

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

Post by "Cassius" of September 7, 2022 at 11:10 PM

Don has articulated my concern very well. To consider all desire to be intrinsically linked to pain has to be overbroad. It cannot be true both that all pleasure is good but that all desire for pleasure not currently in our possession is bad.

Looking for additional text references I see this fragment below from Diogenes of Oinoanda. Check the underlined part: which implies to me that the focus - the "roots of all evil" - are not "desires in general" but only those which "*outrun the limits fixed by nature.*"

I think most all of us are already in agreement that desires for things prohibited by nature (eternal life for example) are desires that are by nature harmful. But desiring those pleasures *that do not exceed the limits fixed by nature* leaves a huge freeway for a spectrum of desires for pleasure which are not only beneficial but also either not intrinsically painful or are well worth the pain they require. To consider for example the excitement of children waiting for Christmas morning to receive their presents to be a state in which they are in pain would I think a highly inverted way of looking at the ultimate reality.

"Outrunning the limits fixed by nature" is a good phrase that helps shift the focus away from the simple observation that we do not yet have the object of our desire to a focus on what we would naturally expect a practical person like Epicurus to focus on: whether the desire is ultimately obtainable, and at what (if any) cost in pain.

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... reasoning ... [of happiness] ..... [is ... hope, after selection of these], and cure of erring emotions. So where, I say, the danger is great, so also is the fruit. Here we must turn aside these fallacious arguments on the grounds that they are insidious and insulting and contrived, by means of terminological ambiguity, to [lead] wretched human beings [astray] ..... [let us] not [avoid every pain that is present, and let us not choose every pleasure, as the many always do. Each person must employ reasoning,] since he [will not always achieve immediate success: just as] exertion (?) [often] involves one [gain at the beginning and] certain [others as time passes by], so it is also with [experiencing pleasure;] for sowings of seeds do [not] bring [the same benefit] to the sower but we see some seeds very quickly germinating [and bearing fruit and others taking longer] ..... of pleasures and [pains] ..... [pleasure].

And so the ..... [are] ..... If ..... [prudence.]

Let us now [investigate] how life is to be made pleasant for us both in states and in actions.

Let us first discuss states, keeping an eye on the point that, when the emotions which disturb the soul are removed, those which produce pleasure enter into it to take their place.

Well, what are the disturbing emotions? [They are] fears —of the gods, of death, and of [pains]— and, besides [these], desires that [outrun] the limits fixed by nature. These are the roots of all evils, and, [unless] we cut them off, [a multitude] of evils will grow [upon] us.