

Is All Desire Painful? How Would Epicurus Answer?

Post by "Cassius" of May 9, 2025 at 6:30 AM

Quote from Godfrey

desires are not feelings and therefore not pains. Pleasure/pain is one biological function, desire is another.

[Quote from Don](#)

Completely, 100% agree with this!!

My only hesitation with this wording is that we can feel pain or pleasure ABOUT a desire? But I completely agree that we need to remember the natural/necessary/etc. categorization is about desire NOT pleasure.

I am coming around to the position that this is basically the general and ultimate answer to the question. Desire is neither painful nor pleasurable by definition/necessity. There are certain kinds of desires that we can generalize to more frequently lead to more pain than pleasure, and vice versa, but those desires themselves aren't by definition painful or pleasurable.

And he who counsels the young man to live well, but the old man to make a good end, is foolish, not merely because of the desirability of life, but also because it is the same training which teaches to live well and to die well. Yet much worse still is the man who says it is good not to be born but 'once born make haste to pass the gates of Death'.

The feeling of pleasure and pain weighs in on everything, especially in the way Epicurus says that you are always feeling, and expands the meaning of pleasure to encompass all feeling that isn't painful,

But only the concepts of pain and pleasure themselves "are" by definition pain and pleasure - everything else we discuss (this is what I meant by "external" earlier) is a reaction that varies with circumstance.