

Why Minimizing All Desire Is Incorrect (And What To Do Instead)

Post by “Cassius” of December 6, 2024 at 7:09 AM

I suspect there is another analogy to pursue here too:'

The Religionist/ Virtue-ethics / anti-hedonists crowd has an inherent antipathy to pleasure. A major tactic that they use is to narrow the definition of pleasure to focus only the sensual pleasures, which they find easiest to disparage, and so they make arguments that imply that the term "pleasure" consists only of "sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll" which they believe are easily caricatured as leading to disastrous results.

The Buddhists (who are really part of the first crowd but who are more honest about their antipathy to pleasure) do the same thing with desire. Unlike the Stoics and western religions which aren't so willing to come right out and preach "life is suffering," the Buddhist team isn't satisfied with attacking pleasure, they want to attack life itself in the form of the desire to remain living. So they narrow the definition of desire so as to focus only on the desires that are most intoxicating and in many cases impossible, and that allows them to disparage **all** desire and make arguments that imply that the term "desire" consists only of those desires that frequently lead to disastrous results.

So I think that the key to resolution of this seeming paradox is to take a wider view of desire, just like Epicurus takes a wider view of pleasure, and to resist the manipulation of definitions of important terms so that a philosophy based on the desire to pursue pleasure and avoid pain becomes impossible.