

# An Epicurean Understanding of Pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of October 9, 2021 at 8:38 AM

## [Quote from Don](#)

So, my contention is that a desire need not be grand. It need not be capital-D Desire. Just like pleasure doesn't need to be capital-P Pleasure. There are things that we desire because they're necessary for living, and only the living can experience pleasure.

Yes I think we all agree on that (I am not saying "Why did you bother to repeat it?" but rather. "Yes that is one of our fundamental presumptions.")

The next step though is significantly harder, which is the analysis of "ranking" pleasures not only on a necessary scale, but on some other scale, such as (1) natural, but also (2 ad infinitum) with words such as "intensity" or "depth of feeling" or "importance to 'us' as individuals, rather than just "us as human beings who have to eat, sleep, etc."

We can probably start with the "natural" because that is in Menoecus and Torquatus, but I have always found that term significantly harder to apply than "necessary." I don't think the key either is "whether it has a limit" because necessary pleasures too have a limit (air, food, water, etc) so there must be some other factor than "having a limit" which distinguishes "natural." So one place to start is to try to get a grip on "natural."

But I don't think even those two give us the subjective element of "intensity" or "depth of feeling" or "importance to 'us' as individuals, rather than just 'us' as human beings" and I surely think that Epicurus did not deprecate those other than perhaps to the "necessary" in the sense that "pleasure has no meaning except to the living" and if we don't get the necessary pleasures we don't remain living very long.