

# Plato's Philebus and the Limit of Pleasure

Post by “Joshua” of May 25, 2022 at 10:18 PM

Principal Doctrine 3

Quote

ὄρος τοῦ μεγέθους τῶν ἡδονῶν ἢ παντὸς τοῦ ἀλγοῦντος ὑπεξαίρεσις. ὅπου δ’ ἂν τὸ ἡδόμενον ἐνῆ, καθ’ ὃν ἂν χρόνον ἦ, οὐκ ἔστι τὸ ἀλγοῦν ἢ λυπούμενον ἢ τὸ συναμφοτέρων.

Cyril Bailey:

Quote

The limit of quantity in pleasures is the removal of all that is painful. Wherever pleasure is present, as long as it is there, there is neither pain of body nor of mind, nor of both at once.

Inwood and Gerson:

Quote

The removal of all feeling of pain is the limit of the magnitude of pleasures. Wherever a pleasurable feeling is present, for as long as it is present, there is neither a feeling of pain nor a feeling of distress, nor both together.

Peter Saint-Andre

Quote

The limit of enjoyment is the removal of all pains. Wherever and for however long pleasure is present, there is neither bodily pain nor mental distress.

from Plato's [Philebus](#):

Quote

Σωκράτης

καὶ ἄλλα γε δὴ μυρία ἐπιλείπω λέγων, οἷον μεθ' ὑγείας κάλλος καὶ ἰσχύν, καὶ ἐν ψυχαῖς αὖ πάμπολλα ἕτερα καὶ πάγκαλα. ὕβριν γάρ που καὶ σύμπασαν πάντων πονηρίαν αὕτη κατιδοῦσα ἢ θεός, ᾧ καλὸν Φίληβε, πέρας οὔτε ἡδονῶν οὐδὲν οὔτε πλησμονῶν ἐνὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς, νόμον καὶ τάξιν πέρας ἔχοντ' ἔθετο: καὶ σὺ μὲν ἀποκναῖσαι φῆς αὐτήν, ἐγὼ δὲ τούναντίον ἀποσῶσαι λέγω. σοὶ δέ, ᾧ Πρώταρχε, πῶς φαίνεται;

Benjamin Jowett:

Quote

Soc. I omit ten thousand other things, such as beauty and health and strength, and the many beauties and high perfections of the soul: O my beautiful [Philebus](#), the goddess, methinks, seeing the universal wantonness and wickedness of all things, and that there was in them no limit to pleasures and self-indulgence, devised the limit of law and order, whereby, as you say, [Philebus](#), she torments, or as I maintain, delivers the soul- What think you, Protarchus?

Harold Fowler:

Quote

There are countless other things which I pass over, such as health, beauty, and strength of the body and the many glorious beauties of the soul. For this goddess,<sup>1</sup> my fair [Philebus](#), beholding the violence and universal wickedness which prevailed, since there was no limit of pleasures or of indulgence in them, established law and order, which contain a limit. You say she did harm; I say, on the contrary, she brought salvation. What do you think, Protarchus?

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of May 25, 2022 at 10:51 PM

Based on the above, could the following be correct?

---Plato said that the craving for pleasure has no end, and thus leads to wickedness.

But Epicurus said pleasure is fulfilled and ends all craving, with the removal of all bodily pain and mental distress.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of May 25, 2022 at 10:54 PM

Or:

---Plato said that the craving for pleasure has no end, and thus leads to wickedness.

But Epicurus said the craving for pleasure ends with the removal of all bodily pain and mental distress.

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## Post by “Joshua” of May 25, 2022 at 11:32 PM

It would be difficult to express it accurately *and* concisely, but here is my attempt:

Plato held that (1) the pursuit of pleasure could not be the best mode of life, because (2) pleasure has no limit--and (3) having no limit, the pursuit of limitless pleasure ends in wickedness.

(4) Virtue is the way to correct wickedness, (5) and Divine Law is the supernatural check against the heedless pursuit of pleasure.

But Epicurus thought (1) that the pursuit of pleasure was the best mode of life, because (2) the limit of the quantity of pleasure is the removal of all pain--and (3) culminating in the removal of all pain, the pursuit of pleasure does not lead to wickedness. (4) The wicked bring pain on themselves, (5) and pain is the natural check against the heedless pursuit of pleasure.

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## Post by “Cassius” of May 26, 2022 at 7:44 AM

I agree with what is written above, but I also think there is another section on Philebus which is more on point with the question of "why" the absence of a limit to pleasure was significant to Plato in relation to pleasure. The same argument is asserted with even greater clarity in Seneca, which I quote below too, but to me the essence of the argument is the logical point that if a thing has no limit, then it can always be made better,. The big point comes down to:;

Once you admit something has no limit, then you admit it can be made better, and then by definition since it can be made better what you have isn't "the best" or "the highest" possible. To be the "highest good" something must really be the "best possible," and that means (sort of counterintuitively since we consider the word "limit" to be bad) that the best possible must have a "limit." The logical reasoning (which makes sense when you think about the various meanings of the word "limit") is that that which has no limit (no "highest point beyond which you can go no further") cannot be "the best."

As Seneca says it very precisely - ""THE ABILITY TO INCREASE IS PROOF THAT A THING IS IMPERFECT."" In other words, if something belongs to the class which can be increased or decreased, then the quantify of that thing is not "perfect" --

Plato uses [Philebus](#) as a patsy, because [Philebus](#) misunderstands the implications of how "perfect" and "admitting of more or less" fit together. By admitting that pleasure has no limit, and can always be increased, he loses the argument to Plato. It's a point that tripped up [Philebus](#), and it continues to trip up a lot of people today because they equate the "limit" as being a negative thing - when it seems clear when viewed logically that this use of "limit" is not bad at all - any more than saying that the fact that Mount Everest has a highest tip takes away from the fact that it is the highest mountain in the world (or whatever mountain it is that holds that honor).

That is why in my view it was important for Epicurus to show that pleasure has a limit. Unless we can show what that limit is (when all pain is gone from our life) then we have no limit we can point to, and thus, by Seneca and Socrates' reasoning, "pleasure" cannot be the highest good.

From [Philebus](#):

SOCRATES: Have pleasure and pain a limit, or do they belong to the class which admits of more and less?

[PHILEBUS](#): They belong to the class which admits of more, Socrates; for pleasure would not be perfectly good if she were not infinite in quantity and degree.

SOCRATES: Nor would pain, [Philebus](#), be perfectly evil. And therefore the infinite cannot be that element which imparts to pleasure some degree of good. But now — admitting, if you like, that pleasure is of the nature of the infinite — in which of the aforesaid classes, O Protarchus and [Philebus](#), can we without irreverence place wisdom and knowledge and mind? And let us be careful, for I think that the danger will be very serious if we err on this point.

[PHILEBUS](#): You magnify, Socrates, the importance of your favourite god.

SOCRATES: And you, my friend, are also magnifying your favourite goddess; but still I must beg you to answer the question. ...

SOCRATES: And whence comes that soul, my dear Protarchus, unless the body of the universe, which contains elements like those in our bodies but in every way fairer, had also a soul? Can there be another source?

PROTARCHUS: Clearly, Socrates, that is the only source.

SOCRATES: Why, yes, Protarchus; for surely we cannot imagine that of the four classes, the finite, the infinite, the composition of the two, and the cause, the fourth, which enters into all things, giving to our bodies souls, and the art of self-management, and of healing disease, and operating in other ways to heal and organize, having too all the attributes of wisdom; — we cannot, I say, imagine that whereas the self-same elements exist, both in the entire heaven and in great provinces of the heaven, only fairer and purer, this last should not also in that higher sphere have designed the noblest and fairest things?

PROTARCHUS: Such a supposition is quite unreasonable.

SOCRATES: Then if this be denied, should we not be wise in adopting the other view and maintaining that there is in the universe a mighty infinite and an adequate limit, of which we have often spoken, as well as a presiding cause of no mean power, which orders and arranges years and seasons and months, and may be justly called wisdom and mind?

PROTARCHUS: Most justly.

The same argument in Seneca:

Seneca's Letters - Book I - Letter XVI: This also is a saying of Epicurus: "If you live according to nature, you will never be poor; if you live according to opinion, you will never be rich." Nature's wants are slight; the demands of opinion are boundless. Suppose that the property of many millionaires is heaped up in your possession. Assume that fortune carries you far beyond the limits of a private income, decks you with gold, clothes you in purple, and brings you to such a degree of luxury and wealth that you can bury the earth under your marble floors; that you may not only possess, but tread upon, riches. Add statues, paintings, and whatever any art has devised for the luxury; you will only learn from such things to crave still greater. \*\*Natural desires are limited; but those which spring from false opinion can have no stopping point. The false has no limits. \*\*

Seneca's Letters - To Lucilius - 66.45: "What can be added to that which is perfect? Nothing otherwise that was not perfect to which something has been added. Nor can anything be added to virtue, either, for if anything can be added thereto, it must have contained a defect. Honour, also, permits of no addition; for it is honourable because of the very qualities which I have mentioned.[5] What then? Do you think that propriety, justice, lawfulness, do not also belong to the same type, and that they are kept within fixed limits? The ability to increase is proof that a

thing is still imperfect.

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## Post by "Cassius" of May 26, 2022 at 8:18 AM

[Joshua, Kalosyni](#), and anyone else who is willing to get into the details of this discussion in [Philebus](#), I hope you will weigh in because I think it is hard to overstate the significance of this issue.

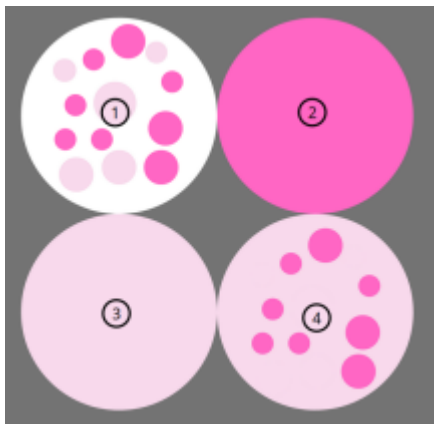
"[Philebus](#)" is reputed to be one of Plato's most mature and important dialogs. It is his "tour-de-force" against Pleasure as the good. And the tip of the spear of his argument by which he defeats the pro-pleasure side is this very argument -- by convincing the pro-pleasure side that pleasure has no limit (it can always be increased or decreased) he persuades [Philebus](#) (the pro-pleasure side) to abandon the argument that pleasure is the highest good.

In Athens in the age of Epicurus it therefore seems to me that Epicurus would have viewed the necessity of defeating this argument as almost as important as defeating the argument in favor of supernatural gods, and the argument in favor of reward or punishment after death. Epicurus was a teacher right in the heart of Athenian logic and philosophy, and this logical argument against pleasure had been enshrined as the gold standard by the most important teacher in Greek philosophy.

I also feel sure there are statements of this argument beyond this one in [Philebus](#), and the examples cited above in Seneca. I just haven't had time to find more at this point.

We need more and better examples to illustrate what is in issue, because it is hard to follow given the shades of meaning of the word "limit."

One way is to go back to [reneliza](#) 's [pink circle model](#):



In this diagram, the "limit of pleasure" is the edge of each circle. Each circle can contain only so much color, and no more, and the total quantity - the total magnitude - of "pink / pleasure" is the "area" of the circle contained within its edge.

By our definition of pink as containing ALL shades of pink (just like we define pleasure as containing ALL kinds of pleasure) we state that circles 2, 3, and 4 have all reached the LIMIT OF PINK (Pleasure). We may want to superficially quibble that "all shades of pink are not pink!" but we have DEFINED pink as including all shades, so circles 2, 3, and 4 have all reached their limit because they are completely filled with pink.

Circle 1, alone, has not reached the limit of pleasure, because it contains a lot of "white" space (our stand-in here for pain). Circle 1 cannot reach the "limit of pink" until all the white space is filled in with some shade of pink.

And this is one of the huge points: We don't make circle one reach the limit of pleasure simply by getting rid of all the white!!!! We can't replace the white with black or gold or green or any other random color, and we also can't simply make the white "disappear!"

We have to replace all the white (pain) with pink (pleasure) in order to reach the limit of pink/pleasure!

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## Post by "Kalosyni" of May 26, 2022 at 9:52 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Nature's wants are slight; the demands of opinion are boundless.

This quote is from post # 5 above -- This would be [PD15](#). And it is expanding on the idea of "limits" on pleasure from a slightly different angle than PD3. In a sense it is a blend of both Plato's and Epicurus' arguments.

I think modern civilization is inseparable from the "demands of opinion" -- the idea that clothing, cars, homes, etc must all look new or well kept. And we recognize classes of people by their appearance and the appearance of their possessions, or by the state of the neighborhoods in which they live. These kinds of pleasures have no limit. You will have to invest time and effort toward these pleasures -- and much more difficult to fulfill for those who do not have enough money to spend -- and in some situations people work long and hard hours to fulfill these pleasures, so that any pleasure gained by this means is negated by the time and stress. And then this points also toward what types of pleasures to pursue, and that "natural" pleasures can be fulfilled and are achievable (thus have a limit) -- and give a longer lasting

feeling of fulfillment.

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## Post by “Cassius” of May 26, 2022 at 10:25 AM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

And then this points also toward what types of pleasures to pursue, and that "natural" pleasures can be fulfilled and are achievable (thus have a limit) -- and give a longer lasting feeling of fulfillment.

Ok I see this as an area of potential confusion that needs clarity.

I do not think that "can be fulfilled" and "achievable" should be viewed as the heart of the discussion in what is being talked about in PD3 or is the issue in responding to Plato as the basis for designating or not designating Pleasure as the greatest good.

It is not "possessing a limit" that itself makes "pleasure" worthy of being designated as the highest good. As Plato lists in [Philebus](#), many things can have a limit. For example, it appears that Plato would say that all of the "virtues" have a limit because they are "superlatives." (See also the statement from Seneca in the post below.)

Virtue is complete in and of itself, in their view. If you're missing some element of virtue, then you're not really virtuous. For this reasoning look back at "in which of the aforesaid classes, O Protarchus and [Philebus](#), can we without irreverence place wisdom and knowledge and mind?"

He is stating that wisdom and knowledge and "mind" are complete in and of themselves, and therefore they are not rightly placed in the category of things of which you can have less or more. You're either "wise" or you're "not wise" -- he's saying that if you can add more wisdom to someone, then that person was not fully wise in the first place.

Unfortunately this discussion in [Philebus](#) is very complex and does not seem to be nearly as clear as it should be. In the part I quoted above I left out a long tangent that ends in this way:

PRO. You are right.

SOC. We have now, then, my friend, pretty clearly shown to what class mind belongs and what power it possesses.

PRO. Certainly.

SOC. And likewise the class of pleasure was made clear some time ago.

PRO. Yes, it was.

SOC. Let us, then, remember concerning both of them that mind was akin to cause and belonged more or less to that class, and that pleasure was itself infinite and belonged to the class which, in and by itself, has not and never will have either beginning or middle or end.

<sup>1</sup> Anaxagoras and probably some now unknown precursors.

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<sup>4</sup> καλῶς T: καὶ καλῶς B.

<sup>5</sup> νοῦς δήπου Bekker: νῦν δήπου T: νῦν δὴ νοῦς B.

and

of what feeling each of them comes into being whenever they do come into being. We will take pleasure first and discuss these questions in relation to pleasure, as we examined its class first. But we cannot examine pleasure successfully apart from pain.

PRO. If that is our proper path, let us follow it.

SOC. Do you agree with us about the origin of pleasure?

PRO. What do you think it is?

SOC. I think pain and pleasure naturally originate in the combined class.

PRO. Please, my dear Socrates, remind us which of the aforesaid classes you mean by the combined class.

SOC. I will do so, as well as I can, my brilliant friend.

PRO. Thank you.

SOC. By combined class, then, let us understand that which we said was the third of the four.

PRO. The one you mentioned after the infinite and the finite, and in which you put health and also, I believe, harmony?

SOC. You are quite right. Now please pay very close attention.

PRO. I will. Say on.

SOC. I say, then, that when, in us living beings, harmony is broken up, a disruption of nature and a generation of pain also take place at the same moment.

PRO. What you say is very likely.

SOC. But if harmony is recomposed and returns to its own nature, then I say that pleasure is generated,

I don't think we can adequately deal with this whole issue until we get a clear grasp of this argument, and I will be the first to admit that I don't have as good a grasp of it as I would like.

But what does seem clear to me is that we aren't yet talking about "individual pleasures" and we aren't at the level of being concerned with dividing up natural and necessary pleasures and choosing between them,

In this argument we are still at the basic level of whether "PLEASURE" can qualify as the highest good, as against VIRTUE, or PIETY or something like that.

And if we get ahead of ourselves and take this "limit" argument and derive from it that we should somehow "limit our pleasure" in life by means of the choices we make, then I think that's the straight road to asceticism, which is exactly where we DON'T want to end up if "Pleasure" is in fact the goal of life.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of May 26, 2022 at 10:37 AM**

Unfortunately as best I can tell Seneca does a much more clear job of stating this issue than does Plato/Socrates. Here is a very clear statement, but even this statement indicates that we need to be careful what we mean by "limitless", because apparently "Limitless" also can be viewed as a definite quantity. It appears that "the ability to increase or decrease," or "the ability to have more or less" is the real problem they are identifying, and so we have to be careful with any definition of "pleasure" that indicates we can have more or less of it.

It appears to me that this is all highly abstract, and not directly related to the choice of particular pleasures on a moment to moment basis. The question of which pleasures should be chosen comes next, AFTER we first identify "pleasure" as the ultimate greatest good / goal / guide (rather than virtue or god or reason).

If we step too quickly from the question (1) What is the greatest good? to the question (2) How should I pursue pleasure? then we're likely to miss the answer to question one entirely, and get confused if we use the answer to question one as the answer to question two. They are two separate questions which the Platonic logical argument (to which Epicurus is responding) is addressing separately.

#### Quote

but virtue itself does not become less or greater.<sup>[4]</sup> For the Supreme Good cannot diminish, nor may virtue retrograde; rather is it transformed, now into one quality and

now into another, shaping itself according to the part which it is to play. **8.** Whatever it has touched it brings into likeness with itself, and dyes with its own colour. It adorns our actions, our friendships, and sometimes entire households which it has entered and set in order. Whatever it has handled it forthwith makes lovable, notable, admirable.

Therefore the power and the greatness of virtue cannot rise to greater heights, because increase is denied to that which is superlatively great. You will find nothing straighter than the straight, nothing truer than the truth, and nothing more temperate than that which is temperate. **9.** Every virtue is limitless; for limits depend upon definite measurements. Constancy cannot advance further, any more than fidelity, or truthfulness, or loyalty. What can be added to that which is perfect? Nothing otherwise that was not perfect to which something has been added. Nor can anything be added to virtue, either, for if anything can be added thereto, it must have contained a defect. Honour, also, permits of no addition; for it is honourable because of the very qualities which I have mentioned.<sup>[5]</sup> What then? Do you think that propriety, justice, lawfulness, do not also belong to the same type, and that they are kept within fixed limits? The ability to increase is proof that a thing is still imperfect.

This is not a long dialog and this statement is pretty close to the start so it is easy to get the full context by starting at the beginning:

[Moral letters to Lucilius/Letter 66 - Wikisource, the free online library](#)

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## **Post by “Cassius” of May 26, 2022 at 2:31 PM**

Here are two brief Wikipedia articles that I think are highly relevant because they go to the core of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. What I am suggesting is that if this central issue ("the good" / "the form of the good") was among the most important things that Aristotle and Plato were arguing about, we would expect that Epicurus too would weigh in on the topic of "the good" very early in the [Principal Doctrines](#). Unless and until refuted Plato and Aristotle's position that the most important thing in life to us is "the good" we would never expect to proceed further away from what Plato and Aristotle taught. The first step in the analysis has to be establishing that this "form of the good" is not to be looked to as the ultimate standard. You don't even begin to discuss "types of pleasures" or "which pleasures to choose" until you first establish that pleasures itself is the goal.

How do you do that in a single document (which as we discuss a lot, was not numbered in the original version)?

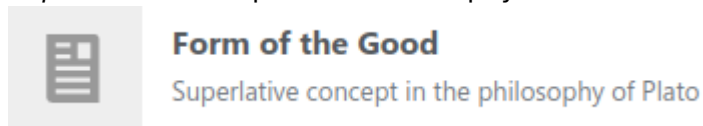
To me, we can look for that logical process is what we see in the PD's. The first point to establish is the proof that, if accepted, allows you to reject the view that there are no supernatural gods and that the gods do not and cannot punish you after death. You start with that first because everyone, even Plato and Aristotle, essentially point to religion and supernatural gods as the source of everything. And you don't just say "The gods don't exist and there is no life after death" because you're a philosopher and you're listing out proofs (logical arguments) not just raw assertions.

And then the second point that you establish, in order of importance after disposing of the supernatural claims, is you provide the proof that there is no logical argument against considering "Pleasure" to be the good. And you do that by directly addressing the most potent logical argument against pleasure, which is that (in Platonic terms) "since pleasure has no limit it is in the class of the more or less and therefore is not a superlative and cannot be considered to be the highest or best." And I see that as the reason for the otherwise convoluted wording "The limit of quantity in pleasures is the removal of all that is painful." All the rest of PD3 and PD4 as to pleasure and pain are subsidiary corollaries that address Platonic logical arguments against making "Pleasure" the highest good.

Seen this way [PD01](#) through [PD04](#) are not primarily therapeutic advice (though they do have that effect for those who are able to absorb them). They are primarily logical positions intended as cannonballs fired against the opposing philosophical positions that ruled Epicurus' world and still rule ours today.

Wikipedia:

1 - [The Form of the Good](#) Interestingly I see the shortest blurb on wikipedia about that is "*Superlative Concept in the Philosophy of Plato.*"



The first references that are seen in *The Republic* to the Form of the Good are within the conversation between [Glaucou](#)n and [Socrates](#) (454 c-d). When he is trying to answer such difficult questions pertaining to the definition of [justice](#), Plato identifies that we should not "introduce every form of difference and sameness in nature" instead we must focus on "the one form of sameness and difference that was relevant to the particular ways of life themselves" which is the form of the Good. This form is the basis for understanding all other forms, it is what allows us to understand everything else. Through the conversation between Socrates and Glaucou (508 a-c), Plato analogizes the form of the Good with the sun as it is what allows us to see things. Here, Plato describes how the sun allows for sight. But he makes a very important distinction, "sun is not sight" but it is "the cause of sight itself." As the sun is in the visible realm, the form of Good is in the [intelligible](#) realm. It is "what gives truth to the things known

and the power to know to the knower". It is not only the "cause of knowledge and truth, it is also an object of knowledge". Plato identifies how the form of the Good allows for the cognizance to understand such difficult concepts as [justice](#). He identifies [knowledge](#) and [truth](#) as important, but through Socrates (508d–e) says, "good is yet more prized". He then proceeds to explain "although the good is not being" it is "superior to it in rank and power", it is what "provides for knowledge and truth" (508e)

The discussion surrounding this article implies that this "form of the good" is maybe the single central concept of Platonism. Amusing fact: "There is an ancient anecdotal tradition that Plato gave a public lecture entitled "On the Good" which so confused the audience that most walked out. At the end of the lecture Plato said to those hearers who remained: 'The Good is the One.'"

The article also points out Aristotle's criticism: " [Aristotle](#) discusses the Forms of Good in critical terms several times in both of his major surviving ethical works, the [Eudemian](#) and [Nicomachean Ethics](#). Aristotle argues that Plato's Form of the Good does not apply to the physical world, for Plato does not assign "goodness" to anything in the existing world. Because Plato's Form of the Good does not explain events in the physical world, humans have no reason to believe that the Form of the Good exists and the Form of the Good is thereby irrelevant to human ethics"

2. [The Summum Bonum](#) We have discussed this recently in our review of Torquatus. This article lays the phrase at the foot of Cicero: "**Summum bonum** is a Latin expression meaning the highest or ultimate good, which was introduced by the [Roman philosopher Cicero\[1\]\[2\]](#) to denote the fundamental principle on which some system of ethics is based — that is, the aim of actions, which, if consistently pursued, will lead to the best possible life. Since Cicero, the expression has acquired a secondary meaning as the essence or ultimate metaphysical principle of Goodness itself, or what Plato called the [Form of the Good](#). These two meanings do not necessarily coincide. For example, [Epicurean](#) and [Cyrenaic](#) philosophers claimed that the 'good life' consistently aimed for pleasure, without suggesting that pleasure constituted the meaning or essence of Goodness outside the ethical sphere. In [De finibus](#), Cicero explains and compares the ethical systems of several schools of Greek philosophy, including [Stoicism](#), [Epicureanism](#), [Aristotelianism](#) and [Platonism](#), based on how each defines the ethical *summum bonum* differently."

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of May 26, 2022 at 9:20 PM

So it seems we need to keep in mind these two approaches, with regard to certain PDs:

- 1) logical positions against opposing philosophical schools
- 2) therapeutic interpretations

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### **Post by “Cassius” of May 27, 2022 at 12:34 AM**

Yes I think that both perspectives are involved and important:

Epicurus would not have taken the philosophical position in support of pleasure that he took unless his position was provable as true by observing the real world practical benefit.

And at the same time:

Epicurus would have rejected the real world practical benefit of pleasure (just as we sometime choose pain over pleasure) if he had been philosophically convinced that a greater benefit were achievable either now or after death by following supernatural religion or "virtue" or "rationalism."

You've got to have both perspectives because they go together and reinforce each other.

One without the other is much more vulnerable to attack. Together they withstand both "practical" and "philosophical" attack.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of May 27, 2022 at 7:00 AM**

I woke up this morning thinking about this passage from Lucretius Book One which provides an example of why the philosophical perspective is so important. Without a sound understanding of philosophy you can't withstand the constant assault from false religion and false worldviews:

#### Quote

102] But still I fear your caution will dispute the maxims I lay down, who all your life have trembled at the poets' frightful tales. Alas! I could even now invent such dreams as would pervert the steadiest rules of reason, and make your fortunes tremble to the bottom. No wonder! But if Men were once convinced that death was the sure end of all their pains, they might with reason, then, resist the force of all Religion, and contemn the threats of poets. Now, we have no sense, no power, to strive against prejudice,

because we fear a scene of endless torments after death.

In that selection you could insert in place of the underlined part these observations from the first five PDs and then understand them as providing us "the reasoning/power to strive against prejudice" and thus refute the major religious/philosophical positions that are the enemies of Epicureanism:

1 - "that perfect gods would not care to interfere in our affairs and thus we need not be concerned about them" (PD1)

2 - "that anything we cannot sense is irrelevant to us and thus the state of being dead can cause us no harm or good" (PD2)

3- "that Pleasure can be complete when it fills out experience, and thus we don't always need more" (PD3)

4- "that pain is never so potent that it can blot out all pleasure for the rest of our lives, so pleasure can be continuous and is always available as a guide to action" (PD4)

5- "that a life of true virtue IS a life of pleasure, and thus virtue is not its own reward." (PD5)

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### **Post by "Kalosyni" of May 27, 2022 at 12:29 PM**

Thank you Cassius, I like this list!

I would personally rephrase # 2

Quote

2 - "that anything we cannot sense is irrelevant to us and thus the state of being dead can cause us no harm or good" (PD2)

Consciousness depends on the body, without consciousness we cannot sense or even think, and thus the state of being dead can cause us no harm or good.

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### **Post by "Don" of May 27, 2022 at 12:52 PM**

To me, this looks like another endorsement for the Tetrpharmakos as a \*very\* abridged summary of the philosophy since that is just an abridgement of PD1 through PD4. Just sayin'



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## Post by “Kalosyni” of May 30, 2022 at 8:02 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

3- "that Pleasure can be complete when it fills out experience, and thus we don't always need more" (PD3)

There are certain pleasures in which one must take care -- PD3 ought to be combined with PD8 -- especially when eating dessert -- because the bad result doesn't come till later on, after you have eaten too much. At a family gathering today, the adults knew how to apply reason with regard to limiting the quantity of dessert, but my great-nephews and great niece wanted to have third helpings of dessert -- their mom had to tell them they had already had enough.

### Quote

...sugar also triggers the mesocorticolimbic system, known as the “reward pathway,” in the brain. When we consume sugar, the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, ventral-tegmental area, and nucleus accumbens are stimulated, releasing dopamine. After sugar triggers this system, we’re left craving more, because these parts of the brain are responsible for behavior reinforcement, pleasure-seeking, and addiction, according to a [study](#) published in *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews* in 2019.

For [more on sugar, read this.](#)