

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

Post by "Cassius" of September 8, 2022 at 6:23 PM

It is unclear to me exactly how Godfrey and I ended up on close to the same page, but it appears to me that is the direction things are taking.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

For me, desire is intricately tied to both pain and pleasure; it can have elements of either or both.

Just to keep things lively, I would carry that forward and say "*For me, desire is intricately tied to life itself.*"

If you don't actively have desires, you aren't alive, and I would analogize the absolute minimizing of all desire to being on the very doorstep of death - such a person might still be breathing and conscious, but if he has no desire of any kind, not even for the continuation of life, then that is what I would expect to observe in a hospital who has lost the battle against some disease and who is totally ready to die. (Leaving aside for the moment that such a person might indeed desire death.)

That's why it is essential to establish the initial presumption that not all desire is inherently painful and something to be minimized.

So therefore I would say that the [Epicurean gods](#) have desires as well -- all of which are presumably met. Which is not to say that [Epicurean gods](#) are omnipotent and can do anything and everything, but that they are smart enough not to have desires for things which are impossible by nature.

This is my vote for best summary statement so far:

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

For me, desire is intricately tied to both pain and pleasure; it can have elements of either or both. My practical Epicurean take is that desire provides the stimulus to action, while pleasure/pain provides guidance in how to act. Practice involves being aware of and responsive to all of these: desire, pleasure, and pain.

Except I would delete the "for me" and render it more firmly something like:

Quote from "Collective Genius" of the EpicureanFriends Forum

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2651-episode-one-hundred-thirty-eight-letter-to-menoecus-5-pleasure-part-one/?postID=19732#post19732>

Desire is intricately tied to both pain and pleasure; it can have elements of either or both. Desire provides the stimulus to action, while pleasure/pain provides guidance in how to act. Epicurean practice involves being aware of and responsive to all of these: desire, pleasure, and pain. The advice of Epicurus to consider whether desires are natural and necessary is a call to consider the full results of pursuing any desire so as to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, not a call to minimize all desire.

Edit: I checked Don's post 36 to see if there is anything in that list that needs to be added to such a really simple summary statement. On first glance I don't know that there is. There are some important points in 36 about voluntary vs automatic but I am not sure those really fit in addressing the main point, which is the issue of how to avoid the implication that ALL desire needs to be avoided/minimized. However if Don or someone sees something pithy to add, please say so. I would eventually like to take a paragraph like the above and add it to the summary outline on page one. We can link to this thread for the full discussion of the extra details of the varying opinions. Link to post 36: [RE: Episode One Hundred Thirty Eight - Letter to Menoecus 5 - Pleasure Part One](#)