable than this? For it is inevitable that there must be in a man who is in this condition a firmness of mind which fears neither death nor pain, because death is void of all sensation; and pain, if it is of long duration, is a trifle, while if severe it is usually of brief duration; so that its brevity is a consolation if it is violent, and its trifling nature if it is enduring. And when there is added to these circumstances that such a man has no fear of the deity of the gods, and does not suffer past pleasures to be entirely lost, but delights himself with the continued recollection of them, what can be added to this which will be any improvement to it?

Imagine, on the other hand, any one worn out with the greatest pains of mind and body which can possibly befall a man, without any hope being held out to him that they will hereafter be lighter, when, besides, he has no pleasure whatever

either present or expected; what can be spoken of or imagined more miserable than this? But if a life entirely filled with pains is above all things to be avoided, then certainly that is the greatest of evils to live in pain. And akin to this sentiment is the other, that it is the most extreme good to live with pleasure. For our mind has no other point where it can stop as at a boundary; and all fears and distresses are referable to pain: nor is there anything whatever besides, which of its own intrinsic nature can make us anxious or grieve us. Moreover, the beginnings of desiring and avoiding, and indeed altogether of everything which we do, take their rise either in pleasure or pain. And as this is the case, it is plain that everything which is right and laudable has reference to this one object of living with pleasure. And since that is the highest, or extreme, or greatest good, which the Greeks call *τέλος*, because it is referred to nothing else itself, but everything is referred to it, we must confess that the highest good is to live agreeably.

Post by "Don" of September 28, 2021 at 6:57 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Look at this for example: In the final sentence the latin is *jocunde* - of which "agreeable" is one translation, but of the options listed at Perseus "agreeably" is probably the least appropriate. Since we are talking clearly about pleasure in this passage, why not use the more applicable "PLEASANTLY" or "DELIGHTFULLY" or "PLEASINGLY"??

Why not? Because "pleasure" and its derivatives are dirty, four-letter words. It's a carry over from a stuffy, puritanical past.

This full text also, in my opinion, bolsters my contention that when Epicurus uses "the good" in various places in the Letter to Menoikeus that he means pleasure and not some abstract philosophical concept. When we recall the good when we're old it's not "philosophical teachings" like some translators state. It's remembering pleasurable events in the past. Plain and simple.

Post by "Cassius" of September 28, 2021 at 7:01 AM

Yes exactly. Many of these older translators (and maybe some not so old too) seem to be trying to effectively edit and change the teachings through choice of words - and that's where we have to drill down to get past that back to a more clear statement of what Epicurus was saying.

I was able to find and post two more versions above that I didn't have in front of me before. I see maybe that "agreeably" maybe started with Yonge and the older Parker version has it right. However I see the Parker version differs fairly radically from Rackham and Yonge so I don't yet have a sense of how to estimate the full effect of the Parker version. Parker puts the whole text as one long paragraph without paragraph divisions or numbers or anything!

Post by "Cassius" of September 28, 2021 at 7:08 AM

But it looks like Parker is not including the parenthetical "which the Greeks call the *telos*" so likely he's not being strictly literal either.

At least as of this morning I am only finding three translations: Rackham, Yonge, Parker. But at least that's two more than I had before.

Post by “Cassius” of September 30, 2021 at 8:28 PM

Parker translation:

I will begin in that method which my master observed before me, and define the subject of the question ; not that I suppose you want any such instruction, but that we may proceed more regularly. It is therefore demanded what is our chief and ultimate good, into which, as it is agreed among all philosophers what- soever, the rest are universally resolved, and itself into none. Epicurus will have this to be pleasure; as, on the contrary, pain to be the greatest of evils; and he thus proposes to prove it.

Every animal, says he, is no sooner born, but it begins the chase after pleasure, and indulges itself in that, as the only expedient of its well-being ; while to the utmost of its power it avoids and rescues itself from pain; and this in an unprejudiced and an undepraved state of nature. And therefore he denies any necessity of expostulating for a reason why we should affect pleasure and abhor pain. These he accounts the immediate results of sensation, as we perceive that fire makes us warm, that snow is white, and honey sweet; of all which particulars, we need no other demonstration to convince us, than that of impressions from without, the difference being wide between syllogistical deductions, and the simple perceptions of sense: the one unlocks doubts and obscurities, and lets you into truth; the other is a thoroughfare, and lets in truth upon you.

Now in regard a man without any senses is no better than a carcass; from hence it follows, that nature is the best judge of her own desires and aversions: and that pleasure is the immediate object of the first, and pain of the other. For is there any thing which a man is capable of perceiving and distinguishing in order to pursue or shun it, besides pleasure or pain?

Others there are of Epicurus's disciples that carry the thing further ; and not enduring that the distinctions of good and evil should be ingrossed by the senses, understand it as a dictate of the judgment, and a rule of right reason, that pleasure is in its own nature desirable, and pain odious. And say that the consequence, which is, that we should pursue the first, and avoid the last, is an innate principle.

But another party, to which I properly belong, observing how strangely the dispute concerning excellency of pleasure and the evil of pain has been bandied about, are of opinion, that we ought not to manage our cause with pertness and bigotry, but lay our reasonings carefully together, and confer at large upon the nature of pleasure and pain. Wherefore for the easier detection and disproof of their error that declaim against pleasure, and speak favourably of pain, I will set the whole matter in a true light, and give you the sense of what I find suggested to our purpose by our great alchemist of truth and projector of human felicity.

Nobody conceives an aversion to pleasure ; but because, if we take imprudent measures to attain it, we suffer for it in the consequences. As on the other hand, nobody can be a friend to pain, as pain; but yet it may meet with a favourable reception, because it frequently happens, that pain and labour prove a necessary means towards the procurement of exquisite pleasures. To propose a trivial instance; which of us three would fatigue himself with our bodily exercises, if he did not find his account in it? At the same time shall I blame a man for preferring that pleasure which he can purchase without any manner of trouble, or for excusing himself from that pain which is not productive of pleasure?

Notwithstanding, when the blandishments of any present delights prevail so far as to intoxicate and incapacitate us for judging what difficulties and inconveniences we had better embrace, we are highly to be blamed, and deserve to have no favour shewed us; as do also those people, whose effeminacy, and lightness, and antipathy to pain and labour betray them into dishonourable courses. But here the right distinction is very obvious. As thus; when we are free from all conditional bars and limitations, and warranted to make directly after that which pleases us best, then we must resign up ourselves entirely to the pleasure, and admit no treaty with the pain.

But when, as it falls out sometimes, either our duty or our circumstances oblige us to give up our pleasures, and wade into vexations, there is this choice yet reserved for every wise man, either to secure to himself greater pleasures at the price of lesser, or to escape severer vexations by accepting lighter. This is my notion of the business; and I would gladly understand why the instances of our family will not agree with it — seeing you were pleased, upon recollection, out of respect and kindness to fasten there. A notable stratagem (if it would take) to stroke your adversary into a peaceable indifference!

But, I beseech you, what account will you give us of their acting as they did? Can you believe when the enemy was charged so briskly, and their own flesh and blood handled so roughly, that no ends or interests were to be served ? The very beasts of prey are wiser than to expose and disorder themselves for nothing : and can you fancy that persons of such a character would have acted so singularly, if they knew not why? Hereafter we shall see what grounds they went upon.

At present it is enough to be assured, that if they did what became them, they acted upon some other motive than that of simple and abstracted virtue. One of them carried off his enemy's chain; and when he had done so, made armour on it for his own security. Well, but there was a dangerous obstacle that faced him, called an army. And what could be the temptation then? Why a prospect of raising his reputation, and fortifying his interest with applause and popularity. The same person knocked his child on the head; but had he been so rash and inhuman as to do such a thing without a reason, I should blush to own myself his relation. Now, if it was his intent rather to destroy his own quiet, than suffer the military discipline to be infringed, or his orders and authority neglected among the soldiers, when the danger was imminent ; he made a wise provision for the safety of his countrymen, well-knowing

that his own was comprehended therein. The same observations are applicable to a vast variety of instances.

And as industriously as both of you, especially my antagonist, who thrashes at the study of antiquity, exercise your lungs upon the characters of gallant and extraordinary men, and magnify their actions, as not resulting from any mercenary considerations, but purely from a principle of virtue and honour, you are tied to retract, provided, as in the premises, it be made a rule of option, that lesser satisfactions are to be quitted for the obtaining of greater, and lesser inconveniences borne with to divert worse. And thus much may suffice in relation to your instances of glorious and heroic actions, it being by this time proper to come forward and observe how directly all virtue tends to pleasure.

And here I shall explain what it is I mean by pleasure, that so the common misconstructions may be prevented, and the seriousness and even austerity of that philosophy, which passes for such a luscious, effeminate system, may be set forth. For indeed that sort of pleasure which strikes the senses, and affects the economy of our bodies with an obliging influence, we do not pursue exclusively of the other incomparable pleasure, which consists in indolency, or an exemption from pain: for since pleasure is nothing else but the agreeableness, nor pain but the disagreeableness of things to the percipient ; and since the very removal and intermission of pain is a thing so very agreeable to us, no wonder if we pronounce the absence of pain to be a pleasure.

Thus for the purpose, the consequence of taking off hunger, and extinguishing thirst is an actual satisfaction: and so, as to all other particulars, a cessation of disturbance is the very birth of pleasure. Hence it was that Epicurus denied a medium between pleasure and pain, because that medium, as understood by those who talk of it, implies freedom from pain; which he will have to be not a pleasure barely, but the queen of all pleasures; it being impossible but that every man who feels at any time within himself after what manner he is affected, should be sensible either of some pleasure or some molestation: whereas it is Epicurus's maxim, that the sublimest pleasure terminates in an entire discharge from pain ; and that although it further admits of specifications and variety, yet it is capable of no higher improvements.

Upon this occasion, I remember, my father has told me, when he has been in the humour of rallying stoicism, that at Athens, in one of the Ceramici, there is a statue of Chrysippus sitting, and holding out his hand, as if he would propose his favourite quere, "Do you find any cravings in your hand in the present crisis of its affairs?" None, I dare say, which yet it would not but have, if pleasure were a real good ; and therefore it cannot be such. My father was positive, the statue itself, if able to speak, would talk more apropos. It is true, the argument holds handsomely against the Cyrenaics; but Epicurus is by no means concerned in it.

If there were no pleasure but that which exhilarates and captivates the senses, the mere absence of pain, without the force of a little lively pleasure, could never have given his hand content : but if Epicurus's indolence be the highest of all pleasures, we may grant Chrysippus

the first supposition, that his hand, while he held it out, felt no want of any thing; but for the next, that if pleasure were a real good, his hand would be grasping at it, we must beg his pardon; for it could not possibly feel the want of any thing, because that which is free from pain is in a state of pleasure.

Further, to make it plain that pleasure is our utmost good, let us represent to ourselves the condition of a man perpetually regaled with all the variety conceivable of the most ravishing pleasures incident either to the mind or body, without the least alloy of pain, either present or approaching: can any condition of life be more advantageous, or more desirable than this? Especially since it must include such a firmness of soul as renders it proof against the fears of death or pain; death being a loss of all sensation, and pain either long and moderate, or acute and short; so that which ever it proves, there is room for comfort; though to finish the felicity of it, it is necessary that the dread of a Deity be forgotten, and the sweetness of past pleasures very frequently recollected.

Again: let us imagine a man afflicted with the saddest agonies and tortures of mind and body, utterly despairing of any relief or relaxation, and wholly lost as well to the remembrance of past, and the expectation of future, as the fruition of any present pleasure; what could we call him but the very accomplishment and idea of misery itself? If therefore a life of torment is the most detestable, undoubtedly it is the greatest evil, and consequently a life of pleasure must be the greatest good, on this side whereof the mind of man finds nothing for it finally to fix upon; as there is nothing besides pain, as that comprehends all sorts of terrors and molestations, which simply and from itself can either disturb or shatter us.

In short, pleasure and pain are the first occasions and springs of all affection, aversion, and action ; whence it is evident, that all the concerns of wisdom and virtue are to be reckoned into the account of a life of pleasure. And thus while we convince ourselves, that when we have said all, a life of jollity and pleasure is the summum bonum, the last and the completest good, into which all others must be resolved, and itself into none; there are some people abroad that widely mistaking the intendment and scope of nature, affirm, that virtue and glory claim that denomination; an absurdity, from which Epicurus, if they would lend him an ear, would easily free them: for what becomes of the dignity and value of all your fine charming virtues, in case they are no longer effective of pleasure ?

But for the sake of health, we should look upon the science of medicine as an idle piece of curiosity ; and a pilot is esteemed, not for his theory of navigation, but the benefit of his conduct: accordingly wisdom, or the science of living, were it no more than a barren amusement, would be undeserving of our application, whereas it claims our attention, because we are by it put in a way to come at pleasure.

What pleasure I mean, I hope you know so well by this time, that I need not fear the odium of the word will stand in the way of my argument. The thing which I drive at is this. All the unhappiness of our lives is notoriously imputable to the false estimates we pass upon the

nature of things, and these misapprehensions frequently forfeit us our choicest pleasures, and lay us open to the most melancholy discomposures; against which, wisdom is our antidote, as being that which subdues our fears, and our desires, corrects our vain opinions and prejudices, and certainly brings us to the possession of true pleasure. It is this alone that quells our solicitude, and all our panic fears, that slakes the vehemence of our appetites, and teaches us the art of living happily, our appetites being so insatiable as to bring destruction upon ourselves and our neighbours, upon entire families, nay upon whole commonwealths.

These are the fountains of emulation, ruptures, faction, and war. And yet as wildly and impetuously as they are raised against other people, the tempests and tumults they excite in our own breasts are such that the comforts of life are totally lost in them; and till a man has the discretion to prune away his levity, and his mistakes, and contain himself within the restrictions of nature, it is not in his power to live without disturbance and terror.

To this purpose is that most useful and edifying division, which Epicurus has introduced of our desires into those that are both natural and necessary ; those that are natural but not necessary ; and those that are neither natural nor necessary. The first may be satisfied easily and cheaply : the second will also come to very reasonable terms, requiring no more than a moderate competency of what provisions offer themselves : but the third will not be restrained or stinted at all. Now then, as sure as ignorance and false reasonings over-cast the serenity of human life, and nothing but wisdom rescues us from the tyranny of our inclinations and terrors, and makes us a match for the malice of fortune, and masters of our own ease and quiet: so surely it is pleasure we propose to ourselves, when we labour to be wise, and fear of infelicity that keeps us from courses of indiscretion.

Thus ought we to be ambitious of having a command over ourselves, not for the sake of the virtue, but the inward satisfaction, complacency, and harmony arising out of it. For this virtue is that which governs us in all our pursuits and aversions, inasmuch as it is not enough for us to distinguish- between what methods are fit or unfit to be taken, but our determinations must be followed with suitable resolutions and practices; whereas usually when we come to know what we have to trust to, some one phantom or other of pleasure enchants us; we yield ourselves prisoners to our own desires, and lose all apprehensions of the consequences ; and so for the love perhaps of a poor insignificant satisfaction, that might have been obtained some other way, or if not, it had been never the worse for us, we run ourselves into diseases, distresses, and disgraces; nay, frequently upon the very weapons of public justice : while they who contrive and regulate their pleasures in such a manner that no subsequent inconveniences attend them, and deal so ingenuously by themselves as not to do, for any solicitations of pleasure, what they are satisfied ought not to be done, receive always double interest for any pleasure they quit ; and to put by a greater evil they surrender themselves to a less.

Whence we infer, that as moderation and temperance are not desirable qualities, as they retrench our pleasures, but only as they commute them to our advantage, so extravagances and in- temperance are not purely upon their own account detestable. The same is to be said of

fortitude. It is not for the blessedness either of taking or enduring pains that we give proofs of our patience, our vigilance, nor our industry, and even our bravery itself: but these, we know, are the best physic toward a cure of the solitudes and discouragements of human life, and a philosophical garde

Post by “Don” of October 1, 2021 at 7:48 AM

[Tully's five books de finibus,](#)

Have you seen this "Done into English by S.P. Gent"

Tully's five books de finibus



I must admit I like that Cicero is called Tully

Post by “Cassius” of October 1, 2021 at 8:55 AM

No! thank you! Oh gosh it's got those funny "s" characters -- but who knows -- the Brown has that too and it's my favorite, so we need to see if this guy also does as well or better than the Moderns.

Post by “Cassius” of October 1, 2021 at 9:01 AM

OK on second look that version IS the same version as the "S.Parker" cited above. Looks like this is like the Browne version of Lucretius - they are obscuring the name of the translator to protect him or otherwise. I haven't checked the actual text yet but the Collier introduction appears exactly the same. Interesting!

Post by “Don” of October 1, 2021 at 9:10 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2213-torquatus-statement-of-the-epicurean-view-of-the-ultimate-good-in-on-ends/>

Bah! I does appear to be the Parker translation. Mea culpa! 😞

Post by “Don” of October 1, 2021 at 9:23 AM

Reid? <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/inu.32000000647208>

This uses "agreeably" in XII.

Post by “Cassius” of October 1, 2021 at 9:27 AM

BINGO ! Another good one to add to the list -- thanks!

I won't be surprised if there are many others, actually, given Cicero's stature and the topics of the book. Hopefully we will find some more but this one looks like an interesting version!

Post by “Don” of October 2, 2021 at 1:41 PM

"Constituamus aliquem magnis, multis, perpetuis fruentem..."

I like Reid's.

"enjoyment of pleasures great, numerous and constant"

Yonges is okay there, but I see other issues elsewhere: "enjoying pleasures great, numerous, and perpetual,"

I don't like Parker and Rackham's paraphrase there.

Post by “Cassius” of October 2, 2021 at 1:54 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2213-torquatus-statement-of-the-epicurean-view-of-the-ultimate-good-in-on-ends/>

I would rebuke Reid for his failure to use the -- what is it called ____comma? -- after the "numerous," but otherwise I agree! 😊

And that's probably not the only place his version is better by far

Got it -- the OXFORD comma.

Post by "Cassius" of October 2, 2021 at 2:13 PM

I think I also like Reid's version of the Chryssipus statue example:

But actually at Athens, as my father used to tell me, when he wittily and humorously ridiculed the Stoics, there is in the Ceramicus a statue of Chrysippus, sitting with his hand extended, which hand indicates that he was fond of the following little argument: *Does your hand, being in its present condition, feel the lack of anything at all? Certainly of nothing. But if pleasure were the supreme good, it would feel*

a lack. I agree. Pleasure then is not the supreme good. -My father used to say that even a statue would not talk in that way, if it had power of speech. The inference is shrewd enough as against the Cyrenaics, -but does not touch Epicurus. For if the only pleasure were that which, as it were, tickles the senses, if I may say so, and attended by sweetness overflows them and insinuates itself into them, neither the hand nor any other member would be able to rest satisfied with the absence of pain apart from a joyous activity of pleasure. But if it is the highest pleasure, as Epicurus believes, to be in no pain, then the first admission, that the hand in its then existing condition felt no

lack, was properly made to you, Chrysippus, but the second improperly, I mean that it would have felt a lack had pleasure been.....

I have always had a bit of a problem following the point of the Chrysippus argument, because there seems to be some buried presumption that doesn't make sense to me. Ok, even if we accept that the hand has its own feelings and disregard that the hand isn't an independent entity that has its own scale of pleasure and pain, there seems to be some presumption that if pleasure is the greatest good then the hand should be feeling that greatest good at every moment, or else feel like it was lacking something? I am not sure it is clear why this is so except maybe under the "replenishment theory of pleasure" anything that isn't experiencing its

greatest good is by definition lacking something. At least, my hand in its ordinary condition doesn't feel like it lacks anything, even though I would admit that something like a hand massage could stimulate it to feel better than it does right now.

Maybe the point is too obvious for me but when we get to the point of explaining this part I'd like to be more articulate about what it means. At the very least I think this is showing that someone (the Stoics? Epicurus? both?) had some presumption about the nature of the greatest good that needs to be explained. And I presume this is closely related to the entire issue of "limits of pleasure."

My tentative position is that this is clearly a Stoic argument and slanted for that reason, but I am not sure that the answer that is suggested is not one that makes sense to Cicero in Cicero's view of Epicurus, but doesn't adequately convey the full Epicurean position.

There is no way based on pure feeling that I would rate my hand at rest as feeling better than my hand while undergoing a massage, so I think we're again dealing here with more of a response to a dialectical trick than to a real-life situation that conveys Epicurus' full philosophy.

Note: Might also be related to the "constancy / continuous" issue that pleasure has to be constantly available in some form so as to constitute the highest good. I recall DeWitt saying that Plato thought that pleasure has ups and downs and periods of total nonexistence and that that was one of the reasons that it could not serve as the ultimate good.

Post by "Cassius" of October 5, 2021 at 11:47 AM

I have completed a transcription of the Reid translation over to the forum, and I am going to feature it instead of the Rackham version in the "Core Texts" links. Here it is: [Cicero's "Torquatus" Presentation of Epicurean Ethics - from "On Ends"](#)

All comments on the differences between this and Rackham are welcome so if you have any please post.

Post by "Cassius" of October 5, 2021 at 12:04 PM

I think I am now repeating myself but every time I read this paragraph I come back to it wondering exactly what is going on. So now I can wonder about the Reid version:

Quote

[39] But actually at Athens, as my father used to tell me, when he wittily and humorously ridiculed the Stoics, there is in the Ceramicus a statue of Chrysippus, sitting with his hand extended, which hand indicates that he was fond of the following little argument: *Does your hand, being in its present condition, feel the lack of anything at all? Certainly of nothing. But if pleasure were the supreme good, it would feel a lack. I agree. Pleasure then is not the supreme good.* My father used to say that even a statue would not talk in that way, if it had power of speech. The inference is shrewd enough as against the Cyrenaics, but does not touch Epicurus. For if the only pleasure were that which, as it were, tickles the senses, if I may say so, and attended by sweetness overflows them and insinuates itself into them, neither the hand nor any other member would be able to rest satisfied with the absence of pain apart from a joyous activity of pleasure. But if it is the highest pleasure, as Epicurus believes, to be in no pain, then the first admission, that the hand in its then existing condition felt no lack, was properly made to you, Chrysippus, but the second improperly, I mean that it would have felt a lack had pleasure been the supreme good. It would certainly feel no lack, and on this ground, that anything which is cut off from the state of pain is in the state of pleasure.

I am all in favor of wittily ridiculing the Stoics, but am I the only one who finds Chrysippus' witticism hard to follow?

Is it necessary to feel a lack of it (when it is absent) in order to identify something as the supreme good?

Or maybe there's some entirely different point.

I certainly think I understand the issue on how the Cyreniac position differs from Epicurus, in that the Cyreniacs considered only "active/ joy/delight" to be pleasure, while Epicurus' definition of pleasure is more wide so as to include any feeling which is not pain, but it's just not clear to me that it is obvious that we would feel the lack of the supreme good if it is missing.

The unstated premise must be something about **the supreme good must be present and available at all times or else it is missed?** (And maybe that's reference back to the Platonic continuity issue that led Epicurus to his "continuous pleasure" statement.)

But regardless of that the Epicureans must have thought this illustration was helpful and important, and I think in order for us to see it so we need to articulate what exactly is going on.

Post by “Joshua” of October 6, 2021 at 10:40 AM

I think this is something we have to consider in its context. What we now know is that the seat of consciousness is in the brain; the ancients, including the Epicureans, had other ideas. Some believed that the seat of the 'soul' was in the breast with the heart. It is easy to observe in oneself the quickening of the pulse in love or fear; more difficult, to intuit that this behavior is governed by signals from the nervous system.

The Epicureans thought that the 'soul'—call it what you will—consisted of a sort of skein of finer atoms spread throughout all the members. If a portion of this soul rests in the hand at any given point in time, and the soul's chief end is pleasure, perhaps the argument of Chrysippus makes a little more sense?

Of course the shift of the soul from the members or the breast to the brain simply shifts the problem. Does the brain feel the lack of the Supreme good? I think of the restlessness that Lucretius describes of the Roman nobility; in the city they wish they were in the country, and in the country they wish they were in the city.

One of Epicurus' achievements was to instruct us in how to tap new sources of pleasure—even something as simple as remembering past pleasures can be a constant source of genuine pleasure available to us whenever we need it.

Post by “Cassius” of October 6, 2021 at 11:01 AM

[Quote from JJElbert](#)

Of course the shift of the soul from the members or the breast to the brain simply shifts the problem. Does the brain feel the lack of the Supreme good?

Unfortunately I agree with that comment. I think in order to really understand the argument there's something about "feeling the lack" that connects "the supreme good" in a way that doesn't seem obvious (at least to me).

More to the point, I think I can come up with an elaborate explanation of it (see above) but since we are going to be talking about this to people who are new to Epicurus and philosophy in general, we need a clear and direct way of explaining what is going on here.

Post by "Cassius" of October 6, 2021 at 11:06 AM

At this moment I think I would try to link this to [the discussion with Philia](#) as an example of trying to "measure pleasure by reason" and coming to a "reasoned understanding of pleasure" in order to dig out why the illustration seems (again, to me) so unsatisfying.

Part of the problem may be that this is an argument from Chrysippus, who has a Stoic was an arch-proponent of logic over

feeling, trying to make a ham-handed logic-based point about pleasure (which he detests as a feeling that distracts from virtue).

Post

[RE: An Epicurean Understanding of Pleasure](#)

1 - yes please let us know if you come up with variations/improvements of the jelly bean jar analogy. I am sure there are much better ones!

2

[...]

Absolutely I agree with that, and I think most people at first glance see it that way too. That's "instinctively" the right approach, IMO. In fact I fluctuate on how much I really accept the opposite view myself. In my (admittedly small) mind, the only reason that the "subtractive" model "works" mentally is because you know that there are only two...



Cassius

October 5, 2021 at 1:20 PM

It's probably a significant part of the issue that pleasure (as a feeling) can never really be captured by a "logic" argument.

And of course in discussing THAT issue, this from "Torquatus" shouldn't be far from our minds as a huge red flag about the attempt to bridge logic and feeling, as Epicurus himself apparently warned against it:

[31] ***There are however some of our own school, who want to state these principles with greater refinement, and who say that it is not enough to leave the question of good or evil to the decision of sense,*** but that thought and reasoning also enable us to understand both that pleasure in itself is matter for desire and that pain is in itself matter for aversion. So they say that there lies in our minds a kind of natural and inbred conception

leading us to feel that the one thing is $\beta\beta$ for us to seek, the other to reject. **Others again, with whom I agree**, finding that many arguments are alleged by philosophers to prove that pleasure is not to be reckoned among things good nor pain among things evil, judge that we ought not to be too confident about our case, and think that we should lead proof and argue carefully and carry on the debate about pleasure and pain by using the most elaborate reasonings.

Post by "Cassius" of October 6, 2021 at 11:16 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

who say that it is not enough to leave the question of good or evil to the decision of sense

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Others again, with whom I agree, finding that many arguments are alleged by philosophers to prove that pleasure is not to be reckoned among things good nor pain among things evil, judge that we *ought not to be too confident about our case* and think that *we should lead proof and argue carefully and carry on the debate about pleasure and pain by using the most elaborate reasonings*.

I can almost see Epicurus gasping "OMG!!! " if he could know that some in his own school were arguing that. Though I doubt he would have restrained his response to an expression of exasperation. Someone(s) would have had a lot of explaining to do to Epicurus as to how they managed to fall so far from the prototype. For anyone who didn't get the message after he explained it to them in person, we'd probably have some good texts on excommunication if he could have lived to write about that kind of thing. 😊

Post by "Cassius" of October 6, 2021 at 3:49 PM

Unfortunately this section of DeWitt does not seek to explain the "witticism" -- but does include some gratifying slams at Chrysippus and ultimately labels logicians like him as "intellectual eunuchs" 😊

competition with the Academy and the Peripatos was waged with the pen. There is no record of rivalry or animosity between Epicurus and Zeno.²⁰ There was no need for them to clash. The former was using Athens as a center from which to disseminate his new philosophy among Greeks everywhere. Zeno addressed himself directly to the adult Athenian citizen, as is indicated by the fact that he chose the Painted Stoa adjoining the market place as the stage for his lectures. Even his immediate successors, Cleanthes and Sphaerus, though they wrote against atomism and Democritus,²¹ are not on record as having attacked Epicurus.

It was Chrysippus (d. 206 B.C.), the second founder of Stoicism, who first decided that Epicurus and not atomism should be the target. He was bitten by jealousy and set out to outdo his rival even in bulk of publications; his output was upward of 700 rolls, more than double the 300 of Epicurus.²² Even in death he was determined to have the last word and provided that his tomb in the Cerameicus should be marked by a statue of himself so posed as to demonstrate that pleasure was not the end or telos.²³ It was his great achievement to develop the study of logic, for which he won a permanent place in the curriculum of studies,

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EXTENSION, SUBMERGENCE, AND REVIVAL

thus contributing handsomely to the growing sterility of ancient culture. Whatever be the merits of logic it is valueless for the increase of knowledge. A good logician is an intellectual eunuch.

An outstanding effect of the career of Chrysippus was to replace the Platonists and Peripatetics as first-line troops in the campaign against Epicureanism and relegate them to the auxiliaries. While the disciples of Epicurus were uniformly men of good will and desirous of peace, there were different breeds of Stoics, some dignified, others vulgar. Some were unprincipled and among them no weapons were barred; when logic seemed futile they resorted to the poison gas of scandal and imputed to the pen of Epicurus collections of obscene letters.²⁴ The last stage of this steady but diversified opposition assumed the form of

Maybe we can find some articles discussing this, [because the statue or something like still exists, correct?](#)

