

Why pursue unnecessary desires?

Post by "Cassius" of May 5, 2025 at 9:04 AM

I want to add this: The only way it would make sense to conclude that you would never pursue anything other than natural and necessary desires would be to believe that as a matter of natural law or some other necessity or flat guarantee, that pursuing anything other than natural and necessary desires is guaranteed to lead to more pain than pleasure.

It does not appear to me that there are any grounds of necessity on which that can be argued to be the case, or that there are any such that statements in Epicurean philosophy. In contrast, the starting point is the statement that all pleasures are desirable, but some will bring more pain than pleasure. It seems to me a stretch to say that there is any flat list that always must be followed to the exclusion of the general rule, even if there are generalizations, such as excessive pursuit of sex or romantic love, that can be made as a warning against that course.

The only way there could be such a flat list would be if there were supernatural gods, or ideal forms, or some other mechanism that guaranteed such a result. Otherwise it's up to us to analyze our own circumstances to determine what is likely to result for us.

Kalosyni's search for an explicit definition is a good way of looking at the problem, but I think part of the answer will be that while all sorts of explanations can be given, a major part of any correct explanation is that no explicit flat list that applies to everyone can be given.

Note: Just in case I am not being clear with the term "flat list," I mean "flat" in the sense of evenly and explicitly applying to everyone at all times in all places and in all circumstances. So a "flat list" would be an explicit list of do's or "don'ts" that always applies without any exception whatsoever.