

# The Hedonistic Calculus - explained through an equation

**Post by "Cassius" of November 4, 2019 at 11:00 AM**

Could you explain your questions? Why would duration be irrelevant to "unnecessary" desires?

As you may know I consider the whole natural/necessary evaluation to be subject to the same issues and limitations as these calculation models. Is it not true that what is "necessary" for some people in some situations is much different than for other people/ situations? An automobile might be a "necessity" for living and working in rural Texas, but totally unnecessary in downtown New York. Even in the sense of basics such as food and air and water, we can for a short time defer even those (hold our breath or fast or go without water) for a time in the pursuit of some other / greater pleasure, or avoidance of worse pain.

I certainly don't mean to criticize Epicurus for referencing them in the letter to Menoecus, and I do think the structure is helpful for analysis, just like these calculation models can be. But I tend to think that the commentators (especially those looking to be friendly to Stoics and other rules-based philosophies) have overemphasized their benefit, and minimized their limitations, for just the reasons that we are discussing here.

Among people very knowledgeable about Epicurus, it would be a given and need no reinforcement that there are no absolute rules, and so the question is always asked in terms of what is "necessary" or "natural" FOR US. But outside that clear context, the implication that "natural" or "necessary" might be quantifiable as a universal list would end up, I think, being the REVERSE of the Epicurean perspective. And that seems to be a strong temptation that people looking for accommodation to Stoics and others simply cannot resist.