

Episode 299 - TD27 - Was Epicurus Right That There Are Only Two Feelings - Pleasure And Pain?

Post by "Cassius" of September 13, 2025 at 10:25 AM

Welcome to Episode 299 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where we discuss this and all of our podcast episodes.

This week we return to our series covering Cicero's "Tusculan Disputations" from an Epicurean viewpoint, and today we will be following up on last week's discussion as we continue in [Section XX](#), where Cicero hammers against the inconsistencies he sees in holding "absence of pain" to be pleasure.

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/67780005/media>

Post by "Cassius" of September 15, 2025 at 6:22 PM

As i am editing I can point out that this week we focus on the second of three challenges Cicero raised in Section XX of part 3 of Tusculan disputations. - that Epicurus is wrong that there are only two feelings, pleasure and pain.

This challenge is common to both Cicero and Plutarch, and it's important for us to think about all possible responses because a lot rides on it.

We phrased the question in terms of "What was Epicurus's justification for dividing feeling into only two categories- pleasure and pain? Why not three, or thirty, or three hundred, giving names to many more types or categories of experiences? Where do we find the basis for this classification?"

Here's on of the places Cicero states his complaint, in section III-XX.[¶](#)

Quote

It may be said, What! do you imagine Epicurus really meant this, and that he maintained anything so sensual? Indeed I do not imagine so, for I am sensible that he has uttered many excellent things and sentiments, and delivered maxims of great weight. Therefore, as I said before, I am speaking of his acuteness, not of his morals. Though he should hold those pleasures in contempt, which he just now commended, yet I must remember wherein he places the chief good. For he was not contented with barely saying this, but he has explained what he meant: he says, that taste, and embraces, and sports, and music, and those forms which affect the eyes with pleasure, are the chief good. Have I invented this? have I misrepresented him? I should be glad to be confuted; for what am I endeavouring at, but to clear up truth in every question? Well, but the same man says, that pleasure is at its height where pain ceases, and that to be free from all pain is the very greatest pleasure. Here are three very great mistakes in a very few words. One is, that he contradicts himself; for, but just now, he could not imagine anything good, unless the senses were in a manner tickled with some pleasure; but now he says that to be free from pain is the highest pleasure. Can any one contradict himself more? The next mistake is, that where there is naturally a threefold division, the first, to be pleased; next, to be in pain; the last, to be affected neither by pleasure nor pain: he imagines the first and the last to be the same, and makes no difference betwixt pleasure and a cessation of pain. The last mistake he falls into in common with some others; which is this: that as virtue is the most desirable thing, and as philosophy has been investigated with a view to the attainment of it, he has separated the chief good from virtue. But he commends virtue, and that frequently; and indeed C. Gracchus, when he had made the largest distributions of the public money, and had exhausted the treasury, nevertheless spoke much of defending the treasury. What signifies what men say, when we see what they do? That Piso, who was surnamed Frugal, had always harangued against the law that was proposed for distributing the corn, but when it had passed, though a man of consular dignity, he came to receive the corn. Gracchus observed Piso standing in the court, and asked him, in the hearing of the people, how it was consistent for him to take corn by a law he had himself opposed? "It was," said he, "against your distributing my goods to every man as you thought proper; but, as you do so, I claim my share." Did not this grave and wise man sufficiently show that the public revenue was dissipated by the Sempronian law? Read Gracchus's speeches, and you will pronounce him the advocate of the treasury. Epicurus denies that any one can live pleasantly who does not lead a life of virtue; he denies that fortune has any power over a wise man: he prefers a spare diet to great plenty, and maintains that a wise man is always happy. All these things become a philosopher to say, but they are not consistent with pleasure. But the reply is, that he doth not mean that pleasure: let him mean any pleasure, it must be such a one as makes no part of virtue. But suppose we are mistaken as to his pleasure, are we so too as to his pain? I maintain therefore the impropriety of language which that man uses when talking of virtue, who would measure every great evil by pain?

Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2025 at 11:31 AM

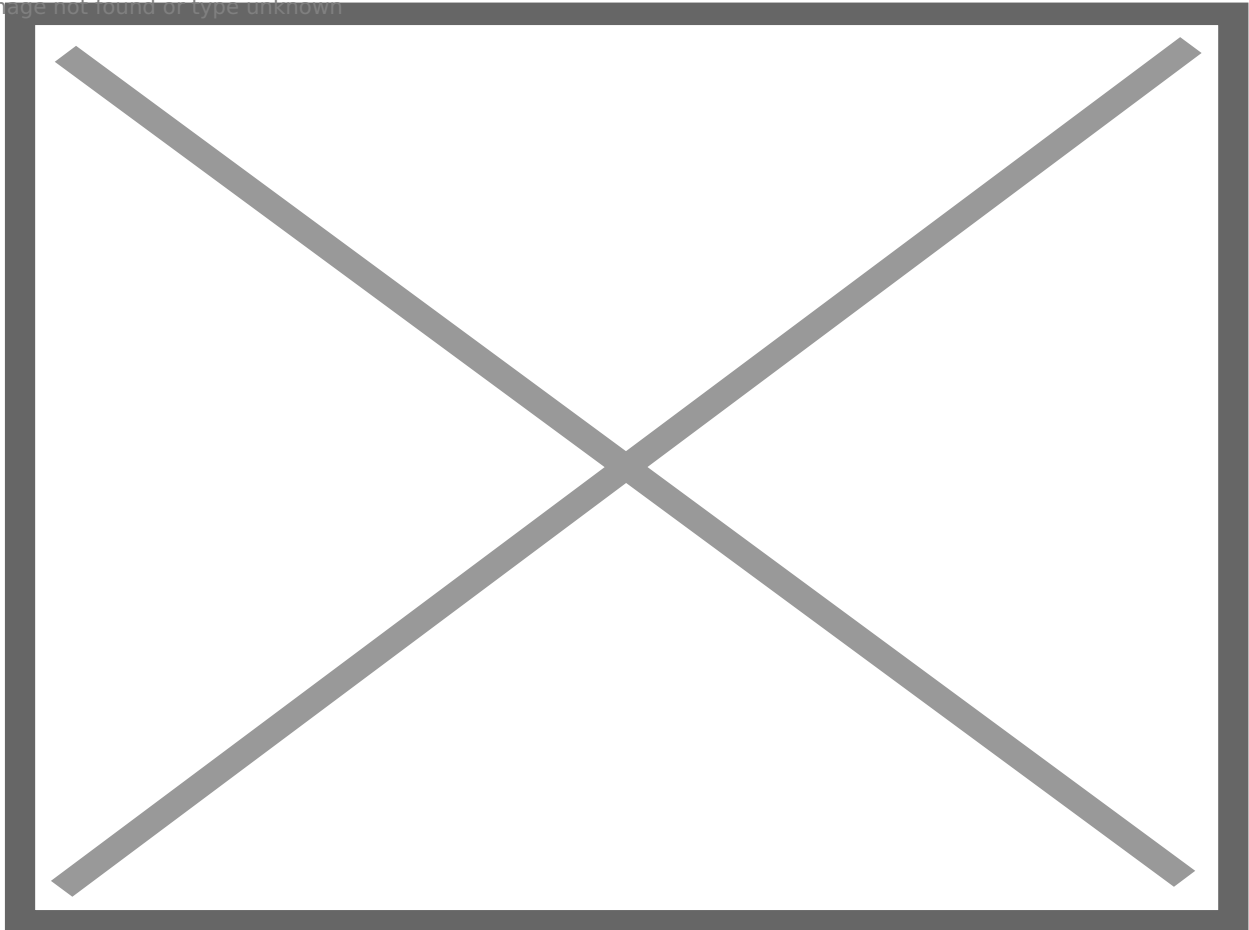
Episode 299 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. Today our episode is entitled: "Was Epicurus Right That There Are Only Two Feelings - Pleasure And Pain?"

[media]<https://www.spreaker.com/episode/67780005/media>

Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2025 at 3:12 PM

I've added this one to substack here:

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[Was Epicurus Right That There Are Only Two Feelings - Pleasure And Pain?](#)

If so, why? Today we address that question in Episode 299 of the Lucretius Today podcast.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4727-episode-299-td27-was-epicurus-right-that-there-are-only-two-feelings-pleasure-an/>

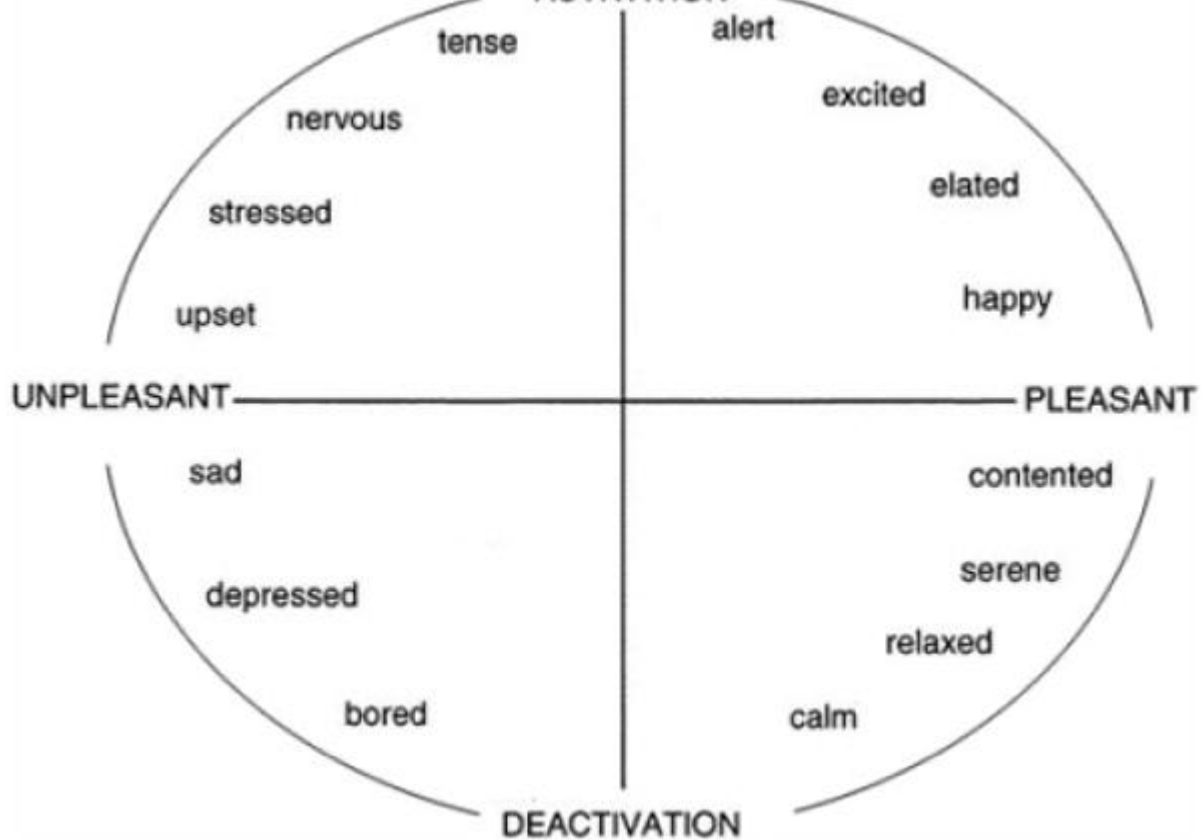
Post by “Don” of September 16, 2025 at 8:37 PM

You two did a great job of defining the "problem" of "the feelings are two" and giving some great answers.

I would only add that Cicero sets up this pain and pleasure spectrum. My analogy would be the timeline we currently use to reckon years. Call the AD/CE side pleasure, the BC/BCE side as pain. There is no year zero. You're either in year 1 BCE or year 1 CE. Same with pleasure and pain, your feeling might be slight, but it's going to be in one era or the other. There is no feeling zero... Unless you've died and ceased to exist.

Post by “Don” of September 17, 2025 at 8:26 AM

Or the circumplex model of affect is applicable:



As one moves around the circle, you experience varying intensities of pleasant and unpleasant/painful feelings. But there's are only two big baskets: pleasant/unpleasant overall. As long as you are a living, breathing being, you're going to experience something in this diagram somewhere along that continuum. Pleasure is to the right of the vertical axis, pain to the left. You can't sit on the line. (Please don't get hung up on whether it's the circumference or the area of the diagram. It's a model after all.)

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2025 at 12:04 PM

Don -- Yes that circle represents another model. Like any other model I would expect that the author of the model would say that it is grounded in reality, so I would say the original question remains.

For example, all of those headings around the circumference are labels that the model-writer has assigned based on his or her experience. Would it be any *less* legitimate to assign them differently?

So the question that I underlies the whole discussion is: What is the *authority* or *foundation* of this or any other model?

Are both Epicurus' model (with no middle ground) and the majority model (with a middle ground) equally legitimate in terms of evidence, differing only in conceptual labelling?

Epicurus obviously thought that it made sense to use a model in which there is no middle ground. Plato, Cicero, *et al.* prefer a model in which there is a middle ground. Is there really a difference in real-world evidence that says that one model conforms with reality more than does the other?

Now obviously I think the Epicurean model provides a far superior method of analysis. By affirming that there is a bright line between pleasure and pain you can make everything fall on one side or the other and see much more clearly that even non-stimulated situations are pleasure or pain. But i also think it is important to state that this is a model that our minds need to comprehend, and not leave it to speculation that there might be some kind of natural law or evidence or force that compels us to say that this model is "true to the evidence" while the other model is "false to the evidence."

As Joshua stated several times in the episode, I think Epicurus and we agree that pleasure and pain are highly subjective, even in terms of likes and dislikes as to food. So who are we to say to Cicero "No you wrong - when you're not in stimulative pain or pleasure, you must still use the same terms (pain or pleasure) to describe the condition that you are in."

Cicero and Plutarch are leaving out that what Epicurus is not saying "You're missing the obvious - when you think you are in neutral you are the same as if you're eating the best steak of your life!"

Instead, what Epicurus is doing is stating a conceptual framework that allows us to analyze the full problem more productively. Epicurus isn't exactly saying to the world: "No, when you're not being stimulated one way or the other, you may not realize it, but you're still being stimulated." The world says that's not true because they know the difference between numbness and eating the best steak they've ever had.

What seems to be in issue is labeling rather than evidence. And what we're arguing about with Cicero as to what to label is what constitutes a healthy state of peak performance of mind and body.

The problem facing us is that the view that "all you have to do is remove pain and you are in the greatest pleasure possible." That's being taken by some as a statement that you can reach the highest pleasure possible by numbing your mind and body as with a drug.

I think we're saying pretty much the opposite - that you want your mind and body to be MORE sensitive to what's going on in them and whether they are healthy or not. In the case of Chrysippus' hand the assertion is that the hand is in its normal operating condition, which in the

case of the limited abilities of a hand a statement of peak condition. In the case of the mind, however, the mind isn't in peak condition unless it understands how the universe operates, that we aren't subject to supernatural gods or punishment/reward by supernatural forces after death, and that we can have the confident expectation of remaining in that condition.

That latter condition of the mind is the opposite of "emptying" or "numbing" the mind so as to allegedly automatically achieve its peak pleasure. That peak performance of the mind is going to require understanding of the nature of things (as listed above) which requires intellectual effort.

And it seems to me that in order to explain the model it is helpful to make clear that what we're talking about isn't that the general public has defective senses, but rather what they are missing is a conceptual model that is required for the proper understanding of the best life.

Post by "Don" of September 17, 2025 at 1:01 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

a model in which there is a middle ground. Is there really a difference in real-world evidence that says that one model conforms with reality more than does the other?

I would bet that that "middle ground" is not as stable as your argument and Cicero's is making it out to be. If you actually ask someone supposedly experiencing this "middle ground," I would meet they'd defer to adjectives like calm, bored, relaxed, with varying degrees of positive or negative feelings with varying degrees of intensity.

The fact - yes, fact - is that if you are *alive*, you're feeling something positive or negative. There is no "middle ground" and no "neutral" feeling. "Meh, I'm okay" is still positive, albeit at a low level of intensity.

Post by "Don" of September 17, 2025 at 1:07 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

For example, all of those headings around the circumference are labels that the model-writer has assigned based on his or her experience. Would it be any less legitimate to assign them differently?

Depends what you mean by "different". My impression is that most everyone would agree that alert, excited, happy, calm, etc are positive feelings; and stressed, upset, nervous, bored are negative feelings. Those positive and negative sides can be sliced to infinity. Those marked are marking of examples.

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2025 at 2:13 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

The fact - yes, fact - is that if you are alive, you're feeling something positive or negative. There is no "middle ground" and no "neutral" feeling. "Meh, I'm okay" is still positive, albeit at a low level of intensity.

Maybe what I am saying is so obvious that it doesn't need to be said.

I'm looking for "what would Epicurus have said himself if he had been present with Cicero or Plutarch and been allowed to speak further beyond what Torquatus was allowed to say, or beyond what Cicero or Plutarch quoted of him.

When Cicero/Plutarch said "everyone knows that there is a state between pain and pleasure where we aren't feeling much of anything," and "everyone knows that absence of pain is certainly not the height of pleasure," what's the first thing out of Epicurus' mouth?

Would it start with "*It depends on how you look at it*"?

Would such a start be obvious, or controversial?

Post by “Don” of September 17, 2025 at 2:42 PM

Are you alive?

Yes?

What are you feeling right now?

Nothing. I am in a neutral state, I am feeling neither pleasure nor pain.

Then you are not alive but dead.

Harrrrumph! Well, the absence of pain is not the highest pleasure.

If you are alive, you are **feeling**, experiencing sensations. Someone who is alive is always feeling...

Etc.

Post by "Cassius" of September 17, 2025 at 3:07 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Nothing. I am in a neutral state, I am feeling neither pleasure nor pain.

Then you are not alive but dead.

Harrrrumph! Well, the absence of pain is not the highest pleasure.

If you are alive, you are **feeling**, experiencing sensations. Someone who is alive is always feeling...

As to especially "*then you are not alive but dead*" and also "*someone who is alive is always feeling*," that is not the way most people talk, and Cicero is going to win that argument every day of the week in front of most juries, Greek, Roman, or today. When it's Epicurus' turn to speak, he's going to have to give more explanation than that to satisfy any fair-minded jury.

In a recent zoom meeting [TauPhi](#) raised this issue in regard to "the size of the sun is as it appears to be" (and perhaps as to other contexts as well). He said in essence that "sloganeering" can be fun but it is not persuasive.

Not saying that *you* or Epicurus are sloganeering or not being a fair-minded juror of course, but I think you know what I mean! 😊 What we have looks like sloganeering because the enemies of Epicurus have selectively preserved the part they want to keep without the part that explains it.

When people of good faith are being approached with something new, they have to be brought along at the right speed. I'm thinking more along the lines of the way Frances Wright has Epicurus speaking to Zeno in A Few Days In Athens, there needs to be a "wind-up" before the pitch. "If you are alive you are feeling something" and "absence of pain is pleasure" and "absence of pain is in fact the highest pleasure" are smoking-hot fastballs on which most batters are going to strike out.

But we're not trying to deceive the batter and strike him out by throwing it *past* him. We're trying to telegraph the pitch, and deliver it right over the plate so the batter can hit it out of the park.

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2025 at 3:15 PM

Don I note you did not comment on this:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Would it start with "It depends on how you look at it"?

Would such a start be obvious, or controversial?

Does that mean that you think "it depends on how you look at it" would be incorrect?

In this case we're not talking about physics, where the ultimate questions certainly don't depend on how you look at it. Atoms and void don't exist or not depending on how we look at them.

And we're not really talking about individual feelings of pain and pleasure, which like snow is white honey is sweet are unmistakable.

But in regard to "pleasure" conceptually as the guide of life or "happiness" as the goal, does it in fact depend on how you choose to look at it?

Post by “Don” of September 17, 2025 at 3:41 PM

"It depends how you look at it" plays into the other person's hands. You've accepted their terms and are agreeing to play by their rules on their turf.

They're "looking at it" Okay, I hesitate to say "the wrong way," but that's what I want to say.

And what are we looking at?

I think a more potentially fruitful way is to "Consider this: If you're alive right now, interacting with the world, what are you feeling?" "Nothing much." "Tell me more." "Oh, my back's a little twingy, but overall... meh." And so on.

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2025 at 4:13 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

"It depends how you look at it" plays into the other person's hands. You've accepted their terms and are agreeing to play by their rules on their turf.

Ok that's why I am thinking that the approach would be controversial, but I am not yet sure that it isn't essentially what Epicurus is saying. Again playing off Joshua's observation, we'd have to deal with the subjectivity of the whole question and whether it is every appropriate to tell someone that what they are feeling is different from what they perceive it to be.

We can definitely dispute about "opinions," but I am not sure that it makes sense to say essentially "if you think about it this current feeling that you perceive as blahness is really the greatest pleasure anyone can experience in life!"

Post by “Don” of September 17, 2025 at 4:42 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"if you think about it this current feeling that you perceive as blahness is really the greatest pleasure anyone can experience in life!"

That's the point. What they rightly subjectively perceive as blahness isn't the highest pleasure. They are not *really* free from all pain. I would go so far as to say that none of us are *ever* going to be at the highest pleasure. We're not gods. Even Epicurus wasn't free from all pain, and he's supposed to be the exemplar, the savior. It's a goal, it's the theoretical limit, but we're mortal

beings in a natural material world. It's a theoretical limit that let's pleasure be the good. There is a limit. Parts of our body and sometimes our minds can be free from pain, but it's temporary... Unless we're talking about rooting out fears and anxieties of things that shouldn't be feared or be anxious about.

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2025 at 6:06 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

That's the point. What they rightly subjectively perceive as blainess isn't the highest pleasure. They are not really free from all pain. I would go so far as to say that none of us are ever going to be at the highest pleasure.

I agree with that.

But ok, where's the disconnect? Torquatus is making these statements very "flatly," He's speaking almost literally "The absence of pain is pleasure - in fact it's the highest pleasure." And I'd say that Epicurus is doing the same thing in the letter to Menoeceus. There's an explanation for the different perspectives, but I don't think we are yet articulating that explanation as Epicurus would.

For the generic man-on-the-street "I feel no pain" doesn't translate into "you are experiencing the height of pleasure" without more explanation that tells them how they are "looking at things" wrong. And leaving out the explanation as Cicero and Plutarch do makes Epicurus look ridiculous. In the case of [Epicurus' letter to Menoeceus](#) I think we can excuse the omission on the grounds that Menoeceus was to all appearances a student, for whom this letter was a summary, and he would be expected to know the full explanation. But for those of us reading Cicero or Plutarch or reading the letter out of context, there's much more to be said.

Post by “Don” of September 17, 2025 at 6:10 PM

"feeling no pain" *is* an idiom for feeling blissful. Just saying 😊

Post by “Don” of September 17, 2025 at 11:54 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4727-episode-299-td27-was-epicurus-right-that-there-are-only-two-feelings-pleasure-an/>

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Torquatus is making these statements very "flatly," He's speaking almost literally "The absence of pain is pleasure - in fact it's the highest pleasure." And I'd say that Epicurus is doing the same thing in the letter to Menoeceus. There's an explanation for the different perspectives, but I don't think we are yet articulating that explanation as Epicurus would.

On Ends, I. 38 *Itaque non placuit Epicuro medium esse quiddam inter dolorem et voluptatem; illud enim ipsum, quod quibusdam medium videretur, cum omni dolore careret, non modo voluptatem esse, **verum etiam summam voluptatem. quisquis enim sentit, quem ad modum sit affectus, eum necesse est aut in voluptate esse aut in dolore.** omnis autem privatione doloris putat Epicurus terminari summam voluptatem, ut postea variari voluptas distinguque possit, augeri amplificarique non possit.*

*I. 38 Epicurus consequently maintained that there is no such thing as a neutral state of feeling intermediate between pleasure and pain; for the state supposed by some thinkers to be neutral, being characterized as it is by entire absence of pain, is itself, he held, a pleasure, and, what is more, **a pleasure of the highest order. A man who is conscious of his condition at all must necessarily feel pleasure or pain.** But complete absence of pain Epicurus considers to be the limit and highest point of pleasure; beyond this point pleasure may vary in kind, but it cannot vary in intensity or degree.*

That line there: *A man who is conscious of his condition at all must necessarily feel pleasure or pain.* That's the essence of Epicurus' "contention" - or pointing out the facts, if I may - that if you're alive you're either feeling pleasure or pain.

The absence of pain then, by definition, means totally filled with pleasure.

The obstacle seems to be Epicurus choice of *hedone* in Greek, translated literally as *pleasure* in English and translated literally as *voluptas* in Latin. I will grant that Epicurus expanded what even his contemporaries well before Cicero thought *hedone* was. But it seems to me he had no better word to convey what he was getting at. I would say a "better" choice of words in English may have been "positive" and "negative" feelings but those connotations didn't really exist in Epicurus' language. The closest to "positive" is *θετικός* but that has more a "fit" argument or "affirmative" not positive in the sense of a "positive" feeling as we understand it. If we take that alternative tack, Epicurus is saying the absence of all negative feeling yields the highest limit of all positive feeling. Okay, that could still be misconstrued, but it at least uses more complementary words.

I. 39 sin autem summa voluptas est, ut Epicuro placet, nihil dolere,

I. 39 Whereas if, as Epicurus holds, the highest pleasure be to feel no pain, ...

But can mortals actually achieve no pain at all in any amount? I remain skeptical of this. Diogenes Laertius writes that the Garden taught that [X.121] *Two sorts of happiness can be conceived, the one the highest possible, **such as the gods enjoy**, which cannot be augmented, the other admitting **addition and subtraction of pleasures**.* And I would add "the addition and subtraction of pains." It is the theoretical limit of pleasure (No Pain) that allows it to contend with "Virtue" (don't get me started) to be the Summum Bonum/Telos.

I. 57 O praeclaram beate vivendi et apertam et simplicem et directam viam! cum enim certe nihil homini possit melius esse quam vacare omni dolore et molestia perfruique maximis et animi et corporis voluptatibus, videtisne quam nihil praetermittatur quod vitam adiuvet, quo facilius id, quod propositum est, summum bonum consequamur? clamat Epicurus, is quem vos nimis voluptatibus esse deditum dicitis; non posse iucunde vivi, nisi sapienter, honeste iusteque vivatur, nec sapienter, honeste, iuste, nisi iucunde.

*I. 57 "Here is indeed a royal road to happiness — open, simple, and direct! For clearly man can have no greater good than complete freedom from pain and sorrow **coupled with** the enjoyment of the highest bodily and mental pleasures. Notice then how the theory embraces every possible enhancement of life, every aid to the attainment of that Chief Good which is our object. Epicurus, the man whom you denounce as a voluptuary, cries aloud that no one can live pleasantly without living wisely, honourably and justly, and no one wisely, honourably and justly without living pleasantly.*

That "coupled with" to me sounds like joining katastematic and kinetic pleasure: complete freedom from pain and sorrow (ataraxia and aponia) + the **enjoyment** of the greatest bodily and mental pleasures (kharis and euphrosyne) . perfrūor = to enjoy fully or thoroughly.

It's getting late and I'm starting to ramble. Consider this food for thought. Until tomorrow.

Post by "Adrastus" of September 18, 2025 at 1:05 AM

Thank you very much for this discussion on an extremely important issue in Epicurean Philosophy, and another well elucidated debate within this episode.

Maybe this belongs more in a highly practical, or religious practice area of the forum; but I use this list a friend of mine but together, to realize the "why not hundreds of emotional states?" and drill back down to whats standing in the way of the ataraxic, unmixed, unalloyed Pleasure of which I feel like katastematic pleasure, as a concept, is avoiding in the issue of "neutrality" in emotion.

and pathos in general.

Now there is a statement that deserves more comment, because I place that framing squarely within the "heap" / sorities framing. Like grains of sand, there are myriad experiences that can be described as pleasure, and yet "happiness" or "the best life" or "the highest pleasure" is not found in any one of them, any more than "heapness" is found in any particular grain of sand.

It is surely legitimate to talk about heaps as real, and likewise talk about happiness or "the greatest pleasure" as real, and yet the latter (happiness, the highest pleasure) are not found in any one single experience, or set of experiences.

And that's why it is necessary to be clear to people that "heap" is a concept rather than a particular "thing," just like happiness and the highest pleasure are not particular "things."

Post by "Cassius" of September 18, 2025 at 5:39 AM

From our zoom discussion last night, here is another way of asking the question:

The average person likely presumes that "the highest pleasure," is what we might call "ecstasy," and Epicurus says something not far from that in U423 (from Plutarch) where Epicurus says that the meaning of good is the near escape from some disaster, which I think most people would consider to name a condition of jubilation at having been delivered from a calamity.

If ecstasy / jubilation is what most people - and even Epicurus - seem to identify as a specific condition of extreme pleasure, then why isn't that also "the highest pleasure?"

That's the normal approach that Cicero and Plutarch think the world will agree with, and they are probably right.

Why should that line of thinking be considered to be incorrect? Why is "Ecstasy" not the highest / greatest pleasure?

Post by "Don" of September 18, 2025 at 8:13 AM

Some may object to my saying mortals can never be free from all pain and say something like What's the use of Epicurus' philosophy then.

It's the foundation that it's built on that matters.

If I remember correctly, the Stoics didn't think a normal human could be completely virtuous either, and yet they followed the teachings of their school.

Epicurus posited the limit of pleasure as absence of all pain and made cogent arguments in support of that thus giving the heave-ho to his rivals on their turf. Take that, Skeptics and Platonists!

I believe we can experience absence of pain in some aspects of our life, especially rooting out fear and anxiety of death, gods, etc. We can experience episodes of no pain in parts of our body from time to time. The strategy is to keep our eyes on the prize as it were. A happy life using pleasure as the North Star, steering toward that, using choices and rejections skillfully, sailing through storms when necessary, enjoying the calm seas when available, standing in awe of the stars in the sky, and delighting in the warm sun on our faces under a clear blue sky.

Post by “Cassius” of September 18, 2025 at 8:49 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Some may object to my saying mortals can never be free from all pain and say something like What's the use of Epicurus' philosophy then.

At least as to me I don't object to it, and I think most everyone here (where we generally have a realistic view of things) will agree. Total absence of pain is pretty obviously a theoretical goal more rather than established fact for any human being at any time. And it's confusion about that which is causing most of the debate and division on what Epicurus was talking about. (And that's most likely why you're concerned that "some may object to [your] saying that" because we can all observe that most of the world is talking as if Epicurus were in fact describing some real condition of total separation from pain.)

Last night in our zoom, Tau Phi offered the analogy that it is understandable that we are always feeling something because we are made up of atoms moving through the void, and the atoms never stop moving, and our sensations as emergent properties of these motions is going to naturally be always responding to internal and external motions so long as we are together and alive.

Similarly, I would expect there is another "physics" analogy on why we should not look to "ecstasy" as the best definition of the highest pleasure.

We talked last night about the "impossibility" of constant ecstasy, and I think we can also analogize that to physics terms. At least theoretically, the "gods" might be able to remain in constant ecstasy, if they so choose, because it's a characteristic of the intermundia (from Lucretius) that it supplies their every need and it is a totally friendly and supportive environment.

Our world, however, is not so constantly supportive. We're constantly buffeted by external and internal motions that would tear us apart literally and figuratively if we did not act to respond to them. A constant state of ecstasy in response to outside influences would not provide a mechanism for us to repair and sustain ourselves in the face of this buffeting. We can't constantly eat fish and drink wine and have sex because given the nature of our world that will lead to dissolution from any number of factors. We **must** take time away from being stimulated so as to exert our own actions to keep us as nearly as possible in constant pleasure, keeping in mind that there are many kinds of pleasures and that some are more productive of repair and regrowth than are others.

While we all recognize the benefits of ecstasy, we also have to keep in mind that we need to pursue other pleasures, and even at times pains, so as to keep our own atoms of body and mind in healthy condition and peak performance.