

On "Desires" And Their Relationship To Pleasure

Post by "Don" of September 12, 2020 at 1:57 PM

For me, it all goes back to Epicurus teaching us to "Ask this question of every desire: what will happen to me if the object of desire is achieved, and what if not?" (VS 71)

It's not about specifically going out to increase or decrease desires. Which desires are you going to try to achieve and which ones are you going to let go. If the feeling of pleasure is your guide, you're going to work to achieve those desires that will bring you a pleasurable, blessed life. If you don't examine your desires and just let your life be "one damn thing after another" you may experience pleasure or pain but you are at the mercy of Fortune and chance. Why would you want to leave your one precious existence up to chance?

It comes back to the boundary markers. We have limited time. The desires we can achieve and the pleasurable experiences we can have are finite. The kinds of desires that will lead to a pleasurable life are not infinite. All pleasure is good, all pain is bad. But that doesn't mean we set out to experience every pleasure nor shun every pain. With pleasure as our North Star, we can "limit" our desires to those that will get us through life most pleurably. There are innumerable paths we can take through life. Pleasure gives us a goal by which to choose a path.