

Episode One Hundred Thirty Eight - Letter to Menoecus 5 - Pleasure Part One

Post by "Cassius" of September 6, 2022 at 9:05 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Epicurus explicitly describes some desires as groundless, empty, vain. That doesn't sound like a description of something "good." In fact, it sounds like something to be avoided.

Yes I think we've got an interplay of issues here mainly arising from the word desire and how specifically to define in.

Pleasure is the only word that Epicurus held to be always "good" -- Did he say that specifically, or is [PD08](#) the closest to that? ([PD08](#). No pleasure is a bad thing in itself; but the means which produce some pleasures bring with them disturbances many times greater than the pleasures.)

So maybe the better question to ask in paraphrase would be - Would it be correct to say?

"No desire is a bad thing in itself, but some desires bring with them disturbances many times greater than the pleasure achievable from the pursuit of the desire."

Or was Epicurus saying that some desires (e.g., *seeking to live forever*) are intrinsically "bad"? Seeking to overcome death would jump out at me as an example of a desire that would in every case lead to frustration, but even that one might be viewed in a better light depending on how the desire was pursued. Would it not be ok for a medical researcher to spend their lives on life extension research, if that researcher didn't obsess over success?

Examples of desires we might generally agree would lead to bad results (seeking great political power, riches, etc) would likely still not be something that Epicurus would say would "always" lead to undesirable results. (And if the result doesn't "always" happen then the thing is not intrinsically bad, correct?)

So where I am going is that unless we can articulate a desire that is intrinsically "bad" then we've got to set up a definition of "Desire" that accounts for its essential role in life but also describes how it can be misused.