

As To The Three Legs Of The Canon (Sensations, Feelings, Anticipations) Is it Possible to Experience (Receive Data?) From One Without The Others?

Post by “Cassius” of February 5, 2023 at 4:23 PM

This morning we recorded the first episode for Chapter 8 and one thing that we came across, but did not deal with yet, led us to consider whether it is possible to experience "feeling" (pleasure or pain) separate and apart and independently of anticipations and feelings. This question arises in discussing the connection and relationship between the three faculties.

This question implicates PD2 (without sensation we are dead) and it is something discussed in the [Wenham article](#) which I regularly cite on the kinetic/katastematic issue.

Before we address it (probably episode 161) it would be good to discuss it in a thread. I am initially posting this in 160s notes but will probably move the topic to a separate thread of its own.

Perhaps a better way of asking the question would involve formulations like:

1. Can you experience pleasure without a sensation being involved / give rise to it?
2. Does every sensation evoke a feeling of pleasure or pain?

Given the big issues involving what anticipations really are, adding it into the mix may be more trouble than it is worth, but probably the same questions apply:

1. Can you experience pleasure without an anticipation being involved / give rise to it?
2. Does every anticipation evoke a feeling of pleasure or pain?

What of the workings of the mind in all this? Do those workings of the mind constitute or generate sensations?

How do the three work together? DeWitt's formulation starts out with:

Quote

The three criteria are neither three aspects of a single capacity nor yet three discrete capacities which function separately from one another. To Epicurus body and soul are alike corporeal; they are also coterminous. Consequently all reactions of the individual to his environment are total or psychosomatic. Thus in the case of every reaction

Nature is on the alert to register approval or disapproval by the signals of pleasure and pain. This is the function of the Feelings in the meaning of the Canon.

It is true that in the Greek language all three criteria may be called *pathe*, in modern parlance "reactions," but they are not identical. It is true also that all three may be components of a given reaction but still they occur in sequence. Sensation is irrational and merely registers a quality, for example, sweetness. It is the intelligence that says, "This is honey," and it is the Feelings that report, "I like it" or "I don't like it." Again, it is positively known that Epicurus postulated the existence of an innate sense of justice and called this an Anticipation. Now injustice hurts and it is the Feelings that register this fact. If a man is condemned to pay an unjust penalty, the pain is a reaction distinct from the aural sensation of hearing the verdict.

Agree? Disagree? Your comments are welcome!

Post by "Don" of February 5, 2023 at 5:41 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

1. Can you experience pleasure without a sensation being involved / give rise to it?
2. Does every sensation evoke a feeling of pleasure or pain?

1. No.

2. Yes.

How's that for being dogmatic 😊

[Quote from Cassius](#)

1. Can you experience pleasure without an anticipation being involved / give rise to it?
2. Does every anticipation evoke a feeling of pleasure or pain?

1. Yes.

2. I don't think so. My take is that anticipations are linked to sensations somehow. But that's a sticky wicket.

While DeWitt is a little wordy and convoluted, I think I agree with the general direction he's going.

Post by “Cassius” of February 5, 2023 at 6:36 PM

[Joshua](#) did I frame this question accurately to the way we were discussing it?

I don't recall that we have addressed this question before and it's full of difficulties. I agree with Don's comments generally with the possible exception as to anticipations. I will need to reread the rest of the chapter and see if there are any academic articles on this topic.

I think my eventual answer is going to be that they all three function together and all the time, but that will move "anticipations" more deeply into the center of all brain activity than I have previously considered it to be. However that may well be possible.

Though Dewitt occasionally uses the term ideas I think reject the view that anticipations are "ideas" of any kind, and I think I prefer the view that they were considered to be by Epicurus some kind of "firmware" or "operating system" process always involved in consciousness (probably involving pattern assembly and recognition).

In that I am influenced by the Barwis argument that we are born with "principles of operation" (again genetic or similar methods of functioning) but not with "ideas.". In that I see a strong analogy to pleasure and pain and the senses, in that they are in operation at birth (or some time after conception) though containing no prior experiences.

Post by “Joshua” of February 5, 2023 at 10:04 PM

Yes, that's basically the discussion we were having this morning. I had *tentatively* suggested that it would be possible to experience pleasure *not* caused by sensation. For example, if one is plagued with anxiety about the fear of death, then the removal of that fear (which is not a sensation) produces a pleasurable feeling of relief. I then clarified that it might be possible to experience pleasure or pain uncaused by sensation, but requiring nevertheless some kind of change in stimulus. In the case I mentioned above, the change in stimulus would be changing one's mind.

Post by “Cassius” of February 5, 2023 at 10:12 PM

Yes to repeat we brought up the subject and then quickly realized that it was going to be very complex and dropped back to continue the podcast without it. So as far as I am concerned we are essentially a blank slate on this topic!

Post by “Don” of February 5, 2023 at 10:35 PM

As far as the anticipations, using justice as an example, I always go back to the research on fairness done with babies and toddlers that shows a clear preference for fair behavior from basically birth before any acculturation can happen.

Post by “Cassius” of February 5, 2023 at 10:41 PM

Quote

I then clarified that it might be possible to experience pleasure or pain uncaused by sensation, but requiring nevertheless some kind of change in stimulus

Is not the awareness of consciousness itself - of being alive - a "sensation" of some kind? And would that not factor in to the apparent view that so long as pain is not present what is being felt is pleasure, even if it is just awareness of being alive?

I presume these are the kinds of issues this question calls for answering.

Post by “Joshua” of February 5, 2023 at 10:49 PM

Yes!

I pointed to four situations that suggest an innate faculty for fairness by four different lines of evidence.

1. Among very small children, if you break a cookie in two unequal halves they'll each be happy to get a part of the cookie even if they don't get equal shares. When they're very young they'll notice that they both got "cookie", but they won't notice differences in quantity.
2. Among somewhat older children, two unequal shares won't cut it anymore. They each want a perfect half, or each individual wants the larger half for themselves.
3. Among chimpanzees, if two are given celery they'll both be happy. If one is given celery and one is given grapes, the one given celery will be visibly upset--grapes are better than celery.
4. Among chimpanzees, if you give food to chimpanzees that are not in a cage they will sometimes share their food with another chimpanzee in the cage who didn't get food.

Post by “Joshua” of February 5, 2023 at 11:51 PM

To clarify, my "yes!" Was in response to Don's post and not Cassius' question (in which we cross posted).

Quote

Is not the awareness of consciousness itself - of being alive - a "sensation" of some kind? And would that not factor in to the apparent view that so long as pain is not present what is being felt is pleasure, even if it is just awareness of being alive?

My (again, *tentative*) reaction to this would be no. When DeWitt says that Epicurus was not an Empiricist he was pushing back against the tendency to merge all faculties into one and call it sensation. DeWitt regards sensation as being incapable of judgment, memory, etc.

When Epicurus talks about 'pleasant expectations for the future', or 'the memory of past pleasures' he's describing mental faculties apart from sensation. DeWitt uses the example of the man unjustly convicted in court. He experiences a feeling of pain at hearing the judgment quite apart from the aural sensation itself. It would of course be impossible for the man to *know* of his unjust conviction without sensation, but after he knows of it he stops requiring sensation to feel pleasure or pain about it.

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2023 at 1:10 AM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

When Epicurus talks about 'pleasant expectations for the future', or 'the memory of past pleasures' he's describing mental faculties apart from sensation.

I've always been confused about this, because on one reading (from my perspective) Epicurus seems to treat the mental faculties of the mind as a sense organ picking up sensations from subtle images leading to thought and memory.

I'll have to think (pun intended) on this.

Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2023 at 4:52 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Epicurus seems to treat the mental faculties of the mind as a sense organ picking up sensations from subtle images leading to thought and memory.

As I read things there is no doubt about that being part of the big picture of the operation of the mind. Clearly Epicurus says this.

I presume that a tricky part is per Joshua:

[Quote from Joshua](#)

but after he knows of it he stops requiring sensation to feel pleasure or pain about it.

Would this be consistent with PD2 relating to absence of sensation being nothing to us? Do the faculties operate so independently that "over here" we have the five senses operating on one set of data while "over here" the pleasure faculty is operating on an entirely different set of data or somehow operating without any data at all?

Are we talking about memory here, to the effect that once a memory is stored the five senses are no longer involved at all? Is not the pleasure or pain from our memory essentially a stored sensation?

In other words for purposes of PD2 and maybe other uses, should we be considering memory of a sensation to be the equivalent of a "new" or "contemporaneous" sensation?

Is "pleasure" like "yellow" - in that pleasure does not exist apart from sensations that are pleasurable just like yellow does not exist apart from things that are yellow? This question I think is particularly important.

Should we ask the same about anticipations? Do anticipations exist apart from sensations and feelings?

Can any of these three faculties be considered to have an independent existence apart from the others?

Would it be concerning if we were to admit that "pleasure" exists apart from "sensations that are pleasurable?" I sense that this question is closely related to the also-troubling contention that katastematic pleasure is some kind of special and higher pleasure, different in nature from any other "normal" type of pleasure, and somehow separate and apart from experience/sensation.

This reminds me of Dewitt's observation that pleasure has no meaning except to the living. "Pleasure" can exist outside the normal functioning living being no more than a soul or spirit can be considered to exist outside the living body, right?

Also: we can choose in our mind to consider yellow apart from a lemon if we prefer, but that doesn't mean yellow exists without our picturing in our mind's eye something that is yellow, does it? This phrase "mind's eye" may be related to the topic. Does our mind have an ear and a nose and a tongue too?

When we say "Imagine something..." Does that mean anything different than summoning up the "image" from storage rather than from the "current" eyeball input? Is summoning up the image from storage so conceptually different for our current purposes such that the result should not be considered to be a sensation? If we close our eyes for just a moment is the pleasure we are feeling from the stored picture in our mind (of the same object while our eyes are closed) so very different in kind? Does the blink of an eye while we are standing in the Louvre change how we should consider the pleasure we feel in appreciating the Mona Lisa?

Seems to me that we are in danger if we don't consider that this discussion has both "biological" aspects and "philosophical" or "conceptual" aspects. Can't (or shouldn't) we conceive of both stored and contemporaneous images as having exactly the same ability to be considered properly as sensations?

[PD02. Death is nothing to us](#), for that which is dissolved is without sensation; and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us.

Does that mean that we should consider ourselves to be dead when we stop receiving new sensations from functioning organs, or only after our minds have ceased to function and to be able to *both* receive new *and* operate on stored memories of sensations?

All this interrelationship is why I think it is ridiculous to single out and interpret "katastematic pleasure" or "tranquility" or "ataraxia" or "aponia" or any other particular word as something higher than, or special in kind, or anything more than one among many experiences of (or aspects of or perspectives on) the "Pleasure" that we use as a description of our general goal in living a full human life.

(And when I say I think it is ridiculous, what I mean is I think Epicurus would have thought this interpretation of his words to be ridiculous too.)

It makes much more sense that Epicurus was taking a very general and common sense perspective on life, so that when he was asked "What is the Goal of Life?" the discussion went something like this:

- Can life be considered to have a goal, Epicurus?

- "If you would like to, Yes."

- Is the goal of life Virtue, or living nobly and virtuously?

- "No."

- is the goal of life Piety, or obedience to the Gods?

- "No."

- Is the goal of life Rationality, since the distinguishing factor of man is that he is the rational animal?

- "No."

- Is the goal of life constant partying, as people claim you do?

- "No."

- Is the goal of life Tranquility, or the elimination of pain?

- "No."

- "Is the goal of life Happiness, or eudaemonia, or flourishing, or well-being?"

- "No, not in the clearest manner of speaking."

- Then what do you say the goal is, Epicurus?

- "Pleasure - which includes the pleasure that comes from living virtuously, and the pleasure that comes from having holy opinions about the gods, and the pleasure that comes from using our minds rationally, and the pleasure that comes from partying, and the pleasure that comes from tranquility, and the pleasure that comes from eliminating pain, and the pleasure that

comes from feeling happiness, and the pleasure that comes from many other types of experiences as well."

Post by "Don" of February 6, 2023 at 9:27 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

also-troubling contention that katastematic pleasure is some kind of special and higher pleasure, different in nature from any other "normal" type of pleasure, and somehow separate and apart from experience/sensation

My take: I have other thoughts on your post but this one elicited an immediate reaction from me.

To me, the only troubling part of katastematic pleasures are their continuing misinterpretation. They are not "special" or "higher". They're merely those pleasures that arise within ourselves like tranquility, pleasant memories, homeostasis, etc. They are "special" only insofar as they are the pleasures we can be most confident in having, even when we are unable to partake in kinetic pleasures like walking in the country, dancing, etc. Tranquility can serve as a foundation for fully experiencing kinetic pleasure free from anxiety.

Quote from Cassius

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Again, I will continue to soapbox that katastematic pleasures are not special, but Epicurus, Metrodorus, and Philodemus all refer to them. They cannot be dismissed out of hand like some of those academic authors do or be singled out as *the* goal like other authors do. But Epicurus consistently stresses the importance of ataraxia *in* a pleasurable life. It seems to me he is saying it is necessary but not sufficient for a pleasurable life.

I would also translate them as stable pleasures not static pleasures. They are pleasures in which we can have confidence at all times.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 6, 2023 at 9:40 AM

There is a whole lot of interesting ideas and questions coming up in this thread, starting with questions on understanding the canon. (But also includes other issues in post 11. Cassius then adds in a few more good questions about the goal of life according to Epicureanism, which gets me wanting to comment on that too, but first wanting to deal with the canon.)

For myself, I need to first understanding the meaning of "anticipations" -- where is that in the Letter to Herodotus? How do you more clearly define it? Are "anticipations" what we see/imagine in our mind's eye? Or am I incorrect on thinking that?

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2023 at 11:04 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Are we talking about memory here, to the effect that once a memory is stored the five senses are no longer involved at all? Is not the pleasure or pain from our memory essentially a stored sensation?

My understanding is that memories, per Epicurus, are not stored anywhere. There are "images" (let's call them "potential sensory inputs" that can be picked up by sense organs) constantly swirling around us. For memories, the images impact our mind. For memories, similar images have - for want of a better term - carved a groove or slot in our mind from our repeated recall and then our minds easily picks up the images when we recall them.

Quote from Cassius

When we say "Imagine something..." Does that mean anything different than summoning up the "image" from storage rather than from the "current" eyeball input?

I don't think it's "stored" anywhere in our bodies. I think it's that slot/groove thing and our minds sense the proper images to perceive the memory.

I need to add that this is not how memory really works. However, I do find it intriguing that the same neurons that perceive sight, sound, etc. also fire when we recollect a sight, sound, etc. Brains are amazing things! Plus, the interplay between brains and our gut biome and other body systems to affect what we think of as our mind is complex and astonishing stuff!

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2023 at 11:10 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Would it be concerning if we were to admit that "pleasure" exists apart from "sensations that are pleasurable?"

Pleasure cannot exist apart from "sensations that are pleasurable." Everything has a physical basis. There is no pleasure without sensation, and no sensation without a feeling - pleasure or pain - resulting from it, although it can be a small and subtle response. The excerpt from Cassius here swerves too close to Platonic ideal Forms. There is no capital-P Pleasure against which pleasure is measured or of which our pleasure is some kind of pale reflection.

Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2023 at 12:10 PM

We certainly agree in your first sentence but I do think there is a "concept" of pleasure which is used as a placeholder in these discussions where the discussion demands a single word that references the full concept.

I don't think all concepts constitute Platonic ideal forms, do they?

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2023 at 12:17 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

We certainly agree in your first sentence but I do think there is a "concept" of pleasure which is used as a placeholder in these discussions where the discussion demands a single word that references the full concept.

I don't think all concepts constitute Platonic ideal forms, do they?

I'll give you that. I suppose we can use pleasure as a word that refers to a group of positive sensations the same way we use dog to talk about a particular kind of animal that is a member of a group of domesticated canines... without going down the Pleasure and Dog ideal form route. We just have to remember we're talking language and not philosophy (although, yeah,

the line is fuzzy).

Post by “Joshua” of February 6, 2023 at 12:28 PM

Quote

I suppose we can use pleasure as a word that refers to a group of positive sensations the same way we use dog to talk about a particular kind of animal that is a member of a group of domesticated canines... without going down the Pleasure and Dog ideal form route. We just have to remember we're talking language and not philosophy (although, yeah, the line is fuzzy).

What DeWitt is saying is that pleasure \neq sensation; that no pleasure is a sensation because pleasure presumes judgment ("I like this") and sensation is irrational and incapable of judgment. I realize that after a certain point this all begins to get a little nit-picky.

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2023 at 12:46 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

Quote

I suppose we can use pleasure as a word that refers to a group of positive sensations the same way we use dog to talk about a particular kind of animal that is a member of a group of domesticated canines... without going down the Pleasure and Dog ideal form route. We just have to remember we're talking language and not philosophy (although, yeah, the line is fuzzy).

What DeWitt is saying is that pleasure \neq sensation; that no pleasure is a sensation because pleasure presumes judgment ("I like this") and sensation is irrational and incapable of judgment. I realize that after a certain point this all begins to get a little nit-picky.

I'd agree with.

To me, the sequence is: We have to have an irrational sensation first, then an involuntary response (literal meaning of pathē: pleasure or pain) to that sensation, then our rational part kicks in with a thought like "I like this".

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2023 at 1:29 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I'd agree with.

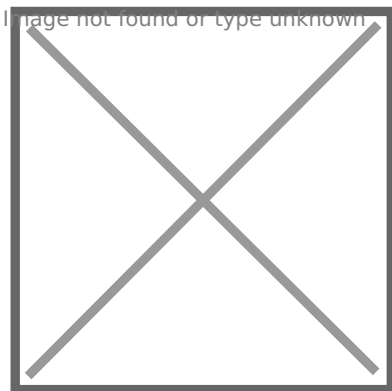
To me, the sequence is: We have to have an irrational sensation first, then an involuntary response (literal meaning of pathē: pleasure or pain) to that sensation, then our rational part kicks in with a thought like "I like this".

The problem is that this is not how our brains work per the current research of people like Dr. Feldman Barrett and many others. We wouldn't survive if we waited to react to sensations, e.g., the snake would already have bitten us. Our brains function like prediction engines, constantly assessing incoming data from our bodies and external stimuli and checking it against the "most likely scenario." When we walk through the woods, our brains basically are primed to "beware of long skinny things on ground = danger!". Then if we register a long skinny thing, we jump immediately. It's only after that we realize it was just a twig or discarded rope.

That's woefully inadequate and probably wrong in some spots, but that's my memory off the top of my head on Barrett's and others findings. There's also the registering of brain waves clearly showing our brains "decide" to initiate an action well before we're conscious of it.

There's no way Epicurus would have known ANY of this, but it intrigues me to see the brain's prediction faculty as somewhat akin to "anticipations."

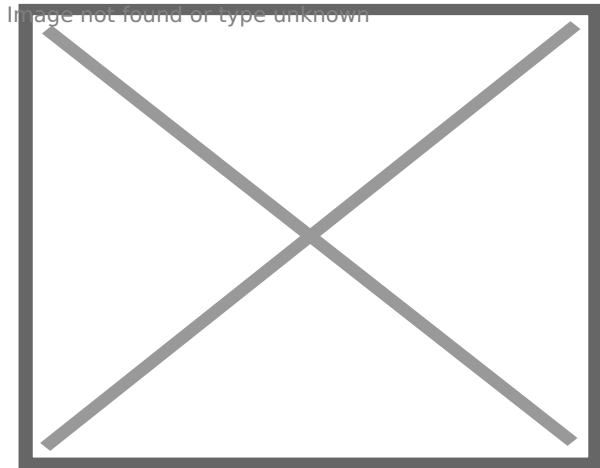
References:



[Our brain is a prediction machine that is always active](#)

Our brain works a bit like the autocomplete function on your phone -- it is constantly trying to guess the next word when we are listening to a book, reading...

www.sciencedaily.com

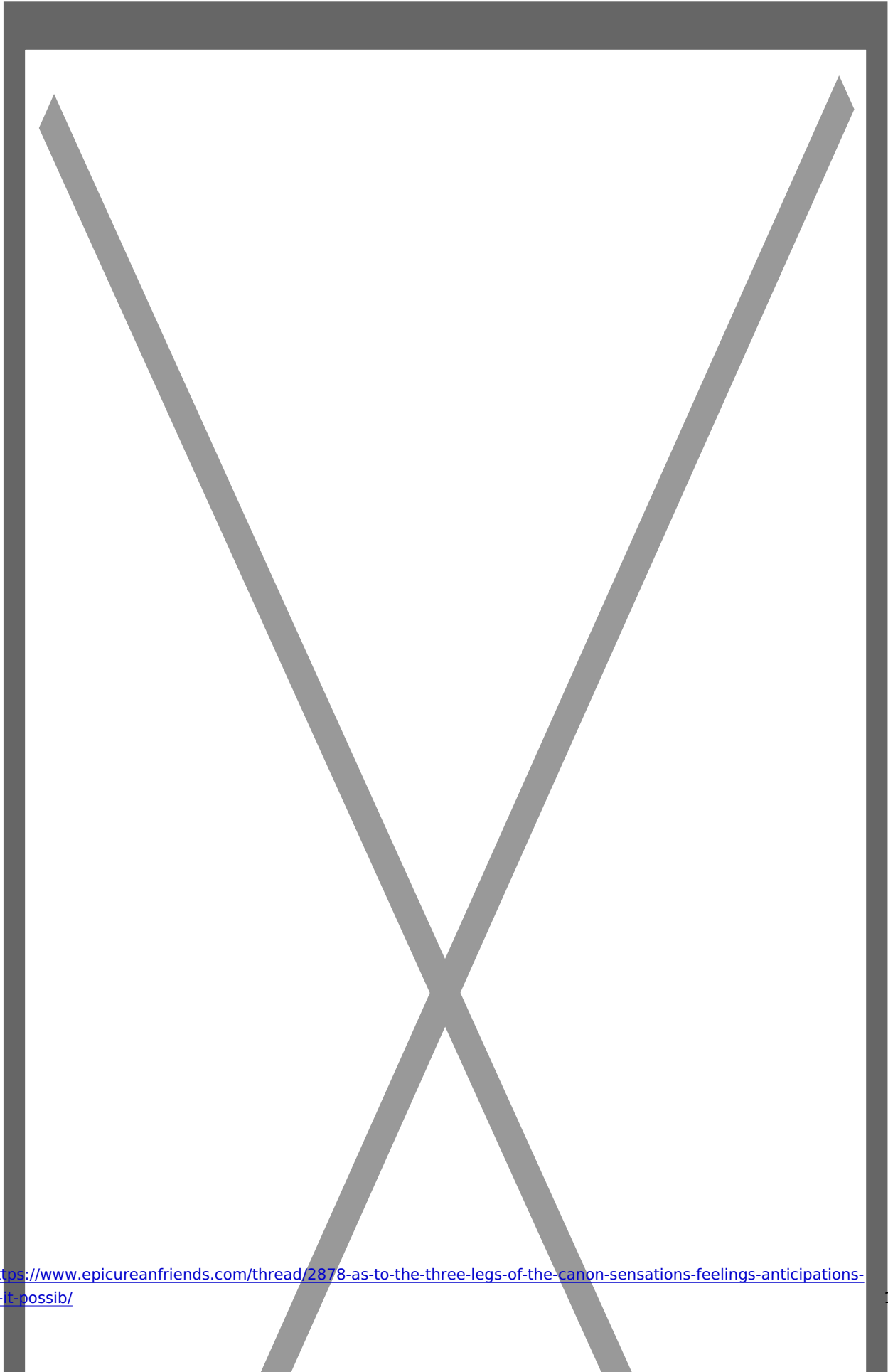


[Interoceptive predictions in the brain](#)

Intuition suggests that perception follows sensation and therefore bodily feelings originate in the body. However, recent evidence goes against this logic:...

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2878-as-to-the-three-legs-of-the-canon-sensations-feelings-anticipations-is-it-possib/>

[How Your "Predictive Brain" Takes Care of You](#)

What is your predictive brain and why does it matter? According to Barrett, the predictive brain is key to your health and mood.

www.shortform.com

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2023 at 2:12 PM

Quote

What DeWitt is saying is that pleasure \neq sensation; that no pleasure is a sensation because pleasure presumes judgment ("I like this") and sensation is irrational and incapable of judgment. I realize that after a certain point this all begins to get a little nit-picky.

I hate to throw a monkey wrench here but I am not thinking I agree that Dewitt is saying that. Joshua can you point to what you are referencing?

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2023 at 2:16 PM

I think the problem is that the word pleasure is like "true*" and can be used in multiple ways, but I would say one of the ways is that pleasure is a feeling and operates automatically and irrationally just like sugar is sweet.

Yes you can look at those words and say that sugar and sweet are concepts, but in these cases the meaning is obvious and nothing is needed beyond "pointing to them."

Pleasure can also be viewed as a concept on the same level as "virtue" and "piety"

The trick is being clear in how we use them.

Happy is also fairly clear in meaning, but "happiness" would be almost like "pleasure ness" - a term we do not use. If we did use that term we would evoke similar problems and ambiguities as we do when we refer to "happiness"

This is a VERY productive conversation because I think its resolution will clear up a lot of problems.

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2023 at 2:20 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Happy is also fairly clear in meaning

Unfortunately, "happy" is only "clear" in context and can have any number of meanings.

I'll see your monkey wrench and raise you a complication.

Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2023 at 2:24 PM

We definitely need to turn some attention to "conceptual reasoning in Epicurean philosophy.". In my view this is a cause of the confusion in Diogenes Laertius as to anticipations.

It seems to me that the description of seeing oxen and assigning a word to them, and then judging future animals against that word, is standard conceptual reasoning with which Epicurus would have had no issue. When he was criticizing excessive decision-making he was not criticizing obvious things like "look at those two animals that look like each other lets call them oxes."

He was criticizing abstractions built on a abstractions which grow further and further away from observation to the point where there is no further linkage.

I think Dewitts position, with which I agree, is that this process of labelling oxen is a matter of language formation that contains many elements of opinion that would not be related to the instinctive process of pattern recognition in the first place.(1)

But for purposes of this discussion the key is to establish that we agree that basic conceptual reasoning is not a reference to Platonic idealism, and is something that Epicurus himself used and embraced. (For example, an "atom").

(1) I edited this post for the record to make clear that I think that's why the best term is prolepsis or pre-conception or anticipation, and the absolutely worst possible term is what Bailey uses in his translation, where he in fact uses the term "conception" rather than something that indicates an input into the concept-formation process. In my view Bailey guts the entire discussion by presuming that pre-conceptions = conceptions, and that is something

that needs to be totally revisited and refuted. We can deal with this when we talk elsewhere about anticipations. Right now we need to establish that the formation and use of concepts in ordinary life attached to real observations does not constitute Platonic idealism. Here is a reference to concept-formation being endorsed by Epicurus in the letter to Herodotus: "First of all, Herodotus, we must grasp the ideas attached to words, in order that we may be able to refer to them and so to judge the inferences of opinion or problems of investigation or reflection, so that we may not either leave everything uncertain and go on explaining to infinity or use words devoid of meaning." Another: "[40] And if there were not that which we term void and place and intangible existence, bodies would have nowhere to exist and nothing through which to move, as they are seen to move. And besides these two, nothing can even be thought of either by conception or on the analogy of things conceivable such as could be grasped as whole existences and not spoken of as the accidents or properties of such existences." Plus I know some disagree on this, but DeWitt cites this from Diogenes Laertius in the context we are talking about it now, and I think it applies: "The internal sensations they say are two, pleasure and pain, which occur to every living creature, and the one is akin to nature and the other alien: by means of these two choice and avoidance are determined. Of investigations some concern actual things, others mere words." This is from Chapter 8 of EAHP:

to overlap the recommendation concerning style, the application is different. It means that the quest of definitions is useless. This quest is capable of terminating in fantastic concepts, such as Other, Same, and Essence in Plato's *Timaeus*, possessing no meaning unless on the highest level of abstraction. Since Epicurus rejected the reality of the eternal ideas, such terms could possess no meaning at all. Hence the following dictum: "There are two kinds of inquiry, the one about realities, the other ending up in sound without sense." ** In the same vein is the advice to the young Herodotus to take words at their face values "so as not by our endless attempts to define have all our ideas in confusion or have mere vocables that mean nothing." 41

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2023 at 2:27 PM

I agree with your last comment Don. I think "happy" has become so ambiguous that it needs a lot of caution and description of how we are using it. Pleasure is much more clear, but as a word it too could be taken out of context by the word-splitters.

Maybe what we are looking for is a description of all these things using words that are resistant to splitting 😊

Post by "Kalosyni" of February 6, 2023 at 2:28 PM

If found this on "anticipations" from another thread:

The passage : <<First of all, Herodotus, we must grasp the ideas attached to words ((important note : CONCEPTS ATTACHED TO WORDS)), in order that we may be able to refer to them and so to judge the inferences of opinion or problems of investigation or reflection, so that we may not either leave everything uncertain and go on explaining to infinity or use words devoid of meaning ((important note : we have to be CAREFUL NOT USING WORDS DEVOID OF MEANING)).

Thread

[The Best Simple Term To Use For "Anticipations" \(?\)](#)

Here is an abstract of a discussion held on Facebook in December 2018. We were discussing a question by Nate as to the most "accessible" term to use for preconception / anticipation / prolepsis:

Elli:

1. Let's give the etymology of this greek word that he used. It consists from the preposition "pre" [=πρo] and the verb "receive" [=λαμβάνω]. This means that from the day of our birth and as human beings, we have the ability to pre-receive things and complex concepts (with the usage of the...



Cassius

December 31, 2018 at 10:18 AM

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 6, 2023 at 2:35 PM

So to be more clear perhaps we could say:

By pleasure we mean the feeling that comes when tasting honey or the feeling that comes while drinking water when thirsty.

Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2023 at 2:36 PM

Oh I am sorry Joshua is saying that Dewitt is saying that pleasure is not one of the five senses. True, but.... That is a reference to the concept of pleasure as one of the three legs of the canon, right?

This is where we need to get into the subtleties of pathos perhaps, because we all refer to pleasure as a "feeling" and that is also a word we use to describe many items of data received from the five senses (at the very least "touch").

So pleasure may not be one of the five senses, but as a canonical faculty we are considering it as a direct contact with or means of measuring reality, correct? It is giving us an analysis automatically and without opinion of what we are sensing, right?

So while pleasure is not one of the five senses, it acts like, and we talk about it, in much the same way, and also regularly refer to "a sensation of pleasure", correct?

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 6, 2023 at 2:49 PM

By pleasure: I mean the feeling that comes when tasting honey or the feeling that comes while drinking water when thirsty.

By happy: I mean the feeling that comes with pleasant sensations and pleasant thoughts.

By happiness: I mean the evaluation of the last month as having been filled with many pleasurable moments.

And one could define everything this way?

Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2023 at 3:31 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

By pleasure: I mean the feeling that comes when tasting honey or the feeling that comes while drinking water when thirsty.

Yes, but you also use the term "pleasure" to describe many other feelings besides honey and drinking, and so you use the word both to describe specific concrete individual instances PLUS

the "placeholder term" or "concept" that you use to summarize each and every pleasurable experience under the commonality that "you find them pleasing."

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

By happiness: I mean the evaluation of the last month as having been filled with many pleasurable moments.

You're including here your "evaluation" of last month or last year or your whole life or any time period you wish to include, which means that the meaning you are giving it in a particular usage needs clarification. Same with "pleasure," but when we scrutinize what "pleasure" means we quickly get back to "a good feeling that we all recognize immediately by nature.

In regard to "happiness" when we scrutinize what that means we also associate that word with a good feeling within ourselves. But in the case of "happiness" we also have to take notice that it is a word that people like Plato and Aristotle and the Pope and all sorts of other people define in entirely and grossly incompatible ways.

There's a problem of agreement as to definition in both cases, but:

- in the case of 'happiness' what makes a man happy is loaded up with so many conflicting terms by the stoics and peripatetics and the religions that the term becomes almost infinitely malleable.

- in the case of "pleasure" we have individual disagreements on what we find pleasurable (chocolate vs vanilla) but we're all generally in the same ballpark that we're talking about a gut-level feeling that is desirable to have for obvious reasons.

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2023 at 4:13 PM

Earlier today I was traveling and my posts were a little rushed. I'd like to repeat that as stated in my post 28 above I think that Joshua is right in bringing up this issue of ambiguities in considering pleasures to be sensations, and we really need to talk about that.

I really don't like the term "sensations" or "the senses" as implicitly linked only to seeing hearing tasting touching, and smelling. Those may be the "classical five" or the "primary five" but Epicurus' own texts talk about the brain receiving images directly, and as Don and others have noted we now recognize sense of balance and other bodily functions that make direct contact with the outside world other than the primary 5.

Since we regularly refer to "a sensation of pleasure" or "a pleasurable sensation" then we really need some terminology that more clearly separates (1) the feeling/sense of pain and pleasure that determines whether something is desirable or not from (2) the automatic bodily functions of which there are 5 primary but also some other number, all of which are unified in that they report automatically without injection of opinion or evaluation as to desirability.

The following is speculation but there is the old theory, still very controversial, that women can be synchronized to the moon phases. ([One of many articles on a much-disputed topic. This one cites Aristotle.](#)) I don't think it undercuts Epicurean philosophy at all for us to recognize more than five physical senses, and I personally speculate that someday there will be discoveries that make Epicurus' theory that the brain is affected by "images" seem somewhat less absurd than it does today. The main commonality between however many there are is that nature provides them and they operate without injection of conscious opinion (errors in interpreting them would be in the mind, not in whatever the faculty is).

So there really ought to be a better term than "the senses" to separate those more clearly from "the feelings."

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2023 at 5:04 PM

This is probably repetitive but might be worth repeating:

I don't think Epicurus saw anything wrong with conceptual reasoning whatsoever as long as we recognize that it is humans who are assigning the definitions to words, and that the definitions/meanings are not assigned by "God" or some kind of mystical or semi-mystical "ideal form" or "essence."

As long as we recognize that humans give definitions to words, and we can make mistakes the further we get away from things that are directly observable, then we can keep speculation in line and come up with methods for determining when we think things are true, when we think things are false, and when we need to "wait" or accept multiple possibilities.

That seems to me to be the premise of the whole Epicurean canonics: We have to use conceptual reasoning in order to reach conclusions and not be absolute skeptics. But in doing so, we can't stand by idly while people falsely claim that their definitions of the concepts (especially concepts which are moral conclusions like "the good" or "virtue" or "piety") are blessed by God or by Nature or by Ideal Forms or by Essences or anything else that gives them a mystical quality that we must accept, overriding and overruling our own conclusions that derive from our own senses, anticipations, and feelings.

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2023 at 5:18 PM

For what it's worth, here are some of the original texts we're working with along with links to the LSJ definitions:

X.31. Now in The Canon Epicurus affirms that our (1) sensations and (2) preconceptions and our (3) feelings are the standards of truth (κριτήρια τῆς ἀληθείας - kritēria tēs alētheias)

ἐν τοίνυν τῷ Κανόνι λέγων ἐστὶν ὁ Ἐπίκουρος κριτήρια τῆς ἀληθείας εἶναι τὰς αἰσθήσεις καὶ προλήψεις καὶ τὰ πάθη,

1. τὰς αἰσθήσεις tas aisthēseis (def. article + plural noun)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, αἴσθησις](#)

2. προλήψεις prolepseis (plural noun)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, πρόληψις](#)

3. τὰ πάθη ta pathē (def. article + plural noun)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, πάθος](#)

X.34. They affirm that there are two (δύο) states of feeling, (1) pleasure and (2) pain, which arise in every animate being, and that the one is favourable and the other hostile to that being, and by their means choice and avoidance are determined

Πάθη δὲ λέγουσιν εἶναι δύο, ἡδονὴν καὶ ἀλγηδόνα, ἰστάμενα περὶ πάντων ζῶων

(Literal: And they say feelings are two, pleasure and pain, which arise in all animate beings)

1. ἡδονὴν hēdonēn

2. ἀλγηδόνα algēdona

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἀλγηδών](#)

Note: ζῶων = zōon leads to zoo- as in zoology

Post by “Cassius” of February 7, 2023 at 6:01 AM

I am editing our podcast episode 160 where we stumbled through the beginnings of this issue, and much of it is going to end up on the cutting room floor due to the stumbling. However one observation that Joshua made that ought to be part of this discussion is that even if you consider "relief from pain" to be a pleasure that is not associated directly with one of the five senses (that itself would be a question) it would still probably be proper to consider that relief from pain to be a "stimulus" involving some kind of change or action that would seem at least analogous to a sensation.

We weren't sure whether that observation helps or not, but in this question of whether pleasure (or pain) occurs totally separately from "sensation" it might be helpful to consider "change." Is all change felt as a sensation? I doubt this is by any means an ultimate answer to the question but it might be helpful as part of the analysis.

Post by “Don” of February 7, 2023 at 10:59 AM

Some thoughts...

[Quote from Cassius](#)

if you consider "relief from pain" to be a pleasure that is not associated directly with one of the five senses (that itself would be a question) it would still probably be proper to consider that relief from pain to be a "stimulus" involving some kind of change or action that would seem at least analogous to a sensation.

I'm still not sure whether "freedom from pain" is not just a description of the state of adding pleasure (more pleasure added = less pain overall). However, if we have pain and the pain, physical or mental, is relieved, we have a mental awareness of our previous painful state versus our current state of being relieved of pain. We perceive a relief from pain. And mental perception is a sensation - mental images impacting our mind leading to memory. So the work of the mind is a sensation.

The feelings of pleasure and pain are definitely separate from the sense-perceptions. Intimately linked, but separate.

Post by “Cassius” of February 8, 2023 at 8:53 AM

I think we have hinted at this in the discussion already, but we need to confront it directly:

I think everyone understands that the intent of [PD02](#) is to provide a complete and total immunity defense to fear of pain after death (or hope for reward after death).

If that is accepted, then whatever word(s) are being used by Epicurus to refer to "sense" are intended to be global and sweeping, and not leave open the possibility that we can feel pain or pleasure after those "senses" are gone. Agreed?

[Don](#) or others, any thoughts on how the wording used in [PD02](#) helps us with this question of whether pain and pleasure can be experienced separately and apart from "the senses"?

Principal Doctrine 2

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Ὁ θάνατος οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς· τὸ γὰρ διαλυθὲν ἀναισθητεῖ· τὸ δ' ἀναισθητοῦν οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς. 

→ Death (is) nothing to us → because what has been dissolved feels nothing → while what feels nothing (is) nothing to us

Translation

Death is nothing to us, because a body that has been dispersed into **elements** experiences no **sensations**, and the absence of sensation is nothing to us.

Is it not safe to presume that (just like with "atoms") Epicurus might not be using the same words we would use today (we might use "consciousness" or "experience" or "feeling" (in a general sense)), but that he is intending to include within a broad designation of "feeling" every possible experience of the mind and body? Should we consider that this may in part be the use of the "images," as a theory of how the brain processes thoughts physically so that "touch" is not limited to the outer skin?

Post by “Eikadistes” of February 8, 2023 at 10:26 AM

Here, I think Epicurus is explicitly referring to the technical stimulation of sensory organs (*or, rather, the lack thereof*).

ANAISTHETEI - ΑΝΑΙΣΘΗΤΕΙ - ἀναισθητεῖ - /aːnaɪs.thɛːˈteɪ/ - related to ἀναίσθητος (anaïsthetos, “insensate”, “unfeeling”) from ἀν- (ân-, “without”) + αἰσθητός (aisthetós,

“perceptibility”, “sensibility”) meaning “devoid of sensation”, “unconsciousness”, “no sense-experience”, “absence of sensation”, “lacks awareness”, “no feeling”, “no perception”.

DIALYTHEN - ΔΙΑΛΥΘΕΝ - διαλυθὲν - /di:a.ly:'then/ - from διαλύω (dialūō) from δια- (dia-, “through”) + λυθὲν (luthén), the third-person, plural, aorist, passive indicative inflection of λύω (lúō, adjectival suffix) meaning “loosened”, “released”, “dissolved”, “destroyed”, “dispersed”, “disintegrated”, “broken down into atoms”.

Post by “Cassius” of February 8, 2023 at 11:42 AM

[Quote from Nate](#)

Here, I think Epicurus is explicitly referring to the technical stimulation of sensory organs (or, rather, the lack thereof).

Nate do you agree that he means to include within these words everything that we might consider ourselves to be “conscious” of? Is this an implication that there is nothing going on in our experiences in life that is not brought within this category of the sensory organs?

Because if we can experience pain and pleasure apart from the sensory organs (at least in the way we are talking about it here), then PD2 doesn't give nearly the protection against fear of death as it would otherwise.

I am thinking that however this is interpreted, the end result must be in a way that is consistent with lack of sensation including all consciousness whatsoever. Pleasure absent sensation would imply pain without sensation and if those exist then the whole argument about death being the end of sensation would miss the mark that seems clearly intended for it.

Post by “Eikadistes” of February 8, 2023 at 1:17 PM

I think in Book III *Lucretius*, in an attempt to disprove the idea of an immortal soul, entertains the possibility of a bodiless soul, or a soul that is simply disembodied, but is afforded all other qualities of the soul besides its embodiment and then supposes how such an existence would differ from being literal void (*I might not be remembering Lucretius completely accurate, but the example still hold*). Even in this (impossible) scenario in which a post-mortem soul can cast judgments (i.e. identifying *pleasure* vs. *pain*), it requires some sensible experience upon which

to cast judgment, therefore, without sensation (*even if, somehow, the soul could still "feel" but not sense*) judgment is void.

Post by “Little Rocker” of February 15, 2023 at 2:04 PM

As I understand it, all awareness, whether sensory, awareness of thought, proprioception, etc., depends on the configuration of atomic structure. When that structure breaks apart at death, all awareness goes down with the ship. Our current medical situation, which Epicurus could not have anticipated, has introduced questions about whether continued bodily reflexes in the absence of any capacity for awareness counts as death, but medical consensus on brain death and harvesting organs says it does.

I admittedly haven't done much reading on it, but it wouldn't surprise me if Epicurus thought our capacity to reflect on our thoughts and feelings is semi-perceptual. Aristotle talked about thought in the same terms as perception, for example. That leaves a person with a regress problem, but there are fancy ways to try to evade that (Aristotle's bizarre 'thought thinking itself'). But either way, Epicurus thinks it all depends on an atomic structure that breaks apart at death, so KD2 is on solid footing as far as I'm concerned.