

PD10 - Interpretations of PD 10 Discussion

Post by “Don” of January 17, 2021 at 9:49 PM

[Elayne](#) , I did bring up PD 10 in the other thread in relation to the bliss pill, but I thought this thread was to specifically discuss the meaning and application of PD 10. But I'm happy to summarize my thoughts overall on that specific topic.

The more I consider the bliss pill / experience machine, the less helpful I think that thought experiment is. I'm equating the pill/machine with unicorns, centaurs, and other mythical things. Discussing whether or not to take the pill or hook yourself up to the machine is, from my perspective, as helpful as talking about how pleasurable would it be to ride a unicorn over a rainbow.

It's going to come up, however, in any general conversation about pleasure being the goal of life. That's why Wilson had to address it. I also agree with her that Epicurus would advise not to take it.

I still think Epicurus would not recommend taking the bliss pill or hooking yourself up to the experience machine for the following reasons:

- Pleasure is the goal, and specifically living the most pleasurable life.
- We use our senses and the reactions of pleasure and pain (and the prolepses) to know the real world.
- We use the information from our senses and our reactions of pleasure and pain to make prudent decisions about our actions to move ourselves steadily in the direction of living the most pleasurable life.
- If we are somehow cut off from the real world, our senses will not work.
 - If the machine, only our mind will be provided sense data and it cannot be checked through the other senses.
 - If a pill, not knowing how it works it's hard to say, but again there is an imposed block on senses by definition.
- Without our senses, there's no way to use the Canon to make decisions to live the most pleasurable life.
- Additionally, from what I can see, the pill and machine would impose someone else's algorithm on what constitutes pleasure on me. If you say, no the pill and machine make you see what's pleasurable to you, we're back to arguing whether unicorns or centaurs are better at chess.

Therefore, I don't think it's productive to tie ourselves in knots discussing such a remote hypothetical when Epicurus was looking for a philosophy to help people in the here and now. I understand Wilson's rationale for including it in her article and concur with her assertion

regarding Epicurus's reaction to it.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

I think you are reading far more into [PD10](#) than it says. Epicurus doesn't take it as far as you have. It's not stated as a universal piece of advice.

LOL. Now, that's the same thing I said about your and [Cassius](#) 's interpretation. You're going to have to be more specific on what you mean by *my* "reading more into (it)". I think I'm taking the most conservative interpretation possible in light of what's actually written and taking it along with what else Epicurus wrote on this exact topic.

I think that Doctrine is addressing a specific life situation and refuting a specific accusation leveled at the Epicureans, namely that they're nothing but Cyrenaics under a different name.

If by a "universal piece of advice," you mean do I think Epicurus would advise anyone that a pleasurable life could not be lived by living a profligate life, I would agree. That is exactly what he says. Do I think that Epicurus would say that IF that life could dispel the fears and anxieties about the gods, death, etc., that it could be a pleasurable life? Yes. But I believe Epicurus was a realist and dealt with real solutions to real world problems, and as in this life the profligate life will undoubtedly lead to more pain overall than pleasure, he would not recommend it as a series of choice-worthy pleasures.