

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

Post by “Cassius” of December 7, 2024 at 10:50 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

BUT - if one thinks they're going to be the exception to the general rule, they're usually disappointed.

I think you and I and probably all of us in this discussion are going to reach the same conclusions 99 out of 100 or maybe 100 out of 100 times.

But since one of our goals here is to be as clear as possible for ourselves and for others who are reading, we need to be clear: What really is the "general rule" that we are discussing?

As I see it, the most important general rule is that pleasure is desirable because it is pleasure. That's a flat assertion with no exceptions whatsoever.

Some pleasures are not sometimes undesirable or painful -- that never is the case, and thus there are no exceptions.

We shift the terminology when we talk about choice and avoidance. Many things - most things? - all things? can be either choiceworthy or non-choiceworthy depending on the circumstances. And we're probably in complete agreement about the probabilities of what is likely to bring more pain than pleasure.

Where Cicero and the majority of the rest of the world try to attack Epicurus is in conflating all these issues together and therefore asserting that "pleasure" is not the best term for the ultimate good. If we agree to that, then we invite in all sorts of logical problems that ultimately make it untenable to maintain that "pleasure" is the ultimate good or ultimate goal.

So I think there's very good reason for being an absolutist and a literalist on Epicurus' statements about pleasure. And that's why I am also very comfortable with "in-your-face" interpretations of [PD10](#) and other aggressive assertions (pleasure IS the absence of pain; the sun IS the size it appears to be; [all sensations ARE true](#); [death IS nothing to us](#), gods ARE living beings blessed and imperishable; the virtues (including wisdom, justice, friendship, and the rest) ARE nothing more than tools for pleasure; etc.). That kind of assertiveness is necessary to get the point across because most people don't think that way, and with them you have to "philosophize with a hammer!" 😊

(Credit goes to someone in the last Wednesday Zoom for bringing up that Nietzsche hammer allusion...)

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4175-why-minimizing-all-desire-is-incorrect-and-what-to-do-instead/?postID=33271#post33271>