

# Was Epicurus Sexually Active?

Post by "Pacatus" of February 24, 2023 at 2:12 PM

## [Quote from Don](#)

The verb ἔραμαι (of which ἐρασθήσεσθαι is a form) does mean "desire passionately, lust after; desire eagerly" so there's a connotation of over the top sexual desire and lust.

Well, here I go: leaping out where I should probably fear to tread—

**First**, it doesn't seem to me that either the LSJ or Wiki entries for ἔραμαι necessitate that connotation, except for regard to things (as opposed to persons); similarly for ἔρος. (I don't know if it usually carries that connotation across the ancient literature, but it strikes me as something that is likely context-dependent.)

Even less so in other lexicons -

Slater: a. fall in love with, love c. gen. ... b. desire.

Autenrieth: enamoured of, in love with.

Etymonline has this for "erotic": 1650s, from French érotique (16c.), from Greek erotikos "caused by passionate love, referring to love," from eros (genitive erotos) "sexual love" (see [Eros](#)). Earlier form was erotical (1620s) -

And under the entry for eros, notes: "Ancient Greek distinguished four ways of love: erao "to be in love with, to desire passionately or sexually;" phileo "have affection for;" agapao "have regard for, be contented with;" and stergo, used especially of the love of parents and children or a ruler and his subjects."

**Second**, in order for sexual desire to have any per se negative connotation vis-à-vis Epicurus, it would have to fall into the category of unnatural desires, not a natural (albeit unnecessary) desire.

**Third**, a form of the same word, ἔραμαι, is used in the DL quote affirming sexual pleasures as among those apart from which Epicurus would not know "how to conceive the good."

"I know not how to conceive the good, apart from the pleasures of taste, sexual pleasures, the pleasures of sound, and the pleasures of beautiful form."

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At bottom, I do not see Epicurus denigrating sexual pleasures at all, simply cautioning care. The denigrating connotations - whilst they might be apropos (or even predominant) in other cultural, philosophical and religious contexts - seem to me the kind of thing that Epicurus might have tried to rectify, as he did for hēdone itself vis-à-vis, say, the Stoics.