

Why pursue unnecessary desires?

Post by "Titus" of May 3, 2025 at 8:22 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Titus and Godfrey, in your answers, did you address this question specifically? Do you agree that you can pursue only necessary pleasures and reach 100% pleasure (or happiness)? If you can pursue only necessary pleasures and reach the target, why would you pursue any others than those which are easiest to obtain?

This is a very good question! And I have to admit that I probably misread the original question as I am concerned not with unnecessary desires but with the category of "vain" desires.

I would like to say yes, but this is just a theoretical yes as I consider the classification of desires as a guidance tool for choosing priorities. In this sense, the category of natural and necessary desires is something that has to be of number one priority to us.

[Quote from Don](#)

127h. τῶν δ' ἀναγκαίων αἱ μὲν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν εἰσὶν ἀναγκαῖαι,

"then, of the necessary ones: on the one hand, there are those necessary for eudaimonia;

Those necessary for eudaimonia are open to interpretation but must be based on Epicurus's philosophy.

127i. αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ζῆν.

ἀοχλησία "freedom from disturbance"

σώματος genitive singular of σῶμα

σῶμα "the body; one's material body or existence"

"then, those [necessary] for the freedom from disturbance for the body; then those [necessary] for life itself."

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This is very fundamental. This is the basis on which our house is built on. It is of importance to secure ones existential needs and also to have a proper understanding of the universe and ones position within.

The category of just natural desires adds flavour to our lives and is to be pursued if the desires do not conflict with the necessity these desires are related to. Giving a classical example for a natural but not necessary desire is the decision to drink wine instead of water. This is to be approved as long as one doesn't slip into extensive drunkenness, which conflicts with the maintenance of our health or the undisturbedness of the body.

To remain close to your question, from my personal experience the category of natural desires, both necessary and unnecessary, is the proper basis for anything to stay focused on (for the 100%). Since I regard most of our desires to be related to natural stimuli, this doesn't lead to asceticism, at least to my understanding.

The "vain" category includes anything else, anything that isn't related directly to naturally arising desires. These are the desires we have to examine very critical.

Epicurus' classification of desires is a helpful tool, but we also have to recognize that it is quite abstract and has to be applied with caution.

Where do we place the desire to earn more money (and the related steps, e.g. building a business or pursuing a career). It is necessary and natural for our survival to have access to material resources. On the other hand, as I've displayed in my previous post, it can become excessive.

So where to place the desire to learn a specific profession or to follow a career path? I totally agree, that the short formula of the 3 categories of desires can fall short very often.