

An Epicurean Understanding of Pleasure

Post by "Godfrey" of October 9, 2021 at 1:02 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

The sense I was trying to get across with the "a desire is a mental concept" is that a desire is something you can think about. In fact, the thought "I want X" (and its many permutations) is itself the desire. On the other hand, pleasure and pain are something that happens to you.

I'm still trying to wrap my head around desire as well. [Don](#) I think we're in agreement as to pleasure, although I'm not sure whether [Cassius](#) agrees with our take. (???)

The first sentence of the Wikipedia quote lists desire as wanting, wishing, longing or craving; I've also seen it called an emotion. I agree that agency is key to desire, I'm just not sure how it all fits together.

Thinking this through, say for example that you had just decided to give up alcohol. You find yourself walking in Munich and suddenly you are strolling by a beer garden and see and smell some of the excellent local beer. Wham! You get hit by a tremendous craving for some delicious golden brew: it's visceral. But you have agency to decide whether or not to give in to the desire. Is your mental concept the "place" where the agency comes from? Further, it's possible that you would just experience a feeling of pleasure from the sights, sounds and smells of the garden, the day, and the people enjoying themselves, without any desire at all. I'm not sure that this clarifies anything, but I've just experienced mental pleasure by imagining this scenario! Maybe mixed with just a tiny taste of desire... 😊

Bottoms up!