

# Does Happiness Require a Non-Epicurean Decision Procedure?

Post by "Pivot" of January 9, 2019 at 10:57 AM

Very interesting thoughts Hiram. Thank you for correcting my view of Epicurean ethics - PD5 shows the necessity for justice in the decision procedure, as you pointed out. Some problems are still there though as I see it.

PD5 is a bit difficult to believe. It is likely there are sociopaths or others who go through life incredibly unjustly, but who are cunning enough to escape detection without worry. At the very least there are certainly isolated incidents where an opportunity to act unjustly for pleasure presents itself to an individual. Imagine finding a wallet with thousands of dollars in it in a dark alley - is it unjust to steal it as opposed to returning it to the owner?

Looking at the PDs, justice is "...something found mutually beneficial in men's dealings." Also that "if a man makes a law and it does not prove to be mutually advantageous, then this is no longer just." Finally, combining his definition of injustice: "Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which is associated with the apprehension of being discovered by those appointed to punish such actions." It appears we have all the conditions necessary for it to be just to steal the wallet.

The situation of the married man, miserable with his job and life, is still troubling because it seems the hedonistic calculus *would* allow him to flee his family, even if they were not doing anything wrong and it was only his job and the burden of providing that contributed to his misery. I do not quite understand how the DeWitt quote would apply if the man finds himself in this unexpected situation. Situations arise that cannot be planned for.

If the highest good is pleasure and [death is nothing to us](#), then I can perfectly see how an Epicurean could sacrifice himself for a friend. But I know that friendship is cherished only because of its great contribution to a man's happiness. It still seems that this is valuing relationships in the wrong sort of way. This is an objection from alienation levied by Railton (<https://pages.ucsd.edu/faculty/rarnes...quentialism.pdf>). Imagine you ask your best friend why he helped you out in your time of need, and he answered "because your friendship is integral for my sustained happiness." It just seems like this sort of valuation, as a means to an end, is the wrong kind. Unless Epicurus makes an exception for friendship as an end in itself *along with* happiness, I can't see a way around it.

Again I should say I am an Epicurean, but am always looking to sharpen my understanding in light of objections.