

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

Post by "Cassius" of September 7, 2022 at 11:54 AM

I agree with most everything in that last post. I would want to clarify this part however:

## [Quote from Don](#)

Oh, I agree! My only intent was to get away from moral judgements. Desires arise naturally from our physical needs and from just living our life but they also arise from things we've been inculcated to desire by society and culture. They're not \*morally\* good or bad but they can be useful to our life and existence or detrimental to our well-being if we choose to follow them. If we choose NOT to follow those that are useful for our life, that's not going to go well for us. Likewise, if we choose TO follow unhealthy or harmful desires, that's not going to go well for us either. But we should leave the morality out of it. "Oh, you did THAT! You're a BAD person!"

You are listing there numbers of ways that desires arise (naturally from physical needs, living our life, things we are inculcated to desire by society and culture. Agreed. But per the letter to Menoecus do we not also to some degree choose our own desires, consistent with our free will, and indeed to the events arising from those choices praise and blame do attach?

## Quote

[133] For indeed who, think you, is a better man than he who holds reverent opinions concerning the gods, and is at all times free from fear of death, and has reasoned out the end ordained by nature? He understands that the limit of good things is easy to fulfill and easy to attain, whereas the course of ills is either short in time or slight in pain; he laughs at (destiny), whom some have introduced as the mistress of all things. ( He thinks that with us lies the chief power in determining events, some of which happen by necessity) and some by chance, and some are within our control; for while necessity cannot be called to account, he sees that chance is inconstant, but that which is in our control is subject to no master, and to it are naturally attached praise and blame

"They're not \*morally\* good or bad " I think I would agree with that statement, since we are basically jettisoning absolute standards of morality, with the result that we are pretty much talking about "What we find to be desirable" and "What we find to be distasteful." But within the paradigm that there is no absolute morality, there is still sort of a factual or consensus "agreement" (possibly related to the justice discussion) that it is valid for us to consider some

actions to be praiseworthy and others to be blameworthy.

I am thinking that is a very important part of this discussion. We're all in agreement I think in Epicurean terms that there is no "absolute" morality in the sense established by supernatural gods or ideal forms. But on the other hand there always remains pleasure and pain, and among our friends at least we presumably share certain views on what makes us happy and what makes us sad, and through that perspective there does in fact remain an important concept of "praiseworthiness" and "blameworthiness."

So - "Oh, you did THAT! You're a BAD person!" cannot refer to an absolute morality, but to the extent we want to define "bad" we can still talk about our norms of agreement on working together for our mutual benefit and not harming each other.

Correct or no?