

Epicurus And Pleasure As The Awareness Of Smooth Motion

Post by "Cassius" of May 10, 2023 at 9:18 AM

I have been meaning to post this for a while, but the recent thread on the nature of the gods ([link here](#)) causes me to post this now, but separately, so as not to derail that thread.

It seems to me as we've previously discussed a few times, but not at length, that it is entirely possible (and maybe probable or definite, I just haven't examined the sources on this recently) that Epicurus agreed with the Cyreniac position that pleasure is intimately related to (constitutes?) the concept of "smooth motion."

I think it would be erroneous to think of things in terms of "the first instance in the universe" giving rise to all that came afterward. We have to get used to thinking in terms of the universe having no beginning, and that the same things that are capable of happening now have been happening for an eternity with there never having been a "first of its kind" experience - at least on a fundamental level. (Has there been more than one Epicurus? Maybe not, but surely there have been many "like" Epicurus.)

I am linking smooth motion to the gods and pleasure because it seems we have to think of some kind of atomic processes which have always existed and always will exist which lead to the coming together and eventual dissolution of worlds, animals, and people, etc. But as to the gods, we don't have fix on whether the process that constitutes godhood would have been thought to have a beginning for an individual god (one of innumerable gods) or whether their atomic structure has been together eternally and either stays together eternally as a necessity, or whether the individual gods find a way to regenerate and keep their atomic flows together (an issue Nate has been talking about).

But just for purposes of putting a lot of things on the table to try to integrate them, I think it is worth entertaining that:

- 1 - "Smooth motion" is a fundamental concept that the Epicureans and Cyreniacs and probably others associated with pleasure;
- 2 - The smooth movement of atoms in a particular area of space is probably related to the other emergent qualities of life;
- 3 - To the extent that Pleasure is a phenomena that spurs on other activity to perpetuate itself, pleasure and smooth motion are intimately related in Epicurean physics;

4 - That Epicurus' view of pleasure as constituting the healthy functioning of an organism in its natural ways, without roughness or disturbance or things that hinder its "smooth" functioning, is informed by this linkage of smooth motion to pleasure.

5 - That as we develop a better of understanding of Epicurus' train of thought as to pleasure and the conclusions that flow from it, we would do well to think in terms of analogies to "smooth motion."

6 - That as to the gods and their nature, they also are elaborate functions that result from "smooth motion," but in their case the motion remains smooth either by some physical necessity, or because they have mastered the art of regenerating and keeping the motions smooth themselves.

7 - That also in relation to the gods there is a multi-track approach going on: A - From a physics perspective, you add together (1) eternal universe, (2) boundless universe, (3) isonomia, and (4) the principle that nature never creates only a single thing of a kind, and you pretty clearly have a deduction that the universe is filled with many beings who have perfected smooth motion and sustain it perpetually. But you also have track B - It makes sense to extrapolate from our own experience what factors in live make it the most pleasant, so we extrapolate from our own experience things like language and breathing and talking with friends, and we attribute those experiences in a similar but "perfected" way to he gods.

What I am saying in point 7 is that the speculation about the gods is both physics based and logic-based but the Epicureans did not see any conflict in those approaches, but viewed them as complementary, at least to some extent because ultimately the Epicureans viewed pleasure as an emergent quality of "smooth motion" no matter what the level of complexity involved.

Edit: Is it in fact "smooth motion" or "smooth atoms" or some combination?

Post by “Cassius” of May 10, 2023 at 9:36 AM

Text references to smooth motion or smoothness:

Diogenes Laertius [Book II Aristippus](#)

"He laid down as the end the smooth motion resulting in sensation."

Lucretius Book Two (Bailey):

[398] There is this too that the liquids of honey and milk give a pleasant sensation of the tongue, when rolled in the mouth; but on the other hand, the loathsome nature of wormwood

and biting centaury set the mouth awry by their noisome taste; so that you may easily know that those things which can touch the senses pleasantly are made of smooth and round bodies, but that on the other hand all things which seem to be bitter and harsh, these are held bound together with particles more hooked, and for this cause are wont to tear a way into our senses, and at their entering in to break through the body.

[408] Lastly, all things good or bad to the senses in their touch fight thus with one another, because they are built up of bodies of different shape; lest by chance you may think that the harsh shuddering sound of the squeaking saw is made of particles as smooth as are the melodies of music which players awake, shaping the notes as their fingers move nimbly over the strings; nor again, must you think that first-beginnings of like shape pierce into men's nostrils, when noisome carcasses are roasting, and when the stage is freshly sprinkled with Cilician saffron, and the altar hard by is breathing the scent of Arabian incense; nor must you suppose that the pleasant colours of things, which can feed our eyes, are made of seeds like those which prick the pupil and constrain us to tears, or look dreadful and loathly in their hideous aspect.

For every shape, which ever charms the senses, has not been brought to being without some smoothness in the first-beginnings; but, on the other hand, every shape which is harsh and offensive has not been formed without some roughness of substance. Other particles there are, moreover, which cannot rightly be thought to be smooth nor altogether hooked with bent points, but rather with tiny angles standing out a little, insomuch that they can tickle the senses rather than hurt them; and of this kind is lees of wine and the taste of endive. Or again, that hot fires and cold frost have particles fanged in different ways to prick the senses of the body, is proved to us by the touch of each.

For touch, yea touch, by the holy powers of the gods, is the sense of the body, either when something from without finds its way in, or when a thing which is born in the body hurts us, or gives pleasure as it passes out, or else when the seeds after collision jostle within the body itself and, roused one by another, disturb our sense: as if by chance you should with your hand strike any part of your own body and so make trial. Therefore the first-beginnings must needs have forms far different, which can produce such diverse feelings.

[444] Or, again, things which seem to us hard and compact, these, it must needs be, are made of particles more hooked one to another, and are held together close-fastened at their roots, as it were by branching particles. First of all in this class diamond stones stand in the forefront of the fight, well used to despise all blows, and stubborn flints and the strength of hard iron, and brass sockets, which scream aloud as they struggle against the bolts. Those things indeed must be made of particles more round and smooth, which are liquid with a fluid body: for indeed a handful of poppy-seed moves easily just as a draught of water; for the several round particles are not checked one by the other, and when struck, it will roll downhill just like water.

Lastly, all things which you perceive flying asunder, like smoke, clouds and flames, it must needs be that even if they are not made entirely of smooth and round particles, yet they are not hampered by particles closely linked, so that they can prick the body, and pass into rocks, and yet not cling one to another: so that you can easily learn that, whatever we see [borne asunder by the tearing winds and] meeting our senses [as poison], are of elements not closely linked but pointed.

But because you see that some things which are fluid, are also bitter, as is the brine of the sea, count it no wonder. For because it is fluid, it is of smooth and round particles, and many rugged bodies mingled in it give birth to pain; and yet it must needs be that they are not, hooked and held together: you must know that they are nevertheless spherical, though rugged, so that they can roll on together and hurt the senses. And that you may the more think that rough are mingled with smooth first-beginnings, from which is made the bitter body of the sea-god, there is a way of sundering them and seeing how, apart from the rest, the fresh water, when it trickles many a time through the earth, flows into a trench and loses its harshness; for it leaves behind up above the first-beginnings of its sickly saltness, since the rough particles can more readily stick in the earth.

Lucretius Book Three (Bailey)

[177] Now of what kind of body this mind is, and of what parts it is formed, I will go on to give account to you in my discourse. First of all I say that it is very fine in texture, and is made and formed of very tiny particles. That this is so, if you give attention, you may be able to learn from this. Nothing is seen to come to pass so swiftly as what the mind pictures to itself coming to pass and starts to do itself. Therefore the mind bestirs itself more quickly than any of the things whose nature is manifest for all to see. But because it is so very nimble, it is bound to be formed of exceeding round and exceeding tiny seeds, so that its particles may be able to move when smitten by a little impulse. For so water moves and oscillates at the slightest impulse, seeing it is formed of little particles, quick to roll.

But, on the other hand, the nature of honey is more stable, its fluid more sluggish, and its movement more hesitating; for the whole mass of its matter clings more together, because, we may be sure, it is not formed of bodies so smooth, nor so fine and round. For a light trembling breath can constrain a high heap of poppy-seed to scatter from top to bottom before your eyes: but, on the other hand, a pile of stones or corn-ears it can by no means separate. Therefore, in proportion as bodies are tinier and smoother, so they are gifted with nimbleness. But, on the other hand, all things that are found to be of greater weight or more spiky, the more firm set they are. Now, therefore, since the nature of the mind has been found nimble beyond the rest, it must needs be formed of bodies exceeding small and smooth and round. And this truth, when known to you, will in many things, good friend, prove useful, and will be reckoned of service.

Lucretius Book Four (Bailey)

[542] Now roughness of voice comes from roughness in its first-beginnings, and likewise smoothness is begotten of their smoothness. Nor do the first-beginnings pierce the ears with like form, when the trumpet bellows deep with muffled tones, and when the barbarous Bercyntian pipe shrieks with shrill buzzing sound, and when the swans at night from the cold marches of Helicon lift with mournful voice their clear lament.

...

[617] First of all we perceive taste in our mouth, when we press it out in chewing our food, just as if one by chance begins to squeeze with the hand and dry a sponge full of water. Then what we press out is all spread abroad through the pores of the palate, and through the winding passages of the loose-meshed tongue. Therefore, when the bodies of the oozing savour are smooth, they touch pleasantly, and pleasantly stroke all around the moist sweating vault above the tongue. But, on the other hand, the more each several thing is filled with roughness, the more does it prick the sense and tear it in its onslaught.

[627] Next pleasure comes from the savour within the limit of the palate; but when it has passed headlong down through the jaws, there is no pleasure while it is all being spread abroad into the limbs. Nor does it matter a whit with what diet the body is nourished, provided only you can digest what you take, and spread it abroad in the limbs, and keep an even moistness in the stomach.

[633] Now how for different creatures there is different food and poison I will unfold, or for what cause, what to some is noisome and bitter, can yet seem to others most sweet to eat. And there is herein a difference and disagreement so great that what is food to one, is to others biting poison; even as there is a certain serpent, which, when touched by a man's spittle, dies and puts an end to itself by gnawing its own body. Moreover, to us hellebore is biting poison, but it makes goats and quails grow fat.

[642] That you may be able to learn by what means this comes to be, first of all it is right that you remember what we have said ere now, that the seeds contained in things are mingled in many ways. Besides all living creatures which take food, just as they are unlike to outer view and a diverse outward contour of the limbs encloses them each after their kind, so also are they fashioned of seeds of varying shape. And further, since the seeds are unlike, so must the spaces and passages, which we call the openings, be different in all their limbs, and in the mouth and palate too. Some of these then must needs be smaller, some greater, they must be three-cornered for some creatures, square for others, many again round, and some of many angles in many ways. For according as the arrangement of shapes and the motions demand, so the shapes of the openings must needs differ, and the passages vary according to the texture which shuts them in. Therefore, when what is sweet to some becomes bitter to others, for the man to whom it is sweet, the smoothest bodies must needs enter the pores of the palate caressingly, but, on the other hand, for those to whom the same thing is sour within, we can be

sure it is the rough and hooked bodies which penetrate the passages.

[663] Now from these facts it is easy to learn of each case: thus when fever has attacked a man, and his bile rises high, or the violence of disease is aroused in some other way, then his whole body is disordered, and then all the positions of the first-beginnings are changed about; it comes to pass that the bodies which before suited his taste, suit it no longer, and others are better fitted, which can win their way in and beget a sour taste. For both kinds are mingled in the savour of honey; as I have often shown you above ere now.

Lucretius Book Five (Bailey)

[1379] But imitating with the mouth the liquid notes of birds came long before men were able to sing in melody right through smooth songs and please the ear. And the whistling of the zephyr through the hollows of reeds first taught the men of the countryside to breathe into hollowed hemlock-stalks. Then little by little they learned the sweet lament, which the pipe pours forth, stopped by the players' fingers, the pipe invented amid the pathless woods and forests and glades, among the desolate haunts of shepherds, and the divine places of their rest.

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2024 at 4:55 AM

I see that I am just short of a year since the time this subject last came to mind. Before I remembered that this thread existed, this time I collected the references to smoothness from the Daniel Browne edition (below).

This time "smooth motion" comes to mind in the context of how Torquatus conveys that no proposition can be more true than that pleasure equals the absence of pain, bringing within the term "pleasure" both (1) the agreeable experiences that are the result of stimulation and (2) those which are not the result of stimulation but of the normal healthy function of the organism.

Might it not be possible or even likely that the common denominator between these two types of experiences would be the "smooth motion" of those two categories? When "stimulated," pleasurable / agreeable feelings are those stimulations that prompt the intensification ("condensation?") of the existing smooth motion of the living thing. When not "stimulated," the normal pleasurable / non-painful condition of life consists in the normal healthy smooth-motion functioning of that living being. Pain is the opposite - pain is rough motion - disruption in smooth motion at any speed.

Ralph Nader had a well known book "Unsafe At Any Speed." Altering that title a little, pleasure is smooth motion at any speed, and pain is rough motion at any speed. Total absence of speed is death.

There seem to be plenty of citations within Lucretius to indicate that Epicurus tied pleasure to smooth motion. These would be useful in supporting an argument that generally speaking pleasure is (or arises from our awareness of) smooth motion. From that perspective it is equally proper to consider the regular smooth motion of the "un-stimulated" person to be pleasure just like it is pleasure when "stimulation" produces irregular and intensified but still smooth motion.

Smoothness and Pleasure

Lucretius Book 2 - Daniel Browne

[398] Thus it is that honey and milk pass in the mouth with a pleasing sensation over the tongue; on the contrary, the bitter juice of wormwood and sharp Centaury torment the palate with a loathsome taste. From whence you collect easily that those things which agreeably affect the sense are composed of particles smooth and round; and such again that seem rough and bitter are bound together by parts more hooked, and closer twined; and therefore they tear the way to our senses, and wound the body as they enter through the skin.

[408] In short, such things as are agreeable to our senses, and those that are rough and unpleasant to the touch, are opposite, and formed of a figure very different from one another; lest you should think perhaps that the grating sound of the whetting of a saw was made of parts equally smooth, without the soft notes of a lute, which the musician forms upon the strings, awaked, as it were, by the gentle strokes of his fingers.

Nor are you to suppose that the seeds are of the same form which strike upon our nerves of smell, when a filthy carcass is burning, or when the stage is fresh sprinkled with Cilician saffron, or the altar sweetens the air with the odor of Arabian incense.

And so in colors you must not imagine such as are agreeable and delight our eyes are composed of the same fashioned seeds with those which prick our sense, and force us to weep, or seem dark or ugly, and shocking in appearance to us; for whatever pleases and delights our senses cannot be composed but of smooth particles; and, on the contrary, things that are hurtful and harsh cannot be formed without seeds that are filthy and disagreeable.

There are other seeds, likewise, which you cannot properly call smooth, nor are altogether hooked, with their points bent, but are rather shaped with small ankles, a little jutting out, and may be said rather to tickle than to hurt the senses; such as the acid taste of the sweet sauce made of the Lees of wine, or the sweet sauce made of the sweetish-bitter root of Elecampane. Lastly, that burning heat, or freezing cold, being formed of seeds of different figures, do affect the body with different sensation our touch is evidence sufficient to evince.

For Touch, the Touch (blessed be the Gods above!) is a Sense of the Body, either when something from without enters through the pores, or something from within hurts us, as it forces its way out, or pleases, as the effect of venery tickles as it passes through, or when the seeds, by striking against each other, raise a tumult in the body, and in that agitation confound

the Sense; and this you may soon experience, if you strike yourself in any part with a blow of your hand. It is necessary, therefore, that the Principles of Things should consist of figures very different in themselves, since they affect the Senses in so different a manner.

[444] Further, those things which appear to us hard and thick, must necessarily be joined together by particles more hooked among themselves, and be held close by branched seeds. In the first rank of these, you are to place the rocks of Adamant, that defy the force of blows, and solid flints, and the strength of hard iron, and brazen hinges, that creak under the weight of their gates.

But Liquids that consist of fluid bodies, must be formed of seeds more smooth and round; for their globular particles are not entangled among themselves, and their flowing motion rolls on forward with the greater Ease.

But lastly, all such Things which you observe instantly to scatter, and fly away as smoke, clouds, and flame, if they do not consist altogether of particles that are smooth and round, yet neither are they formed of hooked Seeds, and therefore may pierce through bodies, and penetrate into stones; nor do their particles nevertheless stick mutually to one another, as we observe the particles of thorns do. From thence you may easily conclude that they are not composed of hooked or entangled, but of acute Principles.

But because you see the same things are bitter and fluid, as the Sea-water, are you to wonder in the least at this; For what is fluid is formed of Principles that are smooth and round, but with these smooth and round seeds are mixed others that are sharp, and give pain. Yet there is no necessity that these sharp seeds should be hooked and twined together; it is sufficient that they be globous as well as rough, that they may be qualified to flow along in their proper Course, as well as to hurt the sense. And that you may the sooner believe that these sharp seeds are mixed with those that are smooth, from whence the body of the sea becomes salt, the way is to separate them, and consider them distinct; for the Sea-water grows sweet by being often filtered through the Earth, and so fills the ditches, where it becomes soft; for it leaves behind the pungent seeds of the rough salt, which are more inclined to stick as they pass along, than those particles that are globular and smooth.

Book 3 - Smoothness of Mind

[177] I shall now go on to explain clearly of what sort of body this mind consists, and of what principles it is formed. And first I say that the mind is composed of very subtle and minute seeds; that it is so, attend closely, and you will find that nothing is accomplished with so much speed as what the mind attempts, and proposes to execute. The Mind therefore is swifter in its motion than anything in nature we can see or conceive. But that which is so exceedingly quick to move must consist of the roundest and most minute seeds, that may be set a-going by the lightest impulse. So water is moved and disposed to flow by ever so little force, because it is composed of small and slippery seeds; but the nature of Honey is more tenacious, its moisture

is more unactive, and its motion slower; its principles stick closer among themselves; and for this reason, because it consists of seeds not so smooth, so subtle, and so round. And thus a large heap of poppy seeds is blown away by the gentlest breath of wind, and scattered abroad; but no blast can shake a heap of stones or darts. Therefore the smoother and smaller the principles of bodies are, the more easily they are disposed to motion, and the heavier and rougher the seeds are, the more fixed and stable they remain.

Since therefore the nature of the mind is so exceedingly apt to move, it must needs consist of small, smooth, and round seeds; and your knowing this, my sweet youth, will be found of great use, and very seasonable for your future inquiries. ...

[231] Yet we are not to suppose this nature of the mind to be simple and unmixed; for a thin breath mingled with a warm vapor, forsakes the bodies of dying men; and this vapor draws the air along with it, for there can be no heat without air intermixed, and heat being in its nature rare, must needs have some seeds of air united with it. We find then the mind consists of three principles: of vapor, air, and heat; yet all these are not sufficient to produce sense: For we cannot conceive that either of these, or all of them united, can be the cause of sensible motions that may produce reason and thought.

And therefore a fourth nature must needs be added to these (and this indeed has no name at all) but nothing can be more apt to move, nothing more subtle than this, nor consist more of small smooth seeds; and this is what first raises a sensible motion through the body: this, as it is formed of the minutest particles, is first put into motion, then the heat, and the unseen vapor receive a motion from it, and then we are and so all the limbs are set a-going; then is the blood agitated, and all the bowels become sensible, and last of all, pleasure or pain is communicated to the bones and marrow. But no pain or any violent evil can pierce so far without disordering and setting the whole into confusion, so that there is no more place for life, and the parts of the soul fly away through the pores of the body. But this motion often stops upon the surface of the body, and then the soul remains whole, and the life is preserved.

Book 4

Inspired, I wander over the Muses seats, of difficult access, and yet untrod; I love to approach the purest springs, and thence to draw large draughts; I love to crop fresh flowers and make a noble garland for my head from thence, where yet the Muses never bound another's temples with a crown like mine. And first I write of lofty things, and strive to free the mind from the severest bonds of what men call religion; then my verse I frame so clear, although my theme by dark; seasoning my lines with the poetic sweets of fancy, and reason justifies the method; for as physicians when they would prevail on children to take down a bitter draught of wormwood, first tinge the edges of the cup with sweet and yellow honey, that so the children's unsuspecting age, at least their lips, may be deceived, and take the bitter juice; thus harmlessly betrayed, but not abused, by tasting thus they rather have their health restored: So I, because this system seems severe and harsh to such who have not yet discerned its truth,

and the common herd are utterly averse to this philosophy, I thought it fit to show these rigid principles in verse, smooth and alluring, and tinge them, as it were, with sweet poetic honey, thus to charm your mind with my soft numbers till you view the nature of all things clearly, and perceive the usefulness and order they display.

...

And now, in what manner each of the other senses distinguishes its proper object is a subject of no great difficulty to explain. And first, sound and all voices are heard when they enter the ears, and strike with their bodies upon the sense; for we must allow that sound and voice are bodies, because they have power to make impression upon the sense; for the voice often scrapes the jaws, and the noise makes the windpipe rough as it passes through. When the seeds of words begin to hurry in a crowd through the narrow nerves, and to rush abroad, those vessels being full, the throat is raked and made hoarse, and the voice wounds the passage through which it goes into the air. There is no question then but voice and words consist of corporeal principles, because they affect and hurt the sense. You are likewise to observe how much a continual speaking, from morning to night, takes off from the body; how much it wears away from the very nerves and strength of the speaker, especially if it be delivered in the highest stretch of the voice. Of necessity therefore voice must be a body, because the speaker loses many parts from himself. The roughness then of the voice depends upon the roughness of the seeds, as the smoothness is produced from smooth seeds; nor are the seeds from the same figure that strike the ears when the trumpet sounds with grave and murmuring blasts, as when the sackbut rings with its hoarse noise, or swans in the cold vales of Helicon sing out with mournful notes their sweet complaint.

....

Nor is the account of the tongue and palate, by which we taste, a subject of greater nicety or more difficult to explain. And first, we perceive a taste in the mouth when we squeeze the juice from our food by chewing, as if we were to press a sponge full of water in our hands to make it dry; then the juice we draw out is spread over the pores of the palate, and through the crooked passages of the spongy tongue. When the seeds of this flowing juice are smooth, they gently touch, and affect all the moist and sweating surface of the tongue with sweet delight; but the seeds, the more rough and sharp they are, the more they stimulate and tear the sense. And then the pleasure of taste we feel no further than the palate; when the food is driven down through the jaws and divided among the limbs, the pleasure is gone; nor is it of any concern with what meat our bodies are nourished, if you can but digest what you eat, and separate it among the members, and preserve the moist tenor of the stomach.

I shall now account why, as we find, different sorts of food are agreeable to different palates; or why, what is sour and bitter to some seems to others exceeding sweet. In these cases the variety and difference are so great that what is food to one will prove sharp poison to another;

and it happens that a serpent touched with the spittle of a man expires and bites himself to death.

Besides, to us Hellebore is strong poison, but goats it fattens, and is nourishment to quails; and to understand by what means this comes to pass, you must recollect what we observed before, that seeds of different kinds are mingled in the composition of all bodies.

And then all animals supported by food, as they differ in outward shape, and after their several kinds have a different form of body and limbs, so they consist of seeds of different figures, and since their seeds differ, the pores and passages which (as we said) were in all the parts, and in the mouth and palate itself, must differ likewise; some must be less, some greater, some with three, some with four squares; many round, and some with many corners in various manners: For as the frame of the seeds and their motions require, the pores must differ in their figure. The difference of the pores depends upon the texture of the seeds, and therefore what is sweet to one is bitter to another: It is sweet because the smoothest seeds gently enter into the pores of the palate; but the same food is bitter to another because the sharp and hooked particles pierce the jaws and wound the sense.

Book Six

[80] That the rules therefore of right reason may keep these evils at the greatest distance from us, though I have offered many things upon this subject before, yet much still remains to be observed, which I shall adorn with the smoothest verse.

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2024 at 5:34 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Total absence of speed is death.

I'd suggest "Total absence of *motion* is death."

Plus, those Lucretian citations seem to be discussing the smoothness or roughness of the atoms/seeds/particles themselves. Smooth atoms lead to easier, unimpeded motion. Pain seems to be caused, per Lucretius, by jagged, rough atoms tearing and ripping as they move.

Sensation is motion. The cessation of motion is death.

Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2024 at 7:08 AM

Or maybe better said is that death is total absence of *awareness* of motion.

Sensation would not be Motion alone, because Motion never stops regardless, but our awareness of motion can and does stop at death.

The connection between awareness of smooth motion and pleasure seems clear from the passages. Smooth particles will move more smoothly and lead to awareness of smoother motions due to their shapes while rough atoms the opposite.

Of course we are presumably talking about small bodies here rather than atoms directly.

But the bottom line is that awareness of smooth interactions through motion are what is being felt. The analogy of pleasure as including both stimulative and nonstimulative experiences would be that smooth motions are going on in the healthy living body whether the body is being stimulated in some way or whether the body is simply functioning in its regular healthy way.

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2024 at 7:36 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Of course we are presumably talking about small bodies here rather than atoms directly.

It seems to me those "small bodies" are exactly atoms.

I think I see where you're going with the rest of that response. Let me think about it and get back to you.

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2024 at 8:24 AM

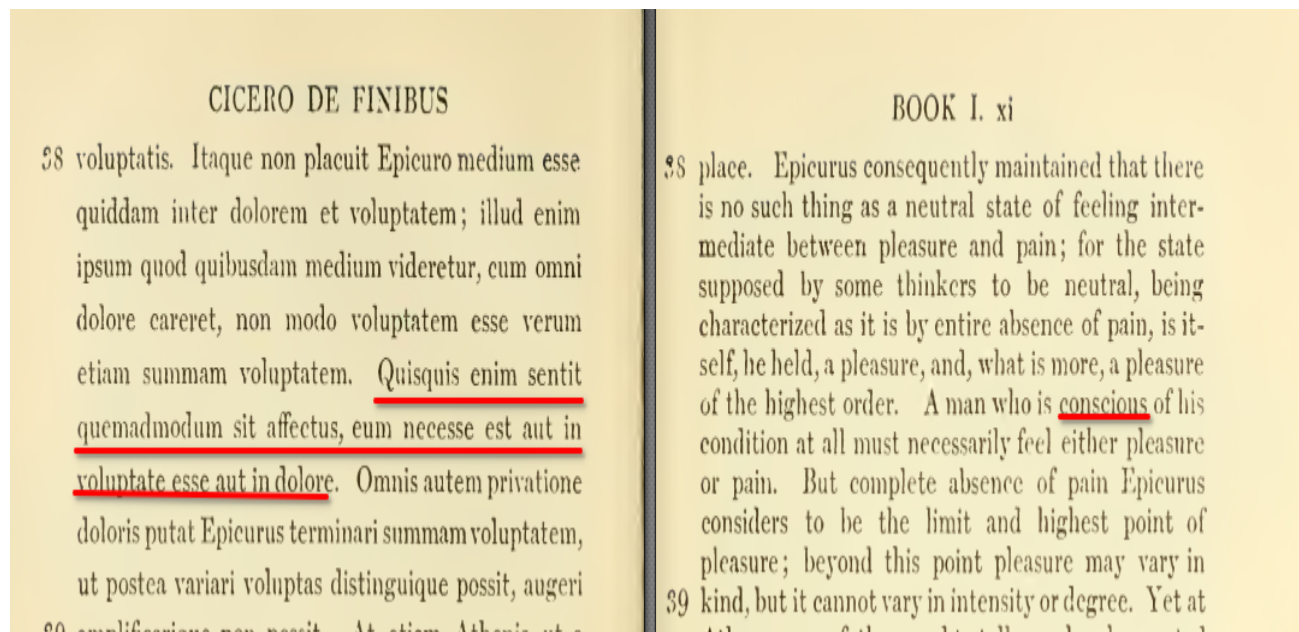
[Quote from Cassius](#)

death is total absence of *awareness* of motion.

This got me thinking: According to Epicurean philosophy then, what IS awareness? If death is the cessation of sensation, what IS sensation?

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2024 at 8:51 AM

I will look for others, but here's one citation to being "conscious" according to Rackham, but this may be an overlay of the translator:



Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2024 at 8:53 AM

Similar discussion of awareness / experience in the context of pleasure:

vacuitas doloris et voluptas idem esse videatur. Hoc est vim afferre, Torquate, sensibus, extorquere ex animis cognitiones verborum quibus imbuti sumus. Quis est enim qui non videat haec esse in naturarum tria? unum cum in voluptate sumus, alterum cum in dolore, tertium hoc in quo nunc equidem sum, credo item vos, nec in dolore nec in voluptate; ut in voluptate sit qui epuletur, in dolore qui torqueatur: tu autem inter haec tantam multitudinem hominum interiectam non vides nec laetantium
17 nec dolentium?" "Non prorsus," inquit, "omnesque qui sine dolore sint in voluptate, et ea quidem summa, esse dico." "Ergo in eadem voluptate eum qui

from pain is the same thing as pleasure. This, Torquatus, is to do violence to the senses—this uprooting from our minds our knowledge of the meaning of words ingrained. Who is not aware that the world of experience contains these three states of feeling: first, the enjoyment of pleasure; second, the sensation of pain; and third, which is my own condition and doubtless also yours at the present moment, the absence of both pleasure and pain? Pleasure is the feeling of a man eating a good dinner, pain that of one being broken on the rack; but do you really not see that intermediate between those two extremes lies a vast multitude of persons who are feeling neither gratification nor pain?" "I certainly do not," said he; "I maintain that all who are without pain are enjoying pleasure, and what is more the highest form of pleasure." "Then you think that a man

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2024 at 8:58 AM

Maybe all these variations of "awareness" or "consciousness" are just coming from "sensation".... which would imply that they were thinking of sensation and awareness as exactly the same thing and would not accept a construction of something like a mind being aware only of itself or its thoughts - and therefore that awareness = sensation in every respect (?), and the word we use as "awareness" means nothing other than "sensation" to them. This issue seems to lurk behind a lot of issues that are regularly discussed, and would be why it is plain to Epicurus that death is total absence of sensation.

desideratum. Quare cum non desideret quod
quod dolore caret id in voluptate est.

40 XII. "Extremum autem esse bonorum voluptatem
ex hoc facillime perspicitur: Constituamus aliquem
magnis, multis, perpetuis fruentem et animo
et corpore voluptatibus, nullo dolore nec impedi-
ente nec impendente; quem tandem hoc statu praestabili-
orem aut magis expetendum possimus dicere? In-
esse 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
41 celeritas, diuturnitatem allevatio consoletur. Ad ea
cum accedit ut neque divinum numen horreat nec
praeteritas voluptates effluere patiatur earumque
assidua recordatione laetetur, quid est quod huc
possit, quo melius sit,¹ accedere? Statue contra ali-
quem 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? Quod si vita doloribus

a good, his hand would have wanted it. And the
reason why it would not have wanted pleasure is,
that to be without pain is to be in a state of pleasure.

40 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 un-
consciousness, and that pain is generally light if long
and short if strong, so that its intensity is compen-
sated by brief duration and its continuance by
41 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 recollec-
tion,—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

Pleasure pro-
the Chief Go-
by extreme
cases of happi-
ness and mis-

animi voluptates esse e corporis societate. Corporis
autem voluptas si etiam praeterita delectat, non
intellego cur Aristoteles Sardanapalli epigramma
tanto opere derideat, in quo ille rex Syriae gloriatur
se omnes secum abstulisse libidinum voluptates. Quod
enim ne vivus quidem, inquit, diutius sentire poterat
quam dum fruebatur, quomodo id mortuo potuit per-
manere? Fluit igitur voluptas corporis et prima
quaeque avolat, saepiusque relinquit causam paeni-
tendi quam recordandi. Itaque beator Africanus
cum patria illo modo loquens:

Desine, Roma, tuos hostes—
reliquaque praeclare:

Nam tibi moenimenta mei nenerere labores.

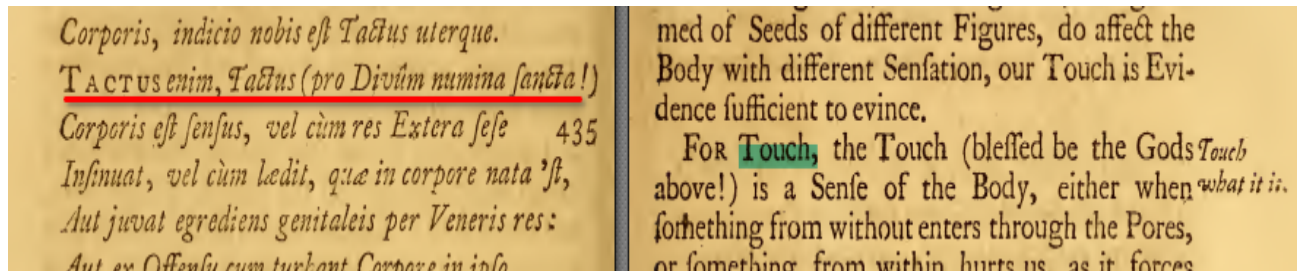
ceases to be true that mental pleasures arise
from the connection of the mind with the body.
Yet if bodily pleasure even when past can give
delight, I do not see why Aristotle^a should be so
contemptuous of the epitaph of Sardanapalus. The
famous Syrian monarch boasts that he has taken
with him all the sensual pleasures that he has
enjoyed. How, asks Aristotle, could a dead man
continue to experience a feeling which even while
alive he could only be conscious of so long as he was
actually enjoying it? So that bodily pleasures are
transient; each in turn evaporates, leaving cause for
regrets more often than for recollection. Accordingly
Africanus must be counted happier than Sardanapa-
lus, when he addresses his country with the words:

Cease, Rome, thy foes—

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2024 at 9:30 AM

It's always seemed to imply something significant that "touch" would be singled out to be exclaimed with "blessed be the gods above!" (around line 444 of Lucretius Book 2)

For Touch, the Touch (blessed be the Gods above!) is a Sense of the Body, either when something from without enters through the pores, or something from within hurts us, as it forces its way out, or pleases, as the effect of venery tickles as it passes through, or when the seeds, by striking against each other, raise a tumult in the body, and in that agitation confound the Sense; and this you may soon experience, if you strike yourself in any part with a blow of your hand. It is necessary, therefore, that the Principles of Things should consist of figures very different in themselves, since they affect the Senses in so different a manner.



[Don](#) that "pro Divinum numina sancta!" looks like a candidate to consider supplementing your "By Zeus!" 😊

Maybe better "For the Gods above are blessed!" ? or something else rather than "blessed be...."

Martin Ferguson Smith -- "For the holy gods are my witnesses that touch, yes touch, is the sense of the body....."

Also [Bryan](#) given your Latin what do you think of that sentence?

Rouse Loeb edition:

faecula iam quo de genere est inulaeque sapor. 430
denique iam calidos ignis gelidamque pruinam
dissimili dentata modo pungere sensus
corporis, indicio nobis est tactus uterque.
tactus enim, tactus, pro divum numina sancta,
corporis est sensus, vel cum res extra sese 435
insinuat, vel cum laedit quae in corpore natat
aut iuvat egrediens genitalis per Veneris res,
aut ex offensu cum turbant corpore in ipso
semina confunduntque inter se concita sensum :

so that they can rather tickle our senses than hurt
them ; of which kind we have now tartar of wine
and the flavour of elecampane. Again, here are hot
fire and cold frost toothed in different fashion to
prick our bodily senses, as the touch in either case
proves to us. For touch, so help me the holy power for touch is
of God, it is touch that is the bodily sense, whether sensation.
when a thing penetrates from without, or when hurt
comes from something within the body, or when it
gives pleasure in issuing forth by the creative acts

pro divum numina sanctum

divus, diva -um, -, divissimus -a -um divine; blessed, saint

numen, numinis N divine will, divinity; god

sancio, sancire, sanxi, sanctus confirm, ratify; sanction; fulfill; enact; ordain; dedicate

Post by “Don” of February 6, 2024 at 10:52 AM

Sensation, it appears, is literally touch: atoms touching the human body. That seems to serve for sensation, thought, memory, etc.

Is that what you're getting?

Post by “Bryan” of February 6, 2024 at 11:58 AM

(**Numen** is a difficult word, but we have basically):

"Indeed contact, by the unbreakable **majesty** if the gods, *contact* is the sensation of the body!"

Each of the senses of our body takes different data from direct contact with other matter. All senses perceive shape and magnitude, but in different ways.

(P.Herc. 19 col. 25a, Justin Barney trans.) So that, according to the analogy itself shape and magnitude are objects of discrimination common to these senses: the ratio which the shape and magnitude of color have with regard to color, those of body have the same ratio with regard to body.

(P.Herc. 19 col. 24a , Justin Barney trans.) we say that touch is able to distinguish both flavor and odor, because it happens that the things that produce them help to effect the unity of outline.

Now there is also "the sense of touch." With this meaning, of course it is restricted to its own domain (eg, "touching something" does not allow you to sense color or specific sounds).

(P.Herc. 19 col. 21a, Justin Barney trans.) ...[the sense organ] takes up the outline and often not the thing itself. If then visible shape is nothing other than the outermost position of colors, and visible magnitude is nothing other than the ordered position of several colors, how is it possible that touch, which is incapable of apprehending colors themselves, is able to comprehend the outermost position of colors?

Post by “Cassius” of February 6, 2024 at 12:24 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Sensation, it appears, is literally touch: atoms touching the human body. That seems to serve for sensation, thought, memory, etc.

Is that what you're getting?

Yes I am looking for further ways to explain how they would have seen the term "pleasure" to cover everything that is not painful. If you view every sensation involving awareness of smoothness as sort of an ultimate-level explanation, the "touch" that is involved in all sensation might have been seen as the mechanism. Maybe this was a way they might have explained the nature of pleasure as a touch sensation regardless of whether the touching that is involved comes through stimulation or through regular functioning.

Post by “Cassius” of December 31, 2025 at 7:04 AM

Additional citation relevant to smoothness / smooth motion:

From Tusculan Disputations at [Part 5 section XXVI](#)

Quote

A. What, when in torments and on the rack?

M. Do you imagine I am speaking of him as laid on roses and violets? Is it allowable even for Epicurus (who only puts on the appearance of being a philosopher, and who himself assumed that name for himself,) to say, (though as matters stand, I commend him for his saying,) that a wise man might at all times cry out, though he be burned, tortured, cut to pieces, "How little I regard it!" Shall this be said by one who defines all evil as pain, and measures every good by pleasure; who could ridicule whatever we call either honourable or base, and could declare of us that we were employed about words, and uttering mere empty sounds; and that nothing is to be regarded by us, but as it is perceived to be smooth or rough by the body?