

# Why pursue unnecessary desires?

Post by "Rolf" of May 2, 2025 at 4:26 PM

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

Further, I agree with you that the natural and necessary analysis is not as clear in our texts as it should be, and it's not something I focus on. I think Torquatus gives a reasonable explanation as to why it exists, as a tool of analysis, but it strikes me as rather obvious and so not something I find that important. The getting to 100% and then the rest being variation is important for logical reasons, but to me this natural / necessary division is not as much philosophical as it is practical advice. It's good practical advice too - if you need need help to see that the harder pleasures to obtain come at higher cost.

Ah, that makes sense. It's less of a hard-and-fast philosophical tenet and more of an example of how to look at things - a tool, as you say. I suppose at the end of the day Epicurean ethics comes down to using prudence to maximise the ratio of pleasure to pain, with much of the rest being tools to help one do this. Would you agree with this evaluation (oversimplified as it may be)?

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

I don't think you're missing something obvious however. This analysis is a prime tool used by the Stoics to argue that Epicurus was a minimalist, so it's a major thing to fight over. Yes it can be read to mean "you should be satisfied when you have just enough to keep you alive." But was it interpreted by Epicurus himself that way? No, so it's either not meant in that way, or Epicurus was a hypocrite. I don't think he was a hypocrite, so I think it was meant in the practical way of meaning "Watch out if you go for the more difficult pleasures in life, because that may cause more pain than it's worth. There's a lot of pleasure available in things that are easier to get, but it's up to you to decide what's best for you. And he of all people - driven as he was - would have known that if you forgo something that you really want to do then that regret can be among the most painful.

That's a good point. Knowing of these arguments against Epicureanism and the Epicurean responses to them really helps me to understand the philosophy.

On that note, I'd probably say to such as a stoic that it is important to remember that boredom and regret, too, are pains. They must be factored in when deciding on which pleasures to pursue.