

Is All Desire Painful? How Would Epicurus Answer?

Post by “sanantoniogarden” of May 10, 2025 at 3:42 PM

I'm hesitant to say that Epicurus would hold that Desires are either wholly painful or wholly pleasurable. Desires have to exist in a sort of neutral Natural sense almost entirely biological. Most of the basic Natural and necessary desires are driven by biological instinct, to satisfy hunger and thirst, shelter from the elements and a community of friendship to shelter from the human predicament.

It seems that on a surface level saying that all Desires are painful might lead one to the ascetic side of Epicureanism. To my understanding there are only two states one can exist in, pleasure or pain, if all Desires are in fact painful, the removal of those Desires would increase one's pleasure more than actually satisfying those Desires. You never have that desire you never have that pain. Because as we all know satisfying a desire would lead to more desires (more pain) unless one educates themselves (where the calculus enters). If all Desires are pleasurable, would it at all make sense to have that desire delayed as long as possible, since desire is wholly pleasurable? Because satisfying a pleasurable desire would remove that pleasurable desire and briefly increase pain until a new pleasurable desire is found? (Playing devil's advocate with these questions)