

# Epicurean versus deceptive (“modern”) Stoic decision making

Post by “Godfrey” of August 10, 2024 at 9:52 PM

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

There are many different ways of looking at things and therefore lots of charts, but I am tempted to say in the fundamental abstract that the first question is always as stated in ["VS71"](#). Every desire must be confronted by this question: What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished, and what if it is not?"

In my own mind I have a very hard time separating "desire" from "pleasure and pain" and "choice and avoidance" or even "willpower," and that's a major reason I have a problem separating out "desire" as if it is some fundamental of human nature apart from everything else. I think they are all a part of a bigger picture and acting as if there is a "desire" part of your brain that acts totally on its own is going to lead to lots of problems.

[Cassius](#) there's a lot to chew on here, but at the risk of oversimplification I'll take a quick stab at it before dinner 😊

[VS71](#) is a great way to analyze this. To my understanding, desire can be considered something that motivates me. The object of one's desire is, for example, a new car or true love. Or, in my current case, dinner. What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished is, ultimately, pleasure or pain. I think that it's pretty much as simple as that.

Desire and pleasure/pain, then, are two different things. Desire is the motivator, pleasure/pain is the result. The only qualification is that some desires might be considered pains. But they are still a motivator in that they make you want to do something. The way that you choose to eliminate that pain can lead to either pleasure or to more pain, so it's helpful to think what categories of desire might be involved as you choose/avoid how to eliminate that pain in order to obtain the resultant pleasure.

At least for me, willpower is another subject.

I think that it can be instructive to read some simplified neuroscience books to get a better grasp on the subject. Obviously Epicurus wasn't privy to that, but his intuition was remarkably close as far as I can tell. I'm guessing that [Don](#) and others may have something to add....

But for now, I think that I shall choose my natural/necessary desire for dinner over my desire to philosophize. All philosophy begins in the stomach, after all.