

PD10 - Interpretations of PD 10 Discussion

Post by “Don” of January 16, 2021 at 8:50 AM

This new thread grew out of the discussion of Catherine Wilson's article in The Statesman. In that thread, several of us posted differing interpretations of PD 10. [Cassius](#) suggested (correctly) that here might be a better spot for that discussion to take place to better focus the other thread. Fully agree! Hence, my starting this new thread over here.

[Elayne](#) and ya'll: Let me see if I can correctly summarize your interpretation of PD 10:

As Epicurus says in his philosophy as a whole, nothing stands above pleasure. As far as the "profligate" of PD 10 are experiencing pleasure, there can be no argument or censure against whatever activities they choose to engage in. PD 10 is only saying that the "profligate" can be censured in so far as they aren't experiencing the fullness of pleasure because they still have the "mind's fears about astronomical phenomena and death and suffering." If they would resolve these pains and fears and come to a correct understanding of these, they could engage in any of the activities which bring them pleasure without anxiety. Please correct or add anything I've gotten wrong or missed. I sincerely want to make sure I fully understand where you're coming from.

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2021 at 9:21 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

As Epicurus says in his philosophy as a whole, nothing stands above pleasure. As far as the "profligate" of PD 10 are experiencing pleasure, there can be no argument or censure against whatever activities they choose to engage in. PD 10 is only saying that the "profligate" can be censured in so far as they aren't experiencing the fullness of pleasure because they still have the "mind's fears about astronomical phenomena and death and suffering." If they would resolve these pains and fears and come to a correct understanding of these, they could engage in any of the activities which bring them pleasure without anxiety

I would rewrite that as follows:

As Epicurus says in his philosophy as a whole, nothing stands above pleasure as the ultimate good, which means the ultimate good or goal for which we do everything else to achieve, and which is not in terms an intermediate step toward any higher goal. As far as the "profligate" of PD 10 are experiencing pleasure, there can be no argument or censure against whatever activities they choose to engage in if in fact those activities succeed in bringing them pleasure which they feel to outweigh the pain which may be required to achieve that pleasure. This is because any legitimate censure would have to be based on them failing to achieve the ultimate goal of nature, and if they do in fact achieve that goal, there is no natural grounds for censuring them. PD 10 is only saying that the "profligate" can be censured to the extent that they fail to achieve their goal, which in practical human experience is likely to happen if their profligate ways do not banish the "mind's fears about astronomical phenomena and death and suffering." If their profligate ways included a means of resolving these and all other pains and fears, there would be no proper /natural grounds for censuring them because they were in fact successful in achieving a pleasurable life.

Now a couple of comments:

(1) I think it's clear that what I am doing is taking "pleasure is the goal" to its logical extreme and presuming that this is a hypothetical profligate man who is hypothesized (against the odds of general experience) to in fact be successful in achieving a pleasurable life. Anyone who looks at [PD10](#) and insists on saying that the profligate man "cannot" be successful, and analyzing it that way, is in my view not accepting this as the hypothetical it seems clearly intended to be. Taking such a position, such a person won't ever accept the conclusion I think [PD10](#) was aimed at communicating, so I think anyone analyzing this has to deal with whether and how to treat this as a hypothetical. So my position is that [PD10](#) is taking the same logical/hypothetical approach entailed in the Torquatus section of On Ends:

"I will start then in the manner approved by the author of the system himself, by settling what are the essence and qualities of the thing that is the object of our inquiry; not that I suppose you to be ignorant of it, but because this is the logical method of procedure. We are inquiring, then, what is the final and ultimate Good, which as all philosophers are agreed must be of such a nature as to be the End to which all other things are means, while it is not itself a means to anything else. This Epicurus finds in pleasure; pleasure he holds to be the Chief Good, pain the Chief Evil."

(2) Clarity also requires that we make clear that there is the time issue. Epicurus said in the letter to Menoeceus that the wise man isn't going to choose the longest life, but the most pleasant, so it needs to be clear that the profligate man isn't necessarily wrong because he experiences pains "longer" than he experiences pleasure. If the letter to Menoeceus is correct, then we have to let the individual involved judge whether the pleasure achieved is worth the cost in pain / effort of achieving it.

(3) Just as with point two we have to take a position on whether Epicurus was saying that it is more important to eliminate pain than it is to achieve pleasure. If you take the position that Epicurus was advising real people to place first priority on eliminating pain, in order to have the best life possible to a human, then you're going to slide to asceticism and minimalism. I would even argue that you're impelled toward eventual suicide at a relatively young age, before the inevitable pains of middle and older age set in. Of course I take the opposite position, and think Epicurus was saying that just as we don't choose the longest life, but the most pleasant, we don't choose the most pain-free life, but the most pleasant.

Post by “Elayne” of January 16, 2021 at 10:30 AM

I agree with almost everything [Cassius](#) said, except for a slightly different take on the hypothetical being a purely logical argument. I take his formulation as a counterfactual, similar to when he said if all pleasures were distributed over the whole person and of the same intensity, they would all be the same -- there, he was asserting that pleasurable feelings do have variety. Because of his observations.

I think it's similar here-- by presenting a counterfactual, he is saying he hasn't observed such a strategy succeeding. That partying doesn't relieve fears of the supernatural-- according to his observations.

Of course, yes, embedded in that formula is also the supremacy of pleasure as the goal, and his condemnation of the strategy because it fails at pleasure. But his point is more about his observation on the strategy and its failures than on logic and hypotheticals.

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2021 at 3:00 PM

Ha let me quote myself:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Epicurus was saying that just as we don't choose the longest life, but the most pleasant, we don't choose the most pain-free life, but the most pleasant.

Is it not interesting how this statement has to be viewed carefully too. Because from the point of view of PD3 (the limit of quantity....) the most pain-free life IS the most pleasant life, by

definition, at least in PD3 when considering the issue from the point of quantity alone. But if you consider that pleasure can't be reduced to a single aspect of measurement that trumps all others (certainly not quantity of time), then every time you put a caveat and say "pleasure in terms of" you're going to end up with a problem in measurement that isn't resolvable by any other standard of measure than going back to "pleasure" itself - which presumably is an individual standard, since only individuals can feel pleasure.

This is why I look at the "pleasure is absence of pain" as not only experientially true, as Elayne will be quick to say, but also as "logically" true. Maybe the correct word is not "logically" because what we're NOT saying is that this can be proven by abstract logic disconnected from experience. I suppose the best words I have for this at the moment are "true reason" (doesn't Lucretius refer to "vera ratio"?) because it is reason based tightly and closely and validated by experience. Maybe it's also "true logic," or at least "practical logic." But to return to the point, it's both logically and experientially sound.

Post by “Elayne” of January 16, 2021 at 3:13 PM

[Cassius](#) maybe what you are noticing is just accurate communication of observations? Not logic? If I say that any time there isn't pain there is pleasure, by my observations, and I've observed no 3rd condition-- then anytime I say there's no pain, you can conclude that means there is pleasure. But you aren't extending a chain of logic. You are just referencing my past descriptions. You aren't making any new conclusions about reality or getting new information, just understanding my language. Just to converse, we have to do that-- but we don't actually require words to be aware of the feelings and phenomena being described. It's just a matter of knowing what people are talking about, not working a logic problem.

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2021 at 3:42 PM

Maybe the question is the extent we are converting experience to concepts and back again. Is all manipulation of concepts something that comes under the category of "reason" or "logic?" Certainly we think there is accurate and inaccurate manipulation of concepts, but don't we call that accurate or inaccurate logic or reasoning?

Post by “Don” of January 16, 2021 at 5:30 PM

[Cassius](#) and [Elayne](#) , this is all *very* helpful and let's me see ya'll's thought processes. I greatly appreciate your willingness to continue to engage in this conversation. Let me now quote the areas above where we have agreement:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

As Epicurus says in his philosophy as a whole, nothing stands above pleasure as the ultimate good, which means the ultimate good or goal for which we do everything else to achieve, and which is not in terms an intermediate step toward any higher goal. As far as the "profligate" of PD 10 are experiencing pleasure, there can be no argument or censure against whatever activities they choose to engage in if in fact those activities succeed in bringing them pleasure which they feel to outweigh the pain which may be required to achieve that pleasure. This is because any legitimate censure would have to be based on them failing to achieve the ultimate goal of nature, and if they do in fact achieve that goal, there is no natural grounds for censuring them. PD 10 is only saying that the "profligate" can be censured to the extent that they fail to achieve their goal, which in practical human experience is likely to happen if their profligate ways do not banish the "mind's fears about astronomical phenomena and death and suffering." If their profligate ways included a means of resolving these and all other pains and fears, there would be no proper /natural grounds for censuring them because they were in fact successful in achieving a pleasurable life.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

he is saying he hasn't observed such a strategy succeeding. That partying doesn't relieve fears of the supernatural-- according to his observations.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

embedded in that formula is also the supremacy of pleasure as the goal, and his condemnation of the strategy because it fails at pleasure.

Now, I can address the places where our interpretations diverge with more specificity.

Post by "Don" of January 16, 2021 at 9:20 PM

Here is my initial response to your posts above. Please let me know if I misunderstood or misinterpreted anything you wrote :

I think this Doctrine is neither counterfactual nor hypothetical. I think Epicurus is saying exactly what he means to say.

I interpret it to be Epicurus's concrete observation as to the inadequacy of pursuing a life of "sex, drugs, & rock n roll" (to use a shorthand) if one wants to lead a pleasurable life. The "profligate" life provides momentary pleasure but will lead to multiple pains in short order. You are welcome to pursue those pleasures, but Epicurus is not going to encourage or sanction your choice. Not all pleasures should be chosen.

I believe this Doctrine was also a direct counter to any criticism of his school of just being Cyrenaic. He needed to give a firm rebuttal to those who painted the Epicureans with the same brush as the Cyrenaics. It is also my contention that this is the purpose of the Letter to Menoikeus section:

Quote

So when we say that pleasure is the goal, we do not mean the pleasures of decadent people or the enjoyment of sleep, as is believed by those who are ignorant or who don't understand us or who are ill-disposed to us, but to be free from bodily pain and mental disturbance. For a pleasant life is produced not by drinking and endless parties and enjoying boys and women and consuming fish and other delicacies of an extravagant table, but by sober reasoning, searching out the cause of everything we accept or reject, and driving out opinions that cause the greatest trouble in the soul.

This again is Epicurus saying exactly what he means to say: "*We do NOT mean the pleasures of decadent people (άσωτος).*" He uses the same word to refer to those people in both the Letter and PD 10. He clearly says "a pleasant life is produced NOT by [that lifestyle] but by sober reasoning, searching out the cause of everything we accept or reject, and driving out opinions that cause the greatest trouble in the soul." In the Letter, "sober reasoning" translates νήφων λογισμὸς "nēphōn logismos" where nēphōn literally means "to be sober; to drink no wine; to be self-controlled." That he uses drinking to say what does not produce a pleasurable life, then says being sober does produce a pleasurable life seems to link those two opposing clauses together. One negative, one positive.

To address [Elayne](#) specifically, I'm not saying Epicurus is advocating a middle path. I don't believe he has any problem with drinking per se (he wrote a book entitled Symposium after all) but just getting drunk and acting there fool, or with sex (he cannot conceive of the good without it), etc. But a life consisting solely of these specific decadent pleasures taken to extremes will not teach one to lead a pleasurable life.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Anyone who looks at [PD10](#) and insists on saying that the profligate man "cannot" be successful, and analyzing it that way, is in my view not accepting this as the hypothetical it seems clearly intended to be.

So then to finally address your quote here, [Cassius](#) , I do not accept that this is a hypothetical and don't believe it should be interpreted that way.

Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2021 at 10:54 PM

Thanks Don -

I think we end up in the same place because of the practicalities of human life.

However I would say that the practical approach alone would undercut the meaning of these two:

PD8: " No pleasure is a bad thing in itself; but the means which produce some pleasures bring with them disturbances many times greater than the pleasures."

and from the letter to Menoeceus:

"Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an evil, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided."

It seems to me that Epicurus is clearly wishing to establish as a flat principle that "pleasure" is an unalloyed good and is to be accepted as such in the philosophic scheme as an absolute premise of all other conclusions that might follow from that premise.

If we look at [PD10](#) solely from the "practical" point of view alone, it seems to me that we imply, or at least open up the logical possibility, that pleasure can lose its nature as good in certain contexts -- namely the context in which the cost of such pleasure is large in terms of the pain required in order to achieve it. I would submit that labeling pleasure "good" or "not good" is not at all the same as saying pleasure is to be "chosen" or not chosen," so I am suggesting that Epicurus is telling us to keep these two aspects in mind as distinctly separate.

This seems to me to present a significant problem in analyzing the original question as set by Torquatus, (who cites it as something on which all philosophers, presumably even Epicurus, agree) which is that of specifying the highest good toward which all else aims, and which is itself not the means to something else. If you are suggesting that pleasure may at times not be a good at all, then you are pretty clearly opening up the field to say that if pleasure cannot be

relied on to always be good, then you have to value something else (presumably wisdom or prudence) as higher than pleasure, since you need wisdom / prudence to know when to choose pleasure. Plato will back you into a corner and you will end up admitting, as did [Philebus](#), that there is something more important for you to have than pleasure.

On the other hand, the more absolute position suggested by Elayne and me would (I submit) have it both ways. You would be affirming the practical conclusion (that it is necessary to watch choices carefully) both experimentally and reasonably according to your definitions.

I seem to remember that there is at least one reference but possibly more than one in Lucretius to a position being doubly potent, or perhaps it is "cutting off all retreat." I can't say I am 100% sure that Lucretius was thinking of that in this context, but this discussion is causing me to be more convinced than ever that Epicurus should be read as linking the experiential with the logical and fighting on both fronts. I suppose it's not "necessary" to fight on the logical level if someone is the type of supremely practical person who isn't bothered by logical problems, but I personally am convinced that the Epicurus was committed not to abandoning logical arguments, but to showing how they can be used properly in conjunction with experience.

Probably someone arguing this position would also cite [PD16](#) as evidence of Epicurus not abandoning reason, but pointing to its proper use:

[PD16](#). In but few things chance hinders a wise man, but the greatest and most important matters, reason has ordained, and throughout the whole period of life does and will ordain.

Presuming that you or Elayne may assert it, I will continue to agree with you that it is legitimate to find it unnecessary to engage in logical debates at all. Some people can successfully go through life not worrying about certain issues, effectively saying "to heck with Plato and his arguments." But I think the evidence is overwhelming that Epicurus didn't just teach his students to ignore Plato and tell them that the Platonists that totally wrong to think about logical reasoning. I would say instead that he showed his students a logical way to reach his conclusions based on the combined use of reason and evidence.

Note: Looks like i am thinking of a passage in Book 3 (perhaps in the mid-400's) which Munro translates as:

"So invariably is truth found to make head against false reason and to cut off all retreat from the assailant, and by a two-fold refutation to put falsehood to rout."

Bailey: "So surely is true fact seen to run counter to false reasoning, and to shut off retreat from him who flees, and with double-edged refutation to prove the falsehood."

Browne: "So evidently does the true matter of fact overthrow all false reasoning, that there is no possibility to escape its force; and the contrary opinion is either way fully refuted."

More context for that passage is here: [Episode Forty-Three - The Mind is Born, Grows Old, and Dies With the Body](#)

Post by "Don" of January 16, 2021 at 11:44 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

PD8: " No pleasure is a bad thing in itself; but the means which produce some pleasures bring with them disturbances many times greater than the pleasures."

and from the letter to Menoeceus:

"Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an evil, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided."

LOL! I would cite both those [Principal Doctrines](#) to defend my position, too, so we *must* be starting to meet somewhere 😊

I did want to address this part of your post:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

If we look at [PD10](#) solely from the "practical" point of view alone, it seems to me that we imply, or at least open up the logical possibility, that pleasure can lose its nature as good in certain contexts -- namely the context in which the cost of such pleasure is large in terms of the pain required in order to achieve it. I would submit that labeling pleasure "good" or "not good" is not at all the same as saying pleasure is to be "chosen" or not chosen," so I am suggesting that Epicurus is telling us to keep these two aspects in mind as distinctly separate.

I don't agree. Looking at it as "practical" provides a concrete example of the philosophy's application to a real-world situation in which people must exercise choices and avoidances as to how to live a pleasurable life. The extravagant pleasures in and of themselves are not "good" or "bad"; they are situationally "choice-worthy" or not. There's no question the "profligate" (I'm really beginning to hate that translation) are experiencing pleasure. Epicurus is not saying some pleasures in and of themselves are good or bad. He explicitly states pleasure is good, The

Good. But also explicitly states not all pleasures should be chosen at all times. The import for me of PD 10, PD 8, the Letter, is to reinforce the goal is to lead a pleasurable life. I would cite:

Quote

PD 25 If at all critical times you do not connect each of your actions to the natural goal of life, but instead turn too soon to some other kind of goal in thinking whether to avoid or pursue something, then your thoughts and your actions will not be in harmony.

For me, that dovetails with:

Quote

everything that you accept or reject in terms of the health of the body and the serenity of the soul — since that is the goal of a completely blessed life.

Epicurus's emphasis, in my opinion, is that the "profligate" experiences pleasure but will not find "the health of the body and the serenity of the soul" nor "a completely blessed life" if they're not also addressing their fear of the gods, of death, of pain. That way of life will not teach you how to rid yourself of those impediments to a completely blessed life filled to its fullness of pleasure.

Post by “Cassius” of January 17, 2021 at 5:53 AM

I certainly think that we are together on the practical result of the doctrine. I think we are just still apart on the type of argument being employed and therefore the implications involved in presenting the position as a system of thought.

Post by “Don” of January 17, 2021 at 7:17 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I certainly think that we are together on the practical result of the doctrine.

Well, I'm genuinely glad to hear that. Originally, I wasn't even sure of that!

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think we are just still apart on the type of argument being employed and therefore the implications involved in presenting the position as a system of thought.

My understanding of this differing position is still that you're trying to make this Doctrine do more work than it has to. My position is that there are 40 [principal doctrines](#) that all work together to present the full system of the school. I'm also trying to take the most literal approach to each doctrine with the least amount of interpretation. In effect, I'm going to characterize my literal/conservative intent as "Epicurus said what he meant and meant what he said" and leave it at that. I think once one starts to say "what he's actually saying is..." that's "like butter scraped over too much bread."

Post by "Cassius" of January 17, 2021 at 7:39 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

I think once one starts to say "what he's actually saying is..." that's "like butter scraped over too much bread."

I see your perspective there and think it is a good place to start. However I would not recommend stopping there, because unless you develop more of the context of the discussion it's easy to miss many implications of what is being presented. In this context I don't think Epicurus can be fully appreciated without realizing how much he amounts to a rejection of Platonic viewpoints, and that remains very important today since Platonic viewpoints are embedded in so much of modern thinking. Plato is never mentioned by name in the principle doctrines, yet it seems that Epicurus was probably thinking explicitly about the need to refute his viewpoints when he compiled his list of important doctrines. A list of principles presented as "this is important to understand" isn't fully understood until the reader understands "why this is important."

Norman Dewitt Epicurus and His Philosophy Page 12

He also exhibits great familiarity with the writings of Plato and he distributed among members of his school the work of refuting or ridiculing his various dialogues. His own classification of the desires is developed from a Platonic hint and he begins to erect his structure of hedonism from the point where this topic was left by Plato. A paragraph is extant in which he warns his disciples against the Platonic view of the universe as described in the Timaeus, and elsewhere

he pokes a little satirical fun at that famous opus. *More than half of his forty Authorized Doctrines are direct contradictions of Platonic teachings.*

Post by “Don” of January 17, 2021 at 8:57 AM

Ah, DeWitt. I have intentionally not finished re-reading all of *Epicurus and His Philosophy*. This is exactly what I mean by making each Doctrine do more work than it has to. When you (and DeWitt) say...:

Quote from Cassius

Plato is never mentioned by name in the principle doctrines

...I have to ask, "Then is Plato really there?" Epicurus and his school had plenty of other schools and philosophers to refute, both contemporary and older ones. I'm maintaining that PD 10 is a direct attack/refutation against the Cyrenaics.

I'm definitely NOT saying that Epicurus and his school didn't need to address Plato's philosophy, and I agree with DeWitt *in general* on that point. But, frankly, Dewitt's penchant for finding precursors of Christianity everywhere in Epicurus makes me wary of his finding anti-Platonic elements everywhere, too.

Post by “Cassius” of January 17, 2021 at 9:00 AM

Yep, your reaction is consistent, to say the least! 😊 This is why I recommend that everyone at least read DeWitt before making up their minds, because most people aren't going to find DeWitt's perspective anywhere else but in "Epicurus and His Philosophy." Everyone should read and come to their own conclusions.

Post by “Elayne” of January 17, 2021 at 9:30 AM

[Don](#), if you don't take each PD in the context of all the PDs, then you can easily wind up "proof-texting" and drawing conclusions Epicurus did not make.

[Cassius](#), I don't mind it so much when people use reasoning to explain a point as long as they do not imply that a conclusion can be drawn from logic that is as valid as conclusions from observations, and as long as they don't get caught up in worrying whether observations that challenge their logic are challenging the philosophy itself, because that is not a thing with EP. The logic at all times must follow the observations, never lead them, and the logic must constantly be available to revision when the observational premises broaden.

Post by “Cassius” of January 17, 2021 at 10:48 AM

Well this thread was extremely helpful in our recording of Episode 54 of the Lucretius Today podcast. I will get that edited and posted as soon as possible and hopefully we will get some comments that can be used in next week's episode too.

Post by “Don” of January 17, 2021 at 11:21 AM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Don, if you don't take each PD in the context of all the PDs, then you can easily wind up "proof-texting" and drawing conclusions Epicurus did not make.

Point taken, but I don't believe I'm proof-texting in relation to PD 10. I've seen people try to proof-text with excerpts and fragments (e.g., lathe biosas), and I fully agree that's a problem.

When I say that it seems to me that ya'll are making PD 10 do more work than it has to, I'm not saying it should be read in isolation. Each Doctrine is one of 40 bricks in the wall supporting the school (to use an Oinoanda metaphor), so I don't think every brick needs to carry the whole structure. Individual bricks can respond to specific tenets of the philosophy or specific refutations of other schools. Of course, each doctrine is a part of the philosophy and needs to fit in properly. However, from my perspective, there's danger in both the urge to proof-text and to overinterpret.

Post by “Elayne” of January 17, 2021 at 11:56 AM

[Don](#) then maybe you would be more inclined to agree if I frame it as what [PD10](#) does not say? [PD10](#) does not say that prudence is more important than pleasure. It does not say anything that would rule out a bliss pill, IF said pill was known to reliably give the person in question pleasure-- if it was an accurate decision, to take the bliss pill, and had the intended results, which would have to include not having anxiety over imaginary things like gods. PD 10 does not say that it would be impossible to use prudence accurately to choose a bliss pill, because it is not considering that particular hypothetical, so it can't be used as evidence Epicurus would say no.

[PD10](#) does not say anything to rule out the pleasures of the profligates if the painful consequences could be removed, or if they could be combined with the pleasure of information about reality that would remove false fears. Nor does it say anything to rule out the possibility that there could be an individual who successfully enjoyed those pleasures without having pains. So it can't be used as an argument against that possibility, which would certainly be permissible in the whole context of the philosophy.

Post by “Don” of January 17, 2021 at 12:48 PM

Okay. That seems like it might be a fruitful approach. Here we go:

[Quote from Elayne](#)

[PD10](#) does not say that prudence is more important than pleasure.

Agreed.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

It does not say anything that would rule out a bliss pill,...

Agreed. However, I'm not going down the "bliss pill" rabbit hole again. This whole topic is like asking, "Would you have a unicorn for a pet?" but even less defined. At least we "know" what a unicorn "is" basically.

Also, I see Epicurus's philosophy as one of individual responsibility. Each of us is responsible for our own pleasure. We get to make choices. Let me be clear, I'm not placing decision-making above pleasure. It is a means to pleasure. If someone wants to take the pill, take the pill. As I see it defined, it takes away the ability to choose and reject, to chart ones own path. Okay, it's

the *final* choice one could take, but the pill/machine is so ill-defined, I'm reluctant to keep flogging a dead unicorn.

In the end, the argument doesn't provide benefits to real people. For PD 10, I'd rather deal in reality and practicalities as Epicurus said philosophy should do.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

[PD10](#) does not say anything to rule out the pleasures of the profligates if the painful consequences could be removed, or if they could be combined with the pleasure of information about reality that would remove false fears.

Agreed, but again I don't believe Epicurus is dealing in hypotheticals or counterfactuals here. He has observed that that lifestyle - in reality and in everyday experience - is not conducive to a pleasure-filled life. It does NOT teach how to remove false fears. I agree with your proposal that it doesn't rule it out, but I believe Epicurus is addressing a real person in the real world who asks "Can I have a completely pleasurable life engaging in "the objects which are productive of pleasures to profligate persons"?" To that, I believe he would answer "No."

Post by "Cassius" of January 17, 2021 at 1:10 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

In the end, the argument doesn't provide benefits to real people.

Don this comment is very close to the issue that I think a number of us to have been circling around for a while on these issues. My own conclusion is that the wider interpretation DOES provide real benefits to SOME real people, but for other real people it does not.

I think you'll be really interested in the discussion we had today, so I took the time to edit it immediately so we can keep the conversation moving forward. When you find time to listen to it, be sure to listen all the way to the end, where I think some of the most important discussion takes place.

[RE: Episode Fifty-Four: Reason Is Dependent On The Senses](#)

Post by "Cassius" of January 17, 2021 at 5:04 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

My own conclusion is that the wider interpretation DOES provide real benefits to SOME real people, but for other real people it does not.

And one of the keys to this is going to be the definition we use for "logic" and "reason" which is addressed near the end of the podcast. I am particularly interested in as much feedback as possible from people on this point, as you will understand when you listen.

Post by “Elayne” of January 17, 2021 at 5:43 PM

[Don](#) if I'm not mistaken-- and I may be, I didn't go hunt through and check-- I thought you were the one who brought up PD 10 as evidence Epicurus would advise against the bliss pill. So that is why I mentioned it again-- you said we were making it do things it wasn't written to do. And I was countering that the whole reason PD 10 came into play on that question was that you used it as an argument. But by your proposal to limit [PD10](#) to only a specific circumstance, it doesn't apply anyway. If you weren't the one who started that, then my reply wouldn't make as much sense ☐.

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.

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.

Post by “Don” of January 17, 2021 at 10:59 PM

To add some additional details from my perspective using vocabulary from Episode 54 of the Lucretius podcast:

- 1) I believe the "pleasure" pill / machine would prevent the senses from being *reliable*, therefore, there would be no way to make choices based on *reliable* information.
 - 2) Epicurus made *repeated observations* on the profligate life leading *reliably* to more pain than pleasure; therefore, that lifestyle is to be "censured" and not recommended if one wants to achieve the goal of leading a pleasurable, happy, blessed life.
-

Post by “Elayne” of January 18, 2021 at 7:27 AM

[Don](#) if it was a true bliss pill as advertised, then it would provide reliable pleasure. Otherwise it's just false advertising. As I've said already, I'd tend to be distrustful of it, given the history of pharmaceutical promises! ☐ But if it were really as advertised, there's no clear Epicurean argument against it.

And yes, that is exactly what I am trying to say-- that as I see it, when you used [PD10](#) to argue against a hypothetical it wasn't designed for, [Cassius](#) and I replied bringing in the context of the whole philosophy. I am trying to show you that you were doing what you said we had done. I see it as the other way around-- we were limiting the PD to its specific context without taking it to any general conclusion that would contradict the rest of the philosophy.

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2021 at 8:58 AM

Yes this is the key "if it was a true bliss pill as advertised, then it would provide reliable pleasure." I understand you (Don) are unwilling to entertain that as a hypothetical so really the issue becomes are you suggesting we draw a bright line against all hypotheticals for which we have never seen an actual instance? I can see that being a reasonable position to entertain but I would think that would have far reaching implications that would require scrutiny.

Post by "Don" of January 18, 2021 at 9:14 AM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Don if it was a true bliss pill as advertised, then it would provide reliable pleasure. Otherwise it's just false advertising. As I've said already, I'd tend to be distrustful of it, given the history of pharmaceutical promises! ☐☐ But if it were really as advertised, there's no clear Epicurean argument against it.

See, that's where I disagree with the premise of the thought experiment: "a true bliss pill." There can't be such a thing. It seems, by definition, the pill or machine is *changing* all your sensations to "pleasurable" ones. If it makes you only "feel" pleasure, even in the midst extreme of objectively pain-inducing experiences, it is substituting its chemical or technological "pleasure-inducing" effect over your natural sensation or reaction. By definition, it can never truly be "your" sensation. It may be perceived to be "your" sensation, but that's like seeing unicorns in a dream and believing they're real. Epicurus calls us to experience real, natural pleasure derived from our choices and rejections. That's my Epicurean objection to taking the pill. I assume you will counter with something like "if we feel it, it's pleasure." If I would naturally feel pain if I was awake in surgery, and the pill / machine was making me "feel" pleasure, that's not a natural reaction of pleasure and provides false sensory data on which to make decisions to live pleasurably.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

And yes, that is exactly what I am trying to say-- that as I see it, when you used [PD10](#) to argue against a hypothetical it wasn't designed for, Cassius and I replied bringing in the context of the whole philosophy. I am trying to show you that you were doing what you said we had done. I see it as the other way around-- we were limiting the PD to its specific context without taking it to any general conclusion that would contradict the rest of the philosophy.

I'm still not convinced entirely, but for the sake of argument I'll remove my use of PD 10 to oppose the bliss pill.

So, if I'm not using PD 10, then, my objection to taking the bliss pill rests on its ability to override the Canon and substitute one's own senses and reactions for its own. Without the Canon - the use of one's senses, reactions, and prolepses - there can be no application of Epicurean philosophy in one's life. There is no choice and avoidance. There is no way to determine if you are or are headed in the direction of living a pleasurable life. Once you take the pill/machine, it will determine how your life will go, what you will feel. Once you take the pill, you cannot have reliable sensory input or be sure you're having a natural reaction to something.

Post by "Don" of January 18, 2021 at 9:28 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Yes this is the key "if it was a true bliss pill as advertised, then it would provide reliable pleasure." I understand you (Don) are unwilling to entertain that as a hypothetical so really the issue becomes are you suggesting we draw a bright line against all hypotheticals for which we have never seen an actual instance? I can see that being a reasonable position to entertain but I would think that would have far reaching implications that would require scrutiny.

We posted over each other 😊

I guess I *am* willing to entertain the hypothetical or I wouldn't continue to discuss 🤔.

I just think there are some sloppy definitions at work when it comes to the bliss pill / existence machine. Not necessarily here, but people throw out this amorphous objection to pleasure and expect us to entertain it. It's a straw man in many ways.

I continue to ask things like:

How does it work? Does it substitute its decisions for mine? Does it make me feel pleasure where - objectively - I should feel pain (e.g., getting my arm trapped in a hay baler)?

There's too much wiggle room. Saying "it works as advertised" doesn't mean anything. Without knowing details, the question is meaningless. That's why I'm convinced it's like asking "Which would you rather smell forever: dragon tears or unicorn sweat?" Again, the question is meaningless. For me, it's the same as my objection to uploading my mind to a computer. "Who

owns the hardware? How hackable is the hardware and software? Where is it housed? Who has access to my upload and what can they do with it?" Just saying "it'd be like being alive. You wouldn't know the difference." Well, I would if I started seeing ads in front of me constantly.

Post by "Cassius" of January 18, 2021 at 10:01 AM

Well we will soon be able to answer the question:

"Is the process of going through the details of a hypothetical of sufficient educational value to make the process worthwhile?"

I would say that's probably the question. I am thinking the answer is "yes."

Post by "Don" of January 18, 2021 at 10:29 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"Is the process of going through the details of a hypothetical of sufficient educational value to make the process worthwhile?"

I think it can be worthwhile IF as long as one of the results of the process is allowed to be "There's no way to adequately answer this hypothetical given the possible parameters we can realistically assign to it."

Post by "Cassius" of January 18, 2021 at 11:01 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

"There's no way to adequately answer this hypothetical given the possible parameters we can **realistically** assign to it."

Ok that's very close to the same question. Must a hypothetical be "realistic" to be worth entertaining. That could be very close to the issue of "conceivability" apparently discussed by Epicurus. Is there, or should we consider there to be, a bright line against hypotheticals which are "inconceivable?" I think there are at least a couple of examples of "inconceivability" as a criterion in Lucretius but I would have to check.

Before we go too down that road we'd want to consider whether [Epicurean gods](#) are conceivable or inconceivable (presumably the former) and also whether it is conceivable to talk about a human being as a god (also presumably yes, per [Epicurus' letter to menoeceus](#) and also the reference in Lucretius to Epicurus being godlike).

Post by “Don” of January 18, 2021 at 12:19 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Before we go too down that road we'd want to consider whether [Epicurean gods](#) are conceivable or inconceivable (presumably the former) and also whether it is conceivable to talk about a human being as a god (also presumably yes, per [Epicurus' letter to menoeceus](#) and also the reference in Lucretius to Epicurus being godlike).

Oh, I would not include the [Epicurean gods](#) in the same hypothetical category as bliss pills. The former, while inconceivable or not, are an integral part of the philosophy as Epicurus and the founders wrote about it. That topic, while difficult, was of fundamental importance to Epicurus himself. I maintain it behooves modern Epicureans to understand why it was so important to Epicurus and what implications and applications it has for us. The bliss pill, on the other hand, is only an intriguing thought experiment albeit an ancient one according to the reference [Joshua](#) provided in a previous thread. I'm personally not as concerned to come to any ultimate understanding of the bliss pill. I don't expect anyone else to necessarily agree with me, but I've answered that question adequately within an Epicurean framework *for myself*.

Post by “Joshua” of January 18, 2021 at 12:36 PM

I agree with Don.

And I think my answer to the bliss pill would be tentative and empirical: I'll observe its effects in others who take it, and begin to form my conclusions then. Ask me another silly hypothetical

question—I have no shortage of silly hypothetical answers!

Post by “Don” of January 18, 2021 at 1:12 PM

[Quote from JJElbert](#)

. Ask me another silly hypothetical question—I have no shortage of silly hypothetical answers!

LOL! Where do you stand on the aroma of dragon tears vs unicorn sweat?

(btw, I do NOT expect a response to this hypothetical 😄)

Post by “Godfrey” of January 18, 2021 at 2:59 PM

Quote

Without the Canon - the use of one's senses, reactions, and prolepses - there can be no application of Epicurean philosophy in one's life. There is no choice and avoidance. There is no way to determine if you are or are headed in the direction of living a pleasurable life.

This quote of Don's seems like a good summary to me. It addresses hypotheticals and also provides grounds for evaluating a life of "sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll."

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2021 at 3:44 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

This quote of Don's seems like a good summary to me. It addresses hypotheticals and also provides grounds for evaluating a life of "sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll."

I completely agree with what Don stated and what Godfrey quoted too, but I do not believe it addresses, at least fully, the proper use of hypotheticals - if there is one - in philosophy. But I'll have to come back to this later....

Post by “Elayne” of January 18, 2021 at 3:45 PM

I think that's not what EP means, and PD 10 does not say that either. That's taking [PD10](#) too far.

Nowhere does Epicurus say a person should refuse to make a one-time decision for permanent complete pleasure on grounds that it's better to have less pleasure along with ongoing choices! That hypothetical is not taken up in [PD10](#).

In context of the whole philosophy, choice and avoidance are used to obtain pleasure. Choice and avoidance are not stand-alone goods but skills in service of the goal. So there would be no reason to forgo pleasure and retain choice-- IF one were certain of the result.

Just practically speaking, sometimes I can make one long time choice, such as I did when I purchased my condo, for pleasure. Of course, I could sell it, but pragmatically I have limited the ease of choosing to live elsewhere tomorrow. I could have retained more freedom of choice by taking a home with the shortest possible lease, so I could exercise choice frequently. But that kind of thing doesn't show up in [PD10](#) nor elsewhere.

Epicurus is not focused on creating the maximum number of choices over the longest duration.

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2021 at 3:52 PM

I am going to agree with Elayne even after I said I agree with what Don quoted, and this is an interesting application of the recent back and forth Elayne and I have been having. I think the statement is correct, as far as it goes, when limited to "in one's life" as if we are talking about one of us. That's a concrete application in which I think it is correct.

But Elayne is also extending the statement to its logical conclusions, and in doing so she is showing that a flat logical reading of it WOULD go to far.

This is back to our discussion of the interplay of logic and feeling/observation. Elayne is pointing out the issue from the position of making sure that the statement is logically consistent with the whole. She is correct in how the issue should be explained in the widest context. If we limit the

discussion and state our limitations, then Don's view is acceptable.

We're making progress I think in seeing that we've got to articulate things in a "logically consistent" fashion while paying attention to both the "reasonable person" standard to come up with a "rule" or a "systematic explanation" and also the particular perspective of an individual focusing on what seems real to them locally.

I do not believe that Epicurus would say that his philosophy was anything less than rigorously logical and reasonable. We can achieve that aim, i think, and we HAVE to if we're going to be able to explain these issues to wider groups of people.

Post by “Elayne” of January 18, 2021 at 3:57 PM

Cassius I'm not using logic. I'm using descriptions of what PD 10 says and what it doesn't. When Epicurus puts pleasure first, it's an actual feeling. I'm just describing the options in the choice, in terms of the desired feeling. I'm using prudence in weighing options, but nothing I'm saying is based on formal logic. It's descriptive.

Post by “Elayne” of January 18, 2021 at 4:00 PM

To explain this to others, all that is necessary is to point out observations in reality about pleasure and pain in their lives, and the role of choice and avoidance.

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2021 at 4:10 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Cassius I'm not using logic.

I see this as the root of our current disagreement and we will resolve it at some point.

I would say that a reasonable person on the street would say that you ARE using logic, in looking at the full context of all the texts, and also comparing to to the feelings that you have and that you can presume Epicurus had.

You don't wish to call that "logic" because you are referring to "formal logic" and saying that what you are doing is not "formal logic."

I'm just going to have to find some place for a definition reference, because I firmly think that the target audience we should be aiming for would be very confused by insisting that "logical" or "reasonable" implies formal logic of the Let $A = B$ and $B=C$; therefore $A=C$ variety.

I was thinking about that this afternoon. I think the target audience (at least the one I am most interested in) would see issues of "logic" vs "feeling" in terms of Spock and McCoy and Kirk.

Spock symbolizes logic and reason - he is data driven to the extreme, but he has no emotion and thus is frequently mistaken because he does not have the human faculty of feeling emotion (he can, presumably, feel pain and pleasure of a type).

McCoy symbolizes the extreme of feeling - he does in fact refer to reason and logic in his medicine, but he is caricature of someone whose emotions clearly run ahead of his reason.

Kirk, is the superior synthesis and combination of both reason and feeling. He is superior to both McCoy and Spock and thus gives the ultimate orders. Within Kirk, it is feeling that ultimately does the decision making, but he does his best to incorporate data-driven logic and reason, because he knows that that is frequently the way to unwind problems. And that is the Epicurean model as I see it.

All of us have our limitations and I am afraid this is mine. I am very aware that you are correct that there is a significant set of people who hear the words "logic" and "reason" and interpret them as you are doing, in formal terms.

The people in my daily world have no clue what "formal logic" is, and any notion they have of it is receding further into the background every day. Yes I want to explain all this to the academicians who use the formal terms,. but they are not my first concern - they are the ones who have botched Epicurean philosophy (in my eyes) for 2000+years. And I want to give the "regular people" a chance, especially because it is my understanding through Cicero that that is who Epicurus actually played to and were most enthusiastic about him.

This is where we need a division of labor and specialization. Those who move in circles which require the words "logic" and "reason" to be used "formally" will need a presentation of their own. In my view, the best compromise to deal with the largest set of people is to use terms like "abstract logic/reason" or "theoretical logic/reason" or similar words to indicate that the premises being used are not observable or verifiable or reliably repeatable through the senses.

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2021 at 4:22 PM

And to use a more classy analogy than Star Trek, this is what I would assert is expressed in [Jefferson's "Head and Heart" letter. in which the heart wins out in the end](#)

Post by “Don” of January 18, 2021 at 5:00 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Nowhere does Epicurus say a person should refuse to make a one-time decision for permanent complete pleasure on grounds that it's better to have less pleasure along with ongoing choices! That hypothetical is not taken up in [PD10](#).

I'm trying not to use PD 10 anymore, that's why I didn't reference it in the response using the Canon.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

In context of the whole philosophy, choice and avoidance are used to obtain pleasure. Choice and avoidance are not stand-alone goods but skills in service of the goal. So there would be no reason to forgo pleasure and retain choice-- IF one were certain of the result.

Right. I'm agreeing with that. Choice and avoidance are instrumental to pleasure, like virtue, like practical wisdom, like acting justly. We don't disagree about that. I'm not sure where you're getting that from my response. But how do we make our choices and rejections? From our senses, our reactions of pleasure and pain, and our prolepses. If we don't have access to them, we can't make choices, etc.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

I can make one long time choice, such as I did when I purchased my condo, for pleasure. Of course, I could sell it...

Then that analogy is not not a one-time, one-and-done choice, by definition. I'm seeing the bliss pill being a point of no return. To use your analogy, taking the bliss pill would be like purchasing your condo then being locked inside forever.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Epicurus is not focused on creating the maximum number of choices over the longest duration.

Of course not! That's absurd, and that's not what I'm saying. What Epicurus is focused on is telling us to use the Canon to make prudent decisions to make sure we live the most pleasure-filled life possible. If we cut ourselves off from the Canon, we have no hope of moving to the fullness of pleasure in our lives.

Post by “Don” of January 18, 2021 at 5:05 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

to use a more classy analogy than Star Trek

Oh, you never apologize for a Star Trek analogy! 👍

Post by “Elayne” of January 18, 2021 at 5:21 PM

[Don](#) if the fullness of pleasure is in a pill, you haven't cut yourself off from anything. Again, that would be a huge decision and I'm not likely to trust such a pill purveyor. But the Epicurean life is about pleasure, and about the methods that work to get it. He recommends choice/avoidance because they work. If something else worked better, he would recommend something else. It's a pragmatic thing, not an absolute.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 18, 2021 at 5:25 PM

I see that I was sloppy in my wording! 🤔

The Canon and choices and avoidances are not the point of EP but are instrumental. Being instrumental, they are necessary to maximize pleasure (unless one lives a charmed life) with pleasure being the goal. To my understanding if you remove the opportunity to choose, you remove the opportunity to *maximize* pleasure. [Elayne](#) you're correct that this isn't what is spelled out in PD.

Regarding the example of buying a condo: this may reduce the opportunity for choice, but in no way eliminates it. Even after making the purchase there can be continual evaluation as to what might bring the most pleasure or pain: sell it for a profit and buy a more pleasant home, keep it to avoid the pain of moving, remodel it to increase pleasure, sell it because of a more pleasant job opportunity elsewhere, etc etc.

Post by “Elayne” of January 18, 2021 at 5:39 PM

[Godfrey](#) the instrumental use of choice and avoidance is only instrumental so long as it works better than anything else. So far, that's what we've observed. However, if some new technology comes about to change that situation and relinquishing choice and avoidance provides maximal pleasure, then that new strategy would be the wisest choice.

Analogies are never perfect-- my condo analogy was meant as an example of how one choice can reduce access to subsequent choices, and that's not always bad.

Let me try again-- I chose to have two children. By doing so, I affected my body in permanent ways. I can't choose to be nulliparous now-- it's done. We make choices frequently that limit other future options. To do it one time would be an extreme, of course, but I see nothing in the philosophy that would rule out making one optimizing choice vs going for a series.

Post by “Don” of January 18, 2021 at 6:47 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Don if the fullness of pleasure is in a pill,

You're seriously going to entertain that even as a hypothetical?

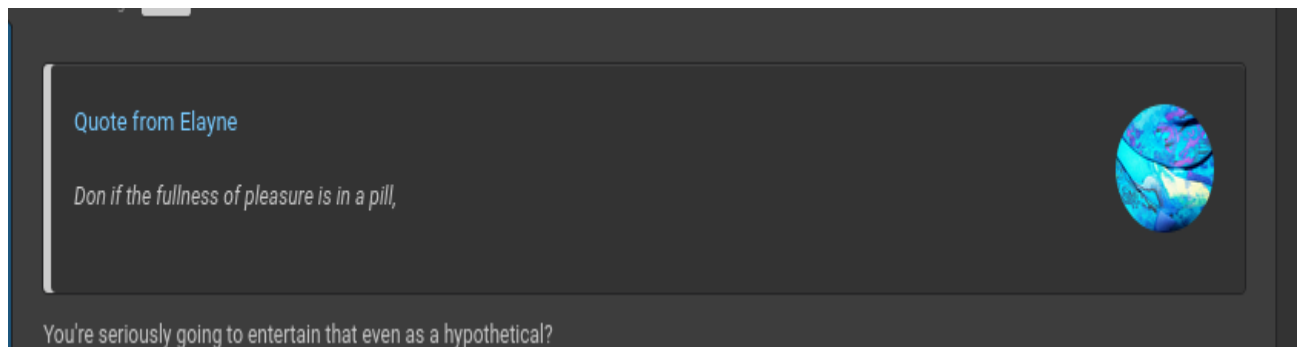
[Quote from Elayne](#)

He recommends choice/avoidance because they work. If something else worked better, he would recommend something else. It's a pragmatic thing, not an absolute.

Of course, he does! I find it hard to seriously accept that you're even hypothetically saying someone else's chemistry in a pill or someone else's technology in a machine will give me my own subjective pleasure better than my own subjective choices and rejections? Are you really saying that so I don't misinterpret?

Of course, he provides a pragmatic solution. Epicurus was providing practical solutions to real-world problems. I don't think I'm being "absolutist." I'm saying I can make better choices for my own pleasure than someone else. By your "logic," I could just as easily say I'm going to let another person - or maybe the government - make choices about what would give me the most pleasure.

Post by "Cassius" of January 18, 2021 at 6:50 PM



You're darn right she is, because that kind of hypothetical is what we're talking about !! 😊

Maybe we should propose a segment on the nature of a bliss pill for our 20th Skype meeting!



Post by "Cassius" of January 18, 2021 at 7:00 PM

I am going to start a new thread on one aspect of this I want to explore - "dialectics" [Dialectics and Hypothetical Questions](#)

Probably it's not worded the best way possible, but eventually it will be something to come back to....

Post by “Elayne” of January 18, 2021 at 7:21 PM

[Don](#) I've said repeatedly that the Devil is in the details and I'd tend to be distrustful of the sellers. And I think such a pill is highly unlikely to ever happen. But yes, as Cassius says, that is the hypothetical, and that is why I answered the actual hypothetical question as presented ☐.

Now, it's fine with me if someone wants to say "that hypothetical would never happen, so I'm not going to answer it." But that's different from changing the hypothetical and then saying someone who answered the actual question is wrong. We would be answering two different questions and the conversation would be confused, as it has been here!

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2021 at 7:40 PM

Maybe we need to acknowledge that in my spare time I am a lawyer and Elayne was married to one, so the two of us are maybe too familiar with hypothetical questions....

Post by “Don” of January 18, 2021 at 8:38 PM

[Elayne](#) Okay, what then is your answer to this hypothetical since I'm evidently adding this detail to the description of the bliss pill:

[Quote from Don](#)

you're ... hypothetically saying someone else's chemistry in a pill or someone else's technology in a machine will give me my own subjective pleasure better than my own subjective choices and rejections?

Post by “Elayne” of January 19, 2021 at 7:50 AM

[Don](#) that is the condition of the hypothetical. In a hypothetical, it's not necessary for the stated condition to be possible. For instance, when Epicurus talked about what a supernatural god would be like-- if all powerful and all knowing, then clearly not loving-- he knew there were no supernatural gods. So it is unnecessary for there to exist such a technology in order to talk about what the wise choice would be IF it existed.

Speaking outside the hypothetical-- obviously there is no such thing currently. Could there be a technology developed which actually learns from individuals what they enjoy and dislike? And which adjusts actions over time-- maybe a nano-robot kind of pill? Maybe so. It's not a completely ridiculous idea. I doubt I would trust it, but that doesn't mean I would be correct.

Post by “Cassius” of January 19, 2021 at 7:58 AM

I think Elayne's post gets to the heart of the issue -- it is the nature of many hypotheticals that it is not necessary for the stated condition to be possible. If we want to draw a bright line and say that the stated conditions **MUST** be possible, then we need to be clear that we are doing that, because those are two types of hypotheticals. Don if you want to advance that proposition please do, because it seems to me it is possible that Epicurus took that position, but I can't conclude that at the moment without more review.

However here I would word differently:

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Epicurus talked about what a supernatural god would be like

I am not aware of a text in which Epicurus talked about what a SUPERNATURAL god would look like. The Riddle might qualify, but I am not sure that is Epicurus. I think Epicurus was always clear that "gods" are NOT supernatural so I do not recall that he even entertained that hypothetical. If anyone knows of a text of Epicurus theorizing based on a god having supernatural qualities lets add it here so we can be precise. I might be wrong about this but it would be worth being very clear on this point, since we are talking about in part whether Epicurus used "impossible" hypotheticals, and if there are clearly impossible hypotheticals on gods that would help the discussion.

Post by “Don” of January 19, 2021 at 8:23 AM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Speaking outside the hypothetical-- obviously there is no such thing currently. Could there be a technology developed which actually learns from individuals what they enjoy and dislike?

Actually, as I read this, I immediately thought of social media algorithms sealing people in their filter bubbles. A practical application of this "hypothetical" may be closer than we think (or already be here). Is social media the "bliss pill" we need to deal with?

Post by “Cassius” of January 19, 2021 at 8:26 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Is social media the "bliss pill" we need to deal with?

No! 🙄

Post by “Don” of January 19, 2021 at 8:35 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

[Quote from Don](#)

Is social media the "bliss pill" we need to deal with?

No! 🙄

I appreciate the wink and quick reply, but I'm not so sure we should be so quick to dismiss this now that Elayne has worded it that way.

Post by “Elayne” of January 19, 2021 at 9:50 AM

[Don](#) do you have evidence social media is making people have bliss? I thought the prevailing evidence was to the contrary. I assume that's why Cassius said no.

[Cassius](#), yes, the riddle-- well yes, I added the term supernatural because I thought it was an argument against the kind of gods people who believed in supernatural gods were proposing. However my point still stands that he was posing hypotheticals about a type of creature he didn't agree exists. If it was him.

Post by “Cassius” of January 19, 2021 at 10:16 AM

Yes Elayne that's exactly why I said the emphatic no! The prevailing evidence is to the contrary, and I don't read anyone seriously proposing that people immersed in social media are experiencing a blissful experience. I suppose the cite Don gave may be suggesting that, but if so I did not read it that way.

Also yes I think the riddle would be an example that supports your usage.

Post by “Don” of January 19, 2021 at 2:12 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Don do you have evidence social media is making people have bliss? I thought the prevailing evidence was to the contrary. I assume that's why Cassius said no.

It's not a perfect analogy (and it's not a total bliss pill), but here's my perspective:

- People choose to plug themselves into social media
- Social media algorithms learn what brings pleasure to reader
- Reader feels pleasure at having their preconceptions and prejudices strengthened and confirmed
- Content fed to reader may or may not reflect reality; it could be misinformation or based on conspiracy theory

- I'm making an analogy between the pleasure felt at having untrue prejudices confirmed and having pleasure from the "bliss pill/machine" filtering/mitigating the senses and reaction of pleasure.
-

Post by “Elayne” of January 19, 2021 at 2:54 PM

[Don](#) my understanding of the engineered goal of social media sites is that it isn't intended to cause pleasure but to create addiction. Which has been called wanting without liking. They are pretty good at creating that response. There are very brief rewards from getting likes to one's posts and comments, but the main experience seems to be unfulfilled desire generation. Our nervous systems are vulnerable to being exploited that way.

Sometimes people can feel pleasure at having biases confirmed, but much of the politically biased content is angry/paranoid in tone. It's possible for people to get hooked on the excitement of anger with really getting much pleasure from it.

If people were really getting reliable pleasure from social media use, the fact that some or all of the information was false would be relevant if it set the person up for unexpected pain or shortened pleasure/life. If social media were engineered to avoid those pitfalls of painful consequences somehow, then it might work out to be a wise choice. But just as with a pharmaceutical, that would depend on the trustworthiness of the product/designer and whether it was as advertised. I haven't seen a false belief system yet which has lived up to its promises, so I would need overwhelming proof of effectiveness before signing up.

I do make use of small mind tricks-- there is some evidence that seeing beautiful natural scenery is mood enhancing. A hospital window with trees in view, for instance, can improve recovery. Whenever possible I prefer to get the whole experience-- inhale the terpenes from the trees, etc. But even just a photo can trick the brain into some of the same benefits. So if I'm working in a windowless room, I use photos of mountains or beaches to make use of an illusion of being somewhere I am not. Yes, I consciously know I'm not there-- but part of my brain is responding to a ruse.

Apparently placebos might even help when people are told they are getting placebos. I've seen one study on this.

However, when we use ruses, it's wise to watch for unexpected consequences. I read a book on artificial flavoring, the Dorito Effect, summarizing research on how a flavor may signal our brains we are taking in certain nutrients, but if the flavor comes without the nutrients, it throws off our appetat. That's the kind of thing I would investigate for in any technology proposing to deliver pleasure along with some sort of ruse.

Post by “Don” of January 19, 2021 at 4:55 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Don my understanding of the engineered goal of social media sites is that it isn't intended to cause pleasure but to create addiction. Which has been called wanting without liking. They are pretty good at creating that response.

But doesn't Epicurus tell us that there can be only two reactions: pleasure or pain?

[Quote from Elayne](#)

Sometimes people can feel pleasure at having biases confirmed, but much of the politically biased content is angry/paranoid in tone. It's possible for people to get hooked on the excitement of anger with really getting much pleasure from it.

But can't people take pleasure in their anger? Self-righteous anger elicits pleasure not pain ("The feelings are two.").

And the addict experiences pleasure from the hit but pain when it's not present.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

. I read a book on artificial flavoring, the Dorito Effect

That was a fascinating book. Read it a couple years ago.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 19, 2021 at 5:44 PM

Addiction is desire, not pleasure or pain. Thinking of or satisfying a desire results in pleasure or pain.

Don that's interesting that you mention anger in this context; I've been starting to think about it in light of current events and I'm curious what Epicurean writings have to say about it, particularly righteous anger. I can't think of any offhand except maybe Philodemus, who I haven't read.

Post by “Don” of January 19, 2021 at 6:04 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Addiction is desire, not pleasure or pain. Thinking of or satisfying a desire results in pleasure or pain.

Don that's interesting that you mention anger in this context; I've been starting to think about it in light of current events and I'm curious what Epicurean writings have to say about it, particularly righteous anger. I can't think of any offhand except maybe Philodemus, who I haven't read.

Hmmm. Okay, but the addiction is caused by pleasure initially then causes pain followed by pleasure in a vicious circle. Right?

Voula Tsouna's The Ethics of Philodemus has a good chapter on anger.

Post by “Elayne” of January 19, 2021 at 9:48 PM

Addiction is mostly pain and then all pain, from reports of my patients. Initially the "hits" cause pleasure but eventually they don't anymore. But the addicted person keeps going for the hits in hopes they will work again, and to avoid withdrawal symptoms, which are even more painful.

The desire in addiction is not pleasurable, although in other non-addiction settings, desire can be pleasurable.

Anger can occasionally be pleasurable in my personal experience, but the kind of anger I see drummed up on social media appears to be unpleasant for the experiencers. It seems mixed with a lot of unpleasant fear, unpleasant resentment, unpleasant bitterness. I am mostly not observing people who report enjoying it. Lots of folks saying they feel very stressed out.

The goal of the designers is just to keep people hooked so they can be marketed to. Not to make them feel ongoing pleasure.

Post by “Don” of January 19, 2021 at 10:12 PM

Okay, I have no strong feelings in pushing that analogy. I do contend that anger can be pleasurable (as [Elayne](#) said above), but again I haven't no strong urge to flog the social media analogy.

I have to go back and re-read Tsouna's chapter on anger and pick out any excerpts from Philodemus's On Anger or start another thread if [Godfrey](#) is interested in exploring that.

This bliss pill/PD 10 thread has unfortunately taken on the odor of a Platonic dialogue to me, and I freely admit I've contributed to the stench. I feel it's turned into a lot of wordplay, Socrates-esque gadflying, and argument for arguments sake. Y'all may have a different take, but the pleasure is decreasing. Plus, I think the practical benefit is decreasing the longer it goes on. I don't necessarily think Epicurus would be pleased. I think I'm going to tap out, but feel free to continue in my absence on this particular topic.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 19, 2021 at 11:01 PM

[Don](#) I got interested in anger in a roundabout way. There's an unexplored aspect of Wilson's article, which is her apparent urge to define an Epicurean political philosophy (an urge shared by utilitarians and others it would seem). I've been giving a little bit of thought (not enough yet to start a thread) to a response to that urge. Since EP is based on individual interactions with the world through the pursuit of pleasure and the Canon, I think that the consensus here is that there is no specific Epicurean political philosophy: instead it's totally individual. It seems, though, that there is a way that an individual Epicurean approaches life that would inform or influence how an Epicurean might engage in political thought and discussion and that this would not lead to any particular positions on specific issues. It might be instructive to examine the PDs on justice, the lives of the Torquati, Atticus, Caesar and, importantly, righteous anger in this regard. But it could also be a can of worms and something that isn't appropriate to discuss on this forum.... However looking at the Epicurean approach to anger, including righteous anger, might be of some interest in this regard.

Post by “Cassius” of January 20, 2021 at 6:51 AM

Quote from [Godfrey](#)

It seems, though, that there is a way that an individual Epicurean approaches life that would inform or influence how an Epicurean might engage in political thought and discussion and that this would not lead to any particular positions on specific issues.

I agree with most of what you wrote Godfrey, in the sense that different people in different circumstances are going to find that Epicurean viewpoints lead in different directions according to their circumstances. But I do that that application of Epicurean viewpoints to a specific individual does lead that individual to make conclusions about social behavior. And though it may sound like another word-splitting exercise, I don't think there's a bright line between political action and social action. [PD39](#) and [PD40](#) seem to me to have direct social implications that would be pretty much indistinguishable from political implications -- but the point remains that different people will choose to order their affairs toward these goals in different ways.

The rules against political discussion in the forum don't exist because each of us don't have political/social interests, but because we can know going into the discussion that our interests are not the same, and may even be very divergent or even hostile. We're voluntarily putting those aspects of life aside for the sake of the longer-term and greater goal of the benefit we get from pursuing the philosophy with like-minded people. I would say that "like-minded in philosophy" will frequently, but not always, lead to "political" and "social" agreement. For better or worse the more we spread out geographically and culturally and economically and in many different ways the more that our specifically political decisions would likely differ.

I underlined that this would not lead to any particular positions on specific issues. because I would qualify that by saying that this would not lead to any particular positions on specific issues that would apply to everyone.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 20, 2021 at 2:57 PM

Good clarification Cassius!

Thinking about "like-minded in philosophy," it occurs to me that what we often see in public discourse are single issues excised from an overall philosophy. They do come from overall philosophies or world views which may or may not be evident, and often several single issues seem to align in a predictable way. Until something happens to elucidate an unexpected world view that drives the single issues.

EP obviously has a clear overall approach and world view. Since there seems to be a fairly persistent urge to apply EP on a societal level (which could actually have some "utility," if you'll pardon my word choice 😊) I'm suggesting that we could be well served in describing how the

overall approach of EP is beneficial to society rather than attempting to align it with specific issues as Wilson does, or in trying to update and expand it per the utilitarians.

Post by “Don” of January 26, 2021 at 10:40 PM

<https://youtu.be/XNP1x11Z2lg>

Curious to see what anyone's take is on this TED-Ed video on Nozick's "experience machine" and the (professed) short-comings of hedonism.

Post by “Cassius” of January 27, 2021 at 6:05 AM

For me, the TED talk reinforces the perspective that [PD10](#) is an in-your-face "make a choice as to which master you are going to follow" proposition, designed as a stress test of whether one really understands that pleasure is the ultimate motivator in life.

I would say that the same desire to clarify the issue that spurred the wording of [PD10](#) spurred the sentiment recorded in u512:

U512

Aetius, *Doxography*, XII p. 547A: And in his work *On the End-Goal*, he says again: “{=[U70](#) }” And in other passages, he says “I spit upon the honorable and those who vainly admire it, whenever it produces no pleasure.”

Plutarch, *Against Colotes*, 30, p. 1124E: ... and when men take for sages those who “spit on excellence, unless pleasure attends it.” [c.f. 1124E @ [U368](#)]

Plutarch, *Is “Live Unknown” a Wise Precept?*, 4, p. 1129B: ... to live together with Leontium and “spit on noble action,” and place the good in the “flesh” and in “titillations.”

Plutarch, *Against Colotes*, 2, p. 1108C: ... those who keep shouting that the *good* is to be found in the belly and that they would not give a copper coin with a hole in it for all the virtues in bulk apart from pleasure.

Plutarch, *That Epicurus actually makes a pleasant life impossible*, 13, p. 1095F: Do they not confess that they are waging war without truce or negotiation on all that is beautiful, so long as it is not pleasurable as well? What holy and pure thing do they welcome and cherish?

Post by “Bryan” of January 28, 2021 at 4:16 AM

Here is KD 10 from a somewhat different angle:

εἰ τὰ Ποιητικὰ τῶν περὶ τοὺς ἀσώτους ἡδονῶν
ἔλυε τοὺς φόβους τῆς διανοίας
τούς τε περὶ μετεώρων καὶ θανάτου καὶ ἀλγηδόνων
ἔτι τε τὸ πέρας τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν ἐδίδασκεν καὶ τῶν ἀλγηδόνων :
οὐκ ἄν ποτε εἶχομεν ὅ τι μεμψάμεθα αὐτοῖς
πανταχόθεν ἐκπληρουμένοις τῶν ἡδονῶν -
οὔτε τὸ λυπούμενον ἔχουσιν -
Ἵπερ ἐστὶ τὸ κακόν·

If the things that produce the pleasures of degenerates
released the fears of the mind
about the heavens and death and pains
and if those things taught the the Limit of desires and of pains:
then we would never have had anything to hold against them
who would be filling themselves from all places with pleasures-
and they would not have pain or sadness from any place-
which is exactly what 'evil' is.

ΤΟΥΣ ΑΚΩΤΟΥΣ “profligates” οἱ ἄσωτοι-τῶν ἀσώτων: libertines, spendthrifts; a lost case; from ἄσματος-ἀσώτη-ἄσματος: having no hope of safety, in desperate case, abandoned, past any hope of recovery. [ἄσματος](#)

ΜΕΜΨΑΙΜΕΘΑ “(then we would not) blame” μέμφομαι-μέμψεσθαι: hold (acc.) against (dat.); here, “we would (not) have held (ὄ τι) against (αὐτοῖς).”

Post by “Don” of January 28, 2021 at 8:44 AM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

ΤΟΥΣ ΑΚΩΤΟΥΣ “profligates” οἱ ἄσωτοι-τῶν ἀσώτων: libertines, spendthrifts; a lost case; from ἄσματος-ἀσώτη-ἄσματος: having no hope of safety, in desperate case, abandoned, past any hope of recovery. ἄσματος

I think that source definition is so important in this. When "profligate" is being used in translation, it sounds like a moral or ethical chastisement only. And that may be part of it BUT saying these decisions to live that lifestyle put them as "having no hope of safety, in desperate case, abandoned, past any hope of recovery" puts a more "these are obviously negative choices to make" spin on it.

Post by “Don” of January 29, 2021 at 11:40 PM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

ΜΕΜΨΑΙΜΕΘΑ “(then we would not) blame” μέμφομαι-μέμψεσθαι: hold (acc.) against (dat.); here, “we would (not) have held (ὄ τι) against (αὐτοῖς).”

I just came across a helpful fact:

μεμψαιμεθα is in the first person middle plural optative. The [optative mood](#) "expresses something that would happen in a hypothetical situation in the future." It is conditional: *If* (εἰ) X were the case, then we would not blame (μεμψαιμεθα). [The Ingenious Language](#), a recent book by Andrea Marcolongo on Ancient Greek, has one chapter dedicated almost exclusively to the optative mood and its shades of meaning. My understanding (and I'm still processing it and

rereading) is that the optative is used in many cases to express desire, usually desire that cannot be fulfilled: "I wish for this but know it is not going to happen." It is a mood reflecting the unreality of a situation.

These are the kinds of fine detail that consistently keep pulling me back into deeper study of the ancient Greek texts! I barely have my toes wet in the sand and SO want to go scuba diving!!

(Full disclosure: I've found [Wiktionary](#) (especially the smart phone app) to be a wonderful tool in parsing some of the Greek syntax. The app along with a Greek keyboard has been indispensable. I just (1) didn't want to give the impression I had more knowledge than I do, and (2) provide tips to anyone else who wants to dig into the texts. Sapere aude 😊)

Post by "Don" of January 30, 2021 at 11:27 PM

In light of this optative verb in KD 10, I think it's important to contrast this with the If... Then.... statements in KD 7. As a refresher:

Quote

Some people want to be well esteemed and widely admired, believing that in this way they will be safe from others; if the life of such people is secure then they have gained its natural benefit, but if not then they have not gained what they sought from the beginning in accordance with what is naturally appropriate. (Emphasis added)

Ἔνδοξοι καὶ περίβλεπτοί τινες ἐβουλήθησαν γενέσθαι, τὴν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀσφάλειαν οὕτω νομίζοντες περιποιήσεσθαι. ὥστε εἰ μὲν ἀσφαλῆς ὁ τῶν τοιούτων βίος, ἀπέλαβον τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἀγαθόν· εἰ δὲ μὴ ἀσφαλῆς, οὐκ ἔχουσιν οὐ ἔνεκα ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατὰ τὸ τῆς φύσεως οἰκεῖον ὠρέχθησαν.

In KD 7, there are no funky moods/tenses/aspects. The if's are followed by an aorist indicative verb and active indicative, respectively. Straightforward statements of fact. So, the idea that a person could indeed find security in being well esteemed or widely admired is not seen as an impossibility. This dovetails nicely with [Cassius](#)'s fervent conviction that Epicureans *could* find security in a public political life. It may be more difficult, and Epicurus seemed to warn people to be careful of entering that arena, but it wasn't out of the question. There was no sense of impossibility or unreality to the idea.

However, I'm contending that that optative verb in KD 10 supports my contention that we can *desire* to not hold the lifestyle of "those who are past any hope of recovery" against them but we really *know* that that's not going to happen. In this life, as reality is lived, the "profligate"

lifestyle will NOT alleviate the fears of death, the gods, etc.

Post by “Elli” of February 5, 2021 at 8:28 AM

This 👍 goes to [Don](#) by me, as a small winning price on his studies in hellenic language.

I do not find proper words to declare and describing my feelings of pleasure when Don found the huge mistake by Lucretius that was with this phrase: <<ουδέν εξ' ουδενός>> **that means "nothing comes from nothing" that was said, by Parmenides.**

Instead of the phrase: <<.πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι οὐδὲν γίνεται ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος>> **that said by Epicurus in his LTH that means: "First of all, that nothing is created out of that which does not exist".**

Epicurus starts his clear thoughts from the **observable** and all these that **exist** since, he does not fall into the trap of the **"zero"**

and the **"nothing"** that was done by **Parmenides**. Epicurus accepts the motion of atoms and bodies, but he does not accept **the changing of the Laws of Universe that are called by Physicists, as fundamental forces**. Epicurus does not fall into the trap of an endless cyclical states of how the Universe is created. And this Universe, as the Physicists say, when in 15 billion years it will stop expanding and will be crushed, for Epicurus, if there are the observable to us as first elements/atoms/as particles and the void/ as quantum field, are capable enough with the space (as he was said it as **"ἀπειρία"** [apiria] that means **this that has no boundaries i.e. as we set the North, South, East, West**) to re-create another Universe same as this we're living. Thus, for him, and according to his manifold way of thinking there is another possibility among many possibilities in any future some intelligent beings will start their researches on how the material Universe with unnumerable Cosmi were created.

Thus, Epicurus with the Canon has set all the credibility in our senses and feelings, and of course the "pre-receivals (greek "προλήψεις") [prolepses] that are accumulated knowledges in the brain that are connecting with the images of the materialistic things of the reality and creating the synapses of neurons. The purpose of new knowledges or the retrieval i.e. the capability of the brain with the memory of all these that are stored in our brain from infancy, as they continue to evolve according to new knowledges of the materialistic reality/the whole Nature are intended and connecting **with the goal to not to disturb us mentally and bodily, for being like sheep below the orders of a master/ruler/leader/god with his representatives as clergy and politicians.**

<<Μακαρίζω σε, ὦ Ἀπελλῆ, ὅτι καθαρὸς πάσης παιδείας ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν ὥρμησας>>.

<<I congratulate or I consider you blissful, oh Apelles, because you have rushed into (epicurean) philosophy clear (i.e. with clear brain) from all culture>>. - Epicurus

culture means: such patterns-false ideas that our brains have been washed from infancy, with the manipulation of a repeat and repeat, and repeat of false religions, false philosophies and false political ideas.

Synaptic plasticity of the brain

When engaged in new experiences and learning, the brain establishes a series of neural pathways. These neural pathways, or circuits, are routes made of inter-connecting neurons. These routes are created in the brain through daily use and practice; much like a mountain path is made by daily use of a shepherd (e.g. Epicurus as a teacher) and his herd (e.g. friends and students of his school).

The neurons in a neural pathway communicate with each other through connections called synapses, and these communication pathways can regenerate throughout your whole life. Each time that we gain new knowledge (through repeated practice), the synaptic communication between neurons is strengthened. A better connection between the neurons means that the electric signals travel more efficiently when creating or using a new pathway.

For example, when trying to recognize a new bird, new connections are made among specific neurons. Neurons in the visual cortex determine its color, the auditory cortex identifies its song, and other, the name of the bird. In order to know what bird it is, its attributes, its color, song, and name are repeated many times. Revisiting the neural circuit and re-establishing neuronal transmission between the implicated neurons at each new attempt enhances the efficiency of synaptic transmission. Communication between the relevant neurons is facilitated, cognition made faster and faster. Synaptic plasticity is perhaps the pillar on which the brain's amazing malleability rests.

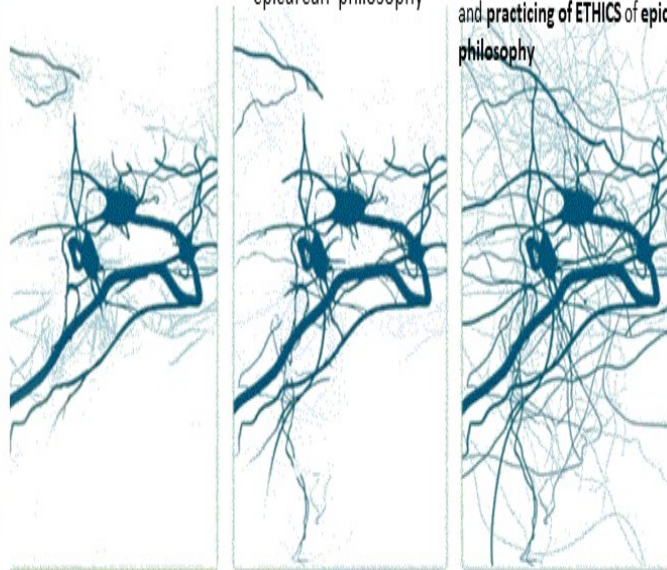
source: <https://www.cognifit.com/brain-plasticity-and-cognition>



This is the clear brain of Apelles

Apelles' brain after he had entered into epicurean philosophy

Apelles' brain in just two months after a repeated stimulation of his brain while was keeping his **ATTENTION** in pure knowledges e.g. on the usage of **CANON**, and of **PHYSICS**, and practicing of **ETHICS** of epicurean philosophy



Neural networks before training

Neural networks 2 weeks after stimulation

Neural networks 2 months after stimulation



<<Μακαρίζω σε, ὦ Ἄπελλι, ὅτι καθαρὸς πάσης παιδείας ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν ὤρμησας>>.

I congratulate or I consider you blissful, oh Apelles, because you have entered into (epicurean) philosophy clear (i.e. with clear brain) from all culture. - Epicurus

culture means: false religions, false philosophies and false political ideas.

APELLES PLEASSED BRAIN/BODY

APELLES MORE PLEASSED BRAIN/BODY

APELLES' PURE PLEASSED BRAIN/BODY... ALL THE PURE HORMONES HAVE ENRICHED FROM APELLES BRAIN TO THE WHOLE OF HIS BODY.

APELLES IS A BLISSFULL-EUDEAMONIC MAN THAT WANTS KEEPING IN HIS BRAIN/BODY, THIS SITUATION [KATASTASIS] OF PURE PLEASURE AS LONG AS HE CAN. APELLES WON'T PERMITT ANY OTHER FALSE BELIEF/ AMBIGUOUS "KWOWLEDGE" TO ENTER IN HIS BRAIN, BECAUSE HE KNOWS ALREADY THAT THIS WILL BE AGAINST HIS PURE PLEASANT SITUATION OF BRAIN/BODY. IN JUST TWO MONTHS APELLES IS LIVING LIKE GOD AMONG MEN.

Post by "Elli" of February 5, 2021 at 10:58 AM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

ΤΟΥΣ ΑΚΩΤΟΥΣ “profligates” οἱ ἄσωτοι-τῶν ἀσώτων: libertines, spendthrifts; a lost case; from ἄσματος-ἀσώτη-ἄσματος: having no hope of safety, in desperate case, abandoned, past any hope of recovery. ἄσματος

I can't find the proper words to narrate my story what means the word "prodigals". This is the word that my lost brother used to say with the greek phrase:"Είμαι ο ἄσματος υἱός του πατέρα μου" that means "I'm the prodigal son of my father". My brother repeated to say that when his father died (his father was my step-father), and when my brother was 20 years old, while his father left only to him a heritage with (a motel with 7 apartments near the sea, for renting them in the tourist season, many lands, money, cars etc. that was aprox. of the amount of 400.000\$). But my brother did not listen to the admonitions of our mother and me as the oldest sister, and had chose the high living with girls, to rent expensive rooms in hotels and apartments, smoking and offering to many friends marichouana and cannabys, offering to them for having together drinks and dinners in expensive bars and restaurants, buying expensive cloths, shoes etc.

In the end, and in just 9 years, he sold all of the heritage with the real estate and run out of money, and with many of my efforts I managed to persuade him to buy only a small appartement next to my home, with a small new car, while my brother in law found to him a job as guard in the security company that my brother in law still works there.

During that time, and as my brother was waiting some legal papers for that job, he found a temporary job that was for sharing ad-leaflets in a near town of where we both were living; and with four other persons, aged 18, 20, 23 my brother aged 29 , along with a driver of a small car that was 45 years old, they started this job.

In the first day, my brother had complained (due to the testimonies of his girlfriend) to the driver to drive more slowly as the driver that was 45 years old, was happy to drive with that small car in dangerous roads with bends and with the speed of 160 km/h!!! The second day, the driver did not listen the complaints of other young guys, and he was still driving with the same speed. In a dangerous bend and while it was raining the driver lost the control of the car and felt on a big truck that was coming from the opposite side of the street, and the car along with all these young men, became all as one mass. 😭

After a week from his death I saw a dream that he was inside a huge library with many books and speaking to me, he was saying loudly: SIS, FIND THE TRUE KNOWLEDGES. I write this now to you, and I'm crying. 😭

In a month I met Epicurus philosophy inside a book store with the book by Irving Yalom entitled in greek "In the Garden of Epicurus-leaving behind the terror of death" . Till now, I did not stop

to blame my grand parents, my parents, my teachers and professors inside schools that they did not teach us anything about Epicurus and his philosophy. 😡

And we are talking about the prodigals after that! 😞

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of January 7, 2022 at 4:08 PM

[Elli](#) , I'm so sorry for your loss. My mother lost her brother in a similar accident, and it still hunts our family to this day. I don't want to imagine what it must have felt like to go through such a huge amount of stress and chaos- I don't think that one can even really put it into words. And I'm very glad that you could recover from this, as far as possible. Almost any philosophy tries to provide a remedy for such terrible accidents, but implementing them into life is far more difficult.

And don't let hate or anger consume you. In the right amount, during the right time, they are necessary- but, when they stay in you for too long, they start to poison you. I don't think that I can/should give advice to you- probably you can give me loads and loads of advice, compared to my very limited experience-, but nevertheless I think that its important to be said.

stay strong!

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of January 7, 2022 at 4:23 PM

And, although the discussion seems to have moved a bit away from the "bliss drug" question, I wanted to comment on that, in light of [this post](#), and add my own thoughts.

Let's imagine that someone managed to develop a machine, like Nozick's machine, which would be able to produce pleasure while we were plugged in. In case that we're unplugged from it periodically, the answer should seem clear: the pain about my miserable life where I haven't achieved anything, except hanging onto a machine, outweighs the pleasure by a large amount. Even if that pleasure is real- which seems very difficult to implement for me-, I would be so shocked about the waste of my life that the only possible answer for me would be to reject such a machine. Also, the pleasure would be non-natural (because induced by a machine) and non-necessary (by obvious reasons), and firmly rejected.

So, in order for the experiment to be more convincing, I shouldn't have the possibility to be unplugged. Once plugged in, plugged in forever. But then, which role does the machine take? It controls my world, it controls my life, my happiness and unhappiness, so **it's God**. When I become plugged in, the machine becomes my own, personal God; she controls every aspect of my experience.

In that case, the whole Epicurean argument- which states that there can't be any omnipotent God-, **doesn't work**. It's like applying Scepticism to a world in which it has (by whatever means) been proven that truth exists. Or Christianity to a world where it has been proven for certain that there can't be a God.

The Epicurean argument is alien and ineffective to a world where it has been proven that there is a God; but because this machine is God itself, we have to employ other philosophical traditions in order to determine if we should surrender to a God. Epicureanism is a real-life philosophy, not one built on hypothesis.

So tl;dr- such a "bliss machine" doesn't destroy the hedonistic argument, simply because the hedonistic argument never claimed to know the ultimate truth. It's designed to live everyday life, not to answer every possible philosophical question. And, as [Don](#) already stated, this mind experiment is- and will stay for the foreseeable future- a mind experiment. In case that someone discovers a perfect experience machine which provides only natural pleasures without any drawbacks, let me know- I would love to try it out 😄

Post by “Don” of January 7, 2022 at 10:21 PM

@smoothiekiwi , there's also this thread [Would An Epicurean Hook Himself Up To An "Experience Machine" or a "Pleasure Machine" If Possible?](#)

specifically on the experience machine hypothetical.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of January 8, 2022 at 3:35 AM

Ah, thanks! Should I copy my thread over to there and then delete it here?

Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2022 at 6:27 AM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

Ah, thanks! Should I copy my thread over to there and then delete it here?

Whatever you think is fine with me. Sometimes the best thing to do is leave a post or series of posts in place. but then make another post in the other thread with a "Cross-reference" link so people can jump over to this one and find it. Feel free to copy this over there, or just place a link to this location in the other thread (As you probably know, each post is numbered so you can link to a particular post.)

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 8, 2022 at 10:50 AM

X (10)

"ΕΙ ΤΑ ΠΟΙΗΤΙΚΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΑΣΩΤΟΥΣ ΗΔΟΝΩΝ ΕΛΥΕ ΤΟΥΣ ΦΟΒΟΥΣ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΤΕ ΠΕΡΙ ΜΕΤΕΩΡΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΘΑΝΑΤΟΥΚΑΙ ΑΛΓΗΔΟΝΩΝ ΕΤΙ ΤΕ ΤΟ ΠΕΡΑΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΠΙΘΥΜΙΩΝ [ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΑΛΓΗΔΟΝΩΝ]* ΕΔΙΔΑΣΚΕΝ ΟΥΚ ΑΝ ΠΟΤΕ ΕΙΧΟΜΕΝ Ο ΤΙ ΜΕΜΨΑΙΜΕΘΑ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΠΑΝΤΑΧΟΘΕΝ ΕΚΠΛΗΡΟΥΜΕΝΟΙΣ ΤΩΝ ΗΔΟΝΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΟΥΔΑΜΟΘΕΝ ΟΥΤΕ ΤΟ ΑΛΓΟΥΝ ΟΥΤΕ ΤΟ ΛΥΠΟΥΜΕΝΟΝ ΕΧΟΥΣΙΝ Ο ΠΕΡ ΕΣΤΙ ΤΟ ΚΑΚΟΝ."

“If those things which make the pleasures of debauched men, put an end to the fears of the mind, and to those which arise about the heavenly bodies, and death, and pain; and if they taught us what ought to be the limit of our desires, we should have no pretense for blaming those who wholly devote themselves to pleasure, and who never feel any pain or grief (which is the chief evil) from any quarter.” Yonge (1853)

“If the objects which are productive of pleasures to profligate persons really freed them from fears of the mind—the fears, I mean, inspired by celestial and atmospheric phenomena, the fear of death, the fear of pain—if, further, they taught them to limit their desires, we should not have any reason to censure such persons, for they would then be filled with pleasure to overflowing on all sides and would be exempt from all pain, whether of body or mind, that is, from all evil.” Hicks (1910)

“If the things that produce the pleasures of profligates could dispel the fears of the mind about the phenomena of the sky and death and its pains, and also teach the limits of desires <and of pains>, we should never have cause to blame them: for they would be filling themselves full with pleasures from every source and never have pain of body or mind, which is the evil of life.” Bailey (1926)

"If the practices productive of the pleasures of profligates dispelled the fears of the mind about celestial things and death and pains and also taught the limit of the desires, we should never have fault to find with profligates, enjoying pleasures to the full from all quarters, and suffering neither pain nor distress from any quarter, wherein the evil lies." De Witt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy* 235 (1954)

"If the things that produce the pleasures of the dissolute were able to drive away from their minds their fears about what is above them and about death and pain, and to teach them the limit of desires, we would have no reason to find them the limit of desires, we would have no reason to find fault with the dissolute; for they would fill themselves with pleasure from every source and would be free from pain and sorrow, which are evil." Geer (1964)

"If the causes of the pleasures of the dissipated released mental fears concerning celestial phenomena and death and distress, and in addition taught the limit of desires, we should never have any reason to reproach them [i.e. the dissipated], since they would be satisfying themselves with pleasures from all directions and would never have pain or distress, which constitutes the bad." Long, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* 115 (1987)

"If the things that beget pleasure in dissolute individuals could dispel their minds' fears about the heavens, death, and pain, and could still teach them the limits of desires, we would have no grounds for finding fault with the dissolute, since they would be filling themselves with pleasures from every source and in no way suffering from pain or grief, which are evil." O'Connor (1993)

"If the things which produce the pleasures of profligate men dissolved the intellect's fears about the phenomena of the heavens and about death and pains and, moreover, if they taught us the limit of our desires, then we would not have reason to criticize them, since they would be filled with pleasures from every source and would contain no feeling of pain or distress from any source—and that is what is bad ." Inwood (1994)

"If the things which debauched men find pleasurable put an end to all fears (such as concerns about the heavenly bodies, death, and pain) and if they revealed how we ought to limit our desires, we would have no reason to reproach them, for they would be fulfilled with pleasures from every source while experiencing no pain, neither in mind nor body, which is the chief evil of life." Anderson (2004)

"If those elements that are productive of the pleasures of the debauched released them from the mental apprehensions aroused by natural phenomena, fear of death, and <obsessive anticipation of> pain; if, in addition, they formed their characters in such a way that they knew when to set a limit to their desires, we would then never have anything to censure them about: indeed, they would then be fully actualizing

all the pleasures and in no way would they have either what is painful or what is productive of grief in them—and it is this latter condition <which they would be avoiding> that is morally bad.” Makridis (2005)

“If the things that produce the delights of those who are decadent washed away the mind's fears about astronomical phenomena and death and suffering, and furthermore if they taught us the limits of our pains and desires, then we would have no complaints against them, since they would be filled with every joy and would contain not a single pain or distress (and that's what is bad).” Saint-Andre (2008)

“If the things that produce the debauchee's pleasures dissolved the mind's fears regarding the heavenly bodies, death, and pain and also told us how to limit our desires, we would never have any reason to find fault with such people, because they would be glutting themselves with every sort of pleasure and never suffer physical or mental pain, which is the real evil.” Strodach (2012)

“If the objects that afforded pleasure to profligate men actually freed them from mental fears, namely those that relate to celestial phenomena and death and pain, and also taught them to limit their desires, we would never have any occasion to find fault with such men, since they would then be filled with pleasures from all sides and would be free of all pain and grief—that is, of all that is bad.” Mensch (2018)

“If the things that produce the pleasures of the dissolute released our minds from fear of celestial things and death and pain, and if they taught us the limit of desire, then we would have nothing to reproach in them, since they would then be replete with pleasures from every source and devoid of pain or sorrow from any source, which are precisely what is bad.” White (2021)

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 8, 2022 at 11:13 AM

There are a few inconsistencies we can flesh out.

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

Even if that pleasure is real- which seems very difficult to implement for me-, I would be so shocked about the waste of my life that the only possible answer for me would be to reject such a machine.

The true waste of life is an existence where happiness is controlled by a machine. Rejecting necessity is a worthy goal (and is literally the plot of *The Matrix* and the theme of most of Rage Against the Machine's songs, which is tight).

"[T]here is no necessity to live under the control of necessity." (Epicurus, Vatican Saying 9)

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

But then, which role does the machine take? It controls my world, it controls my life, my happiness and unhappiness, so **it's God**. When I become plugged in, the machine becomes my own, personal God; she controls every aspect of my experience.

A god, according to Epicurean sources, is either (1) an animal who has perfected their existence to such an extent that they have become incapable of being troubled, destroyed, or inconvenienced, or (2) mental images that inadvertently enter our minds, which alert us to the possibility of living a better natural life. A machine cannot be a god because it is neither an organism living a perfect existence, nor an image that only interacts with the rest of us accidentally, inadvertently, and randomly, through dreams. A machine feels no pleasure, no pain, and has no sense of prudence. Furthermore, the entire existence of the machine is, literally, designed to interfere with human beings. An entity that troubles others is unworthy to be venerated as a god. Rather, it sounds like just another troublesome obstacle, like a destructive force of nature (but, in this case, artificial), not a path to growth and satisfaction.

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

In that case, the whole Epicurean argument- which states that there can't be any omnipotent God-, **doesn't work**. It's like applying Scepticism to a world in which it has (by whatever means) been proven that truth exists. Or Christianity to a world where it has been proven for certain that there can't be a God.

The Epicurean argument is alien and ineffective to a world where it has been proven that there is a God; but because this machine is God itself, we have to employ other philosophical traditions in order to determine if we should surrender to a God.

This speculation, that a monotheistic entity exists, is an example of what Epicurus would call a "liability to vain imagination", a "groundless", "illusory", or "vain fancy", an "empty imagining" or a "senseless whim". In other words, it is a proposition that is neither based on sensory data, internal feelings, or mental anticipations, but, rather, is a pure product of the imagination. To entertain an idea would be as fruitless as testing for the existence of elves and faeries. Surely, like the Sceptics, we could devote thousands of pages to refuting every idea under the sun. However, in Epicurean philosophy, prudence is the greater virtue, and a speculation that does not lead to practical wisdom is empty.

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

So tl;dr- such a "bliss machine" doesn't destroy the hedonistic argument, simply because the hedonistic argument never claimed to know the ultimate truth. It's designed to live everyday life, not to answer every possible philosophical question. And, as [Don](#) already stated, this mind experiment is- and will stay for the foreseeable future- a mind experiment. In case that someone discovers a perfect experience machine which provides only natural pleasures without any drawbacks, let me know- I would love to try it out 😊

There is a fundamental difference between painlessness due to maximizing the enjoyment of a natural life versus sedation due to an emotional withdrawal from the challenges of a natural existence. The "bliss machine" is a form of sedation. In fact, I think in this case, a thought experiment isn't even necessary. Just look at alcoholism and opiate abuse throughout "advanced" countries. There is a possibility of abusing "bliss". There is no possibility of abusing "painlessness" if we look at it honestly, because we cannot achieve "painlessness" through any other means besides fulfilling our potential as human beings. We couldn't enjoy exercise or companionship connected to a machine. The machine does not require that we act sensibly, with decency and dignity. It just requires our submission.

Post by “Don” of January 8, 2022 at 11:21 AM

[Quote from Nate](#)

There is a fundamental difference between painlessness due to maximizing the enjoyment of a natural life versus sedation due to an emotional withdrawal from the challenges of a natural existence. The "bliss machine" is a form of sedation

I like your phrasing there.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of January 8, 2022 at 3:03 PM

Well, @Nate, lets get the debate rolling 😊

[Quote from Nate](#)

There are a few inconsistencies we can flesh out.

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

Even if that pleasure is real- which seems very difficult to implement for me-, I would be so shocked about the waste of my life that the only possible answer for me would be to reject such a machine.

The true waste of life is an existence where happiness is controlled by a machine. Rejecting necessity is a worthy goal (and is literally the plot of *The Matrix* and the theme of most of Rage Against the Machine's songs, which is tight).

"[T]here is no necessity to live under the control of necessity." (Epicurus, Vatican Saying 9)

Very good point, and one I can't argue with.

[Quote from Nate](#)

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

But then, which role does the machine take? It controls my world, it controls my life, my happiness and unhappiness, so **it's God**. When I become plugged in, the machine becomes my own, personal God; she controls every aspect of my experience.

A god, according to Epicurean sources, is either (1) an animal who has perfected their existence to such an extent that they have become incapable of being troubled, destroyed, or inconvenienced, or (2) mental images that inadvertently enter our minds, which alert us to the possibility of living a better natural life. A machine cannot be a god because it is neither an organism living a perfect existence, nor an image that only interacts with the rest of us accidentally, inadvertently, and randomly, through dreams. A machine feels no pleasure, no pain, and has no sense of prudence. Furthermore, the entire existence of the machine is, literally, designed to interfere with human beings. An entity that troubles others is unworthy to be venerated as a god. Rather, it sounds like just another troublesome obstacle, like a destructive force of nature (but, in this case, artificial), not a path to growth and satisfaction.

I get what you mean, but I meant the "standard" monotheistic God (a poor phrasing on my side, I'm sorry 😞) And well, for me personally, the Matrix would be a God if I didn't know about her existence and the pure fact that she's a machine. Why shouldn't the experience machine be

exactly the same?

Quote

This speculation, that a monotheistic entity exists, is an example of what Epicurus would call a "liability to vain imagination", a "groundless", "illusory", or "vain fancy", an "empty imagining" or a "senseless whim". In other words, it is a proposition that is neither based on sensory data, internal feelings, or mental anticipations, but, rather, is a pure product of the imagination. To entertain an idea would be as fruitless as testing for the existence of elves and faeries. Surely, like the Skeptics, we could devote thousands of pages to refuting every idea under the sun. However, in Epicurean philosophy, prudence is the greater virtue, and a speculation that does not lead to practical wisdom is empty

Although you're somehow right, I can't fully agree with you. I fear that I'm not proficient enough in Epicureanism- and I'm not even sure that my viewpoint is Epicurean at all-, but I'm convinced that we have to accept certain societal thought experiments not as true, but that these thoughts exist. And I think that the existence of a God is accepted by five billion people on earth. To refuse acknowledging such a speculation would be madness, in my humble opinion. I obviously don't agree with the idea that there **is** a God, but I most certainly acknowledge that people **believe** in a God.

Quote

We couldn't enjoy exercise or companionship connected to a machine. The machine does not require that we act sensibly, with decency and dignity. It just requires our submission.

Well, but when it produces more pleasure in the end than normal life, why shouldn't I sacrifice virtue and dignity for more long-time pleasure? 🙄

Post by "Cassius" of January 8, 2022 at 4:28 PM

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

Well, but when it produces more pleasure in the end than normal life, why shouldn't I sacrifice virtue and dignity for more long-time pleasure?

I think you're going in the right direction with that question, but by inserting "long-time" or "long-term" you would be focusing exclusively on the "duration" of the pleasure and I doubt that would be correct Epicurean theory. Duration would (in my understanding) be only one of the aspects, and you would need to consider "intensity" or some other measure:

Letter to Menoeceus: "And just as with food he does not seek simply the larger share and nothing else, but rather the most pleasant, so he seeks to enjoy not the longest period of time, but the most pleasant."

Even that quote might not be entirely clear but I think it is evidence that we measure pleasure by more than just duration in time.

And that question of determining "the most pleasant" is relevant to the bliss machine hypo at a fundamental level. The "unreality" that is the basis of so much objection to the experiment is I think sensing in part the issue that is referenced by Epicurus as "the most pleasant." The issue is probably not that there is an absolute scale of "most pleasant for everyone" or "the best pleasure" or "the highest pleasure" for everyone, but there is still an issue of "what kind of pleasure" is being experienced by the individual that is relevant to the question.

Post by "Don" of January 8, 2022 at 4:40 PM

Here's my translation of the excerpt from the letter (verse 126):

Quote

Just as the most food is not chosen but that which brings the greatest pleasure; choose as well not the longest time but that in which one enjoys the fruits of that which bring the greatest pleasure.

I find it significant that Epicurus's word is καρπίζεται (karpizetai) related to the Latin carpe as in Carpe diem "Pluck/Harvest the day."

Post by "Cassius" of January 8, 2022 at 4:45 PM

Just to refresh my memory Don do you have a preferred interpretation of what is translated as "the greatest pleasure"?

Post by “Don” of January 8, 2022 at 4:56 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Just to refresh my memory Don do you have a preferred interpretation of what is translated as "the greatest pleasure"?

126c. ὥσπερ δὲ σιτίον οὐ τὸ πλεῖον πάντως ἀλλὰ τὸν ἥδιστον αἰρεῖται,

τὸ ἥδιστον "the most pleasant"

αἰρεῖται "is chosen/choosing"

126d. οὕτω καὶ χρόνον οὐ τὸν μήκιστον ἀλλὰ τὸν ἥδιστον καρπίζεται.

126c and 126d exemplify again why it's important to look at the words Epicurus used and not just modern English translations. Take a look at the final phrases of each:

126c. ...ἀλλὰ τὸ ἥδιστον αἰρεῖται,

"choosing that which brings the greatest pleasure"

126d. ...ἀλλὰ τὸν ἥδιστον καρπίζεται.

"enjoying the fruits of that which bring the greatest pleasure."

Both of these use the word ἥδιστον (hēdiston) which is the superlative of ἡδύς (hēdus) "pleasant, sweet" which is related to ἡδονή (hēdonē) "pleasure". By variously translating these two occurrences of the same exact word as "most pleasing/brings the greatest joy," "most delicious/happiest," "nicest/most agreeable," or "most enjoyable" (for both), the fact that Epicurus used the same word is lost. Only Yonge uses "most pleasant" for both. Epicurus teaches that pleasure is the greatest good and by refusing to translate words like ἥδιστον more literally as "(that which) brings the most pleasure" it would appear that translators are consciously shying away from acknowledging that pleasure was Epicurus's North Star. When Epicurus says pleasure, he means pleasure. Translators should not equivocate or obfuscate. They should strive to illuminate and communicate.

For more, check out my translation of the Letter to Menoikeus [Epicurus's Letter to Menoikeus - A New Translation with Commentary](#) 😊

Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2022 at 5:34 PM

Thank you. What I am asking you also is "What do you take 'most pleasant' to mean"?

Post by “Don” of January 8, 2022 at 5:45 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Thank you. What I am asking you also is "What do you take 'most pleasant' to mean"?

I'm not quite sure what you mean. Could you give a few more details on the dilemma?

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἡδύς](#)

Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2022 at 6:37 PM

How do you describe in words the attributes of one pleasure that make it more or less pleasant than another?

Post by “Don” of January 8, 2022 at 6:55 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

How do you describe in words the attributes of one pleasure that make it more or less pleasant than another?

My perspective is "that which brings the greatest pleasure" *to you* in the present moment. There is no absolute comparative scale of pleasures.

The significance of καρπίζεται is also to pluck the greatest pleasure at the right time, when the time is ripe so to speak.

Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2022 at 7:01 PM

Right I am not trying to ask a trick question or box anyone in. I am not sure I can answer it myself.

But I think it is legitimate question which we should be able to use the texts to answer.

Another way to ask the question might be:. "What factors should I consider in deciding what pleasure is greatest? Can you give me any help with that?"

I think "duration" / "time" is documentable in the texts (per the quote above).

I think "intensity" is probably also documentable in terms of the references to "pure pleasure" (I will look for the PD reference).

But I suspect there are or should be other factors, or else we should have an explanation as to why there are not.

(Edit:. This is a topic we've referenced before so I am interested in any comments from anyone and not only Don)

Post by “Don” of January 8, 2022 at 7:53 PM

Actually, my response was meant to be serious. Only the individual in the moment can answer what is "most pleasurable."

Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2022 at 8:09 PM

I think you are absolutely right that the answer is and must be subjective.

But does that mean that it is impossible to put into words any factors that describe the feeling of pleasure other than how long it lasts?

(..... He asks rhetorically to no one in particular.... 😊)

Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2022 at 8:11 PM

As to the "intensity" factor I think I would cite:

[PD09](#). If every pleasure could be intensified so that it lasted, and influenced the whole organism or the most essential parts of our nature, pleasures would never differ from one another