

Would Epicurus Say That It Is Better to Suffer Harm Than to Harm?

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 21, 2022 at 10:02 AM

From Letter to Menoeceus:

"And because this is the primary and inborn good, we do not choose every pleasure. Instead, we pass up many pleasures when we will gain more of what we need from doing so. And we consider many pains to be better than pleasures, if we experience a greater pleasure for a long time from having endured those pains. So every pleasure is a good thing because its nature is favorable to us, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen — just as every pain is a bad thing, yet not every pain is always to be shunned. It is proper to make all these decisions through measuring things side by side and looking at both the advantages and disadvantages, for sometimes we treat a good thing as bad and a bad thing as good."

I think to answer "is it better to suffer harm than to harm?" would be taken on a case by case basis, so there would not be an absolute rule on this. Sometime you might choose to suffer some small harm in the short term if it led to a better long-term outcome.