

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

Post by "Don" of December 7, 2024 at 9:03 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

That's because I am pretty sure we agree that "sex, drugs, and rocknroll" are definitely desirable pleasures, and completely proper ones, when not "overindulged in" - which means essentially "to excess." Correct?

Correct, I think. "The pleasures of the prodigal" are, to my reading, by definition pleasures to excess. Luke 15:13 which uses *ασωτως* (the adverb form of the word in [PD10](#)) is variously translated as:

- in wild living (NIV)
- with riotous living. (KJV)
- in dissolute living (NRSVue)
- in reckless and immoral living. (Amplified Bible)

To me, τὰ ποιητικὰ τῶν περὶ τοὺς ἀσώτους ἡδονῶν "the things that produce the delights of those who are decadent" is very specific and carefully worded phrase. It *doesn't* say (and I'm guilty of implying it does) "the pleasures" themselves are the problem. The "*the things that produce*" the pleasures of the one who is overindulging are the main topic/subject of that phrase. So, we have two options to interpret that first part of [PD10](#):

1. Are "the things that produce" the pleasures of the profligate referring to *specific activities*: possibly including drinking, gambling, dancing, sex, etc.,?
2. Are "the things that produce" the pleasures of the profligate referring to the overindulgent , unlimited participation in those activities?

I *think* it has to be number two since Epicurus includes all activities that bring pleasure as defined as good. Therefore, if riotous, wild, reckless living and experiencing every pleasure without limits did dispel fears and taught us about the limits of pain and desires, then we'd have no complaints against those who indulge in pleasure that way. But I believe he makes us ask the question: "Does riotous, wild, reckless living and experiencing every pleasure without limits dispel fears and teach us about the limits of pain and desires?" The hypothetical (as you describe this PD) drives home the requirement to look at how we normally view pleasure. I think a large number of people today think "riotous, wild, reckless living" when they hear *pleasure* or *hedonism*. Epicurus, Philodemus, the whole Garden seem to have been confronting this same battle of both inadvertent and deliberate misunderstanding of their school. To me,

it's both a philosophical point and practical advice, taken together with what has become [PD11](#) and [PD12](#).

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I completely agree with the emphasis on personal responsibility, unless you mean that wording to indicate that personal responsibility is more important than pleasure itself. I don't think you mean that, but in the context of the discussion I could see someone casually reading the post thinking that is what you mean. We live for pleasure, and personal responsibility is essential to ensure that we do not overindulge and end up with too much pain, but personal responsibility itself is just a "virtue" and therefore a "tool" for living pleasurably, and it is living pleasurably ("pleasure") that is the goal.

We definitely agree here.