

# Why pursue unnecessary desires?

Post by "Cassius" of May 2, 2025 at 3:35 PM

I think you're well on your way to seeing that the decision to classify all of experience into either pleasure or pain is at the heart of Epicureanism - it is "philosophy." And that is why there's probably no more significant analysis in Dewitt better than:

Quote from "Epicurus And His Philosophy" page 240 - Norman DeWitt (emphasis added)

Quote

"The extension of the name of pleasure to this normal state of being was the major innovation of the new hedonism. It was in the negative form, freedom from pain of body and distress of mind, that it drew the most persistent and vigorous condemnation from adversaries. The contention was that the application of the name of pleasure to this state was unjustified on the ground that two different things were thereby being denominated by one name. Cicero made a great to-do over this argument, but it is really superficial and captious. The fact that the name of pleasure was not customarily applied to the normal or static state did not alter the fact that the name ought to be applied to it; nor that reason justified the application; nor that human beings would be the happier for so reasoning and believing.

Epicurean philosophy isn't magic. Epicurus extended the definition of pleasure to include all that is not painful as a way of refuting the arguments of the other schools that it makes no sense to set "Pleasure" as the ultimate goal because "pleasure" is insatiable and can never be satisfied. If he had not done so, he would never have been able to say that Pleasure can be satisfied, and that it is indeed possible to reach the best life.

It's a choice to see and understand things in a way that rejects the supernatural and makes sense of the evidence and the faculties that we have as a basis for how to live one's best life. The best life comes down to a life of pleasure because there are no supernatural gods or ideal forms that command us to live other than as nature has provided through pleasure and pain.

And the best way to reduce that best life into a single goal (which all philosophers want to do, and everyone else wants to do so they have an understandable goal) is to identify that single goal as "Pleasure." At that point it's up to you to go out and apply it and live your life.