

Pleasure vs pain - example and thoughts!

Post by "Don" of May 20, 2023 at 11:55 AM

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Anyway my colleague is willing to do cocaine and will go through the come down afterwards because he argue's that the pleasure outweighs the pain. Of course at some point, he might become addicted to cocaine so the pain factor would kick in then. But he argues that he doesn't have an addictive personality type and only does cocaine on special occasions. It could be argued in this scenario that he is being Epicurean?! Thoughts!

Right off the bat, I can't say whether your colleague is "being Epicurean" or not. Just saying you're doing something for the "pleasure" of it strikes me as being more generally "hedonistic" than strictly Epicurean. Around here at least, that capital-E Epicurean brings along a lot more than simply doing something for the pleasure it provides.

On a deeper level, [Cassius](#) (& others here) and I have had some "knock-down drag-out fights" 😊 over the years concerning the interpretation of [PD10](#) as well as the section in the [Letter to Menoikeus](#) about "the pleasure of those who are prodigal." I have refined my views on that Principal Doctrine thanks to those "discussions."

I maintain that it's not an activity, in and of itself, that is objectionable to Epicurus's philosophy but the consequences. It is of paramount importance to **always** adhere to [VS71](#): *Ask this question of every desire: what will happen to me if the object of desire is achieved, and what if not?* @Nate 's mention of [symmetresis](#) (Great word, btw!!) is a nice one-word summary of that process. One "weighs together" the "What if's?" against each other. Questions for your colleague to ask themselves would include, but not be limited to:

- Does the activity negatively affect his life? Positively affect?
- Are they willing to accept the physical damage to their body?
- What happens if they don't do the drug in the social setting?
- Are friendships damaged if the drug is not partaken of? If partaken of? If so, which of those friendships are important to your well-being?
- As Nate points out: Are you concerned about being caught using an illegal substance? (whether one agrees with the justice of the laws or not, it's still illegal)

And so on...

Epicurus's position seems to me that you can't have a blanket statement *against* a specific activity. Epicurus is all about context. That said, I continue to assert that Epicurus thought it was *better* in the long run to not indulge all the time in "sex, drugs, and rock & roll." Those behaviors and activities have been shown to not be conducive to an overall pleasurable existence due to health and social concerns. He's not laying down a prohibition from on high. He's saying, "Okay, if that's what you want to do. Report back to me on how it's going later, and we'll talk." But, as I pointed out in post #5 above, Epicurus wrote in his *Symposium* (lost except for fragments now 😭) , of which it appears he was a participant in the dialogue, that it was the behavior *arising* from getting drunk that was the problem, not the drinking of wine itself.

[ThinkingCat](#) : You have definitely earned your screen-name. Not only are you obviously thinking yourself; you're getting the rest of us to think as well! Thanks!