

Epicurean Change

Post by “Matt” of April 8, 2022 at 8:39 AM

Well I've been gone for awhile with some pretty stressful things at work and at home over the last couple months...but that spring renewal is here.

As of late, I have had some Epicurean wisdom in action, and I have made some significant changes based solely on pursuing my own pleasure. The hedonic calculus or spectrum, or whatever we call it is a real quantifiable thing. Experiencing certain pains to pursue greater pleasure are sometimes necessary. This state of the pursuit pleasure is the natural state of human behavior, surrounded by a cloud of illusory constructs that tell us to reject this natural state. Those constructs are wrong...they keep us from pursuing pleasure.

You never truly realize how muted our behaviors and perspectives are until you get that blast of pleasure and you realize that you haven't truly been living...this can last years.

So Epicurean wisdom must be lived. There is a danger of only receiving Epicurean philosophy in an intellectual or stoicized manner and still live in a state of anesthesia without pleasure. It makes sense in the mind, but the body misses out. I can say that was my situation for awhile. But no more...

Live it.

<https://youtu.be/QtMv9r-wjiU>

Post by “Cassius” of April 8, 2022 at 9:03 AM

[Quote from Matt](#)

So Epicurean wisdom must be lived. There is a danger of only receiving Epicurean philosophy in an intellectual or stoicized manner and still live in a state of anesthesia without pleasure.

DEFINITELY!

Post by “Don” of April 8, 2022 at 10:38 AM

A philosopher's words are empty if they do not heal the suffering of mankind. For just as medicine is useless if it does not remove sickness from the body, so philosophy is useless if it does not remove suffering from the soul. κενὸς ἐκείνου φιλοσόφου λόγος, ὃφ' οὐ μηδὲν πάθος ἀνθρώπου θεραπεύεται· ὡσπερ γὰρ ἰατρικῆς οὐδὲν ὄφελος μὴ τὰς νόσους τῶν σωμάτων ἐκβαλλούσης, οὕτως οὐδὲ φιλοσοφίας, εἰ μὴ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκβάλλει πάθος.

Post by “Matt” of April 8, 2022 at 12:02 PM

You can probably infer from my veiled language what the change is. But it's astonishing the hold that some circumstances have on us and how long we are willing to be miserable for.

Post by “Godfrey” of April 8, 2022 at 12:05 PM

Quote from Matt

This state of the pursuit pleasure is the natural state of human behavior, surrounded by a cloud of illusory constructs that tell us to reject this natural state. Those constructs are wrong...they keep us from pursuing pleasure.

Well put: that seems to be the crux of the problem! Not only on the level of the individual, but on the level of society.

Post by “Don” of April 8, 2022 at 9:19 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

so philosophy is useless if it does not remove suffering from the soul.

, οὕτως οὐδὲ φιλοσοφίας, εἰ μὴ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκβάλλει πάθος.

btw ἐκβάλλει is not merely "remove." It connotes cast away, hurl away, or throw from. "Remove" strikes me as a little milquetoast.

Post by “Cassius” of April 8, 2022 at 9:27 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

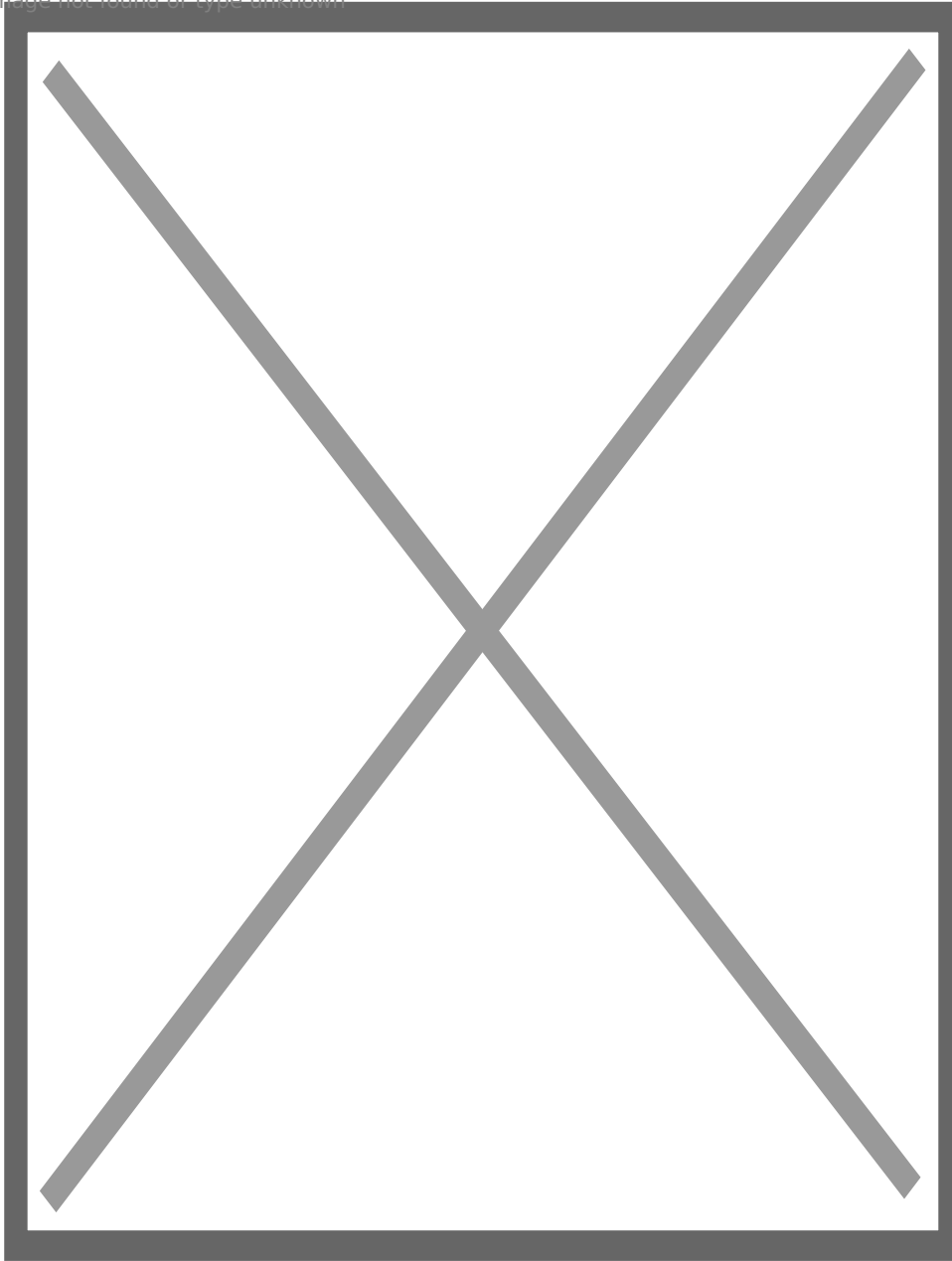
Remove" strikes me as a little milquetoast.

And if there is anything we need to purge from Epicurean philosophy and from our lives it is milquetoastism!

Post by “Don” of April 9, 2022 at 9:07 AM

FYI Did not realize the word came from a comic strip:

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[Caspar Milquetoast - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org)
en.wikipedia.org

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 9, 2022 at 9:18 AM

| [Quote from Matt](#)

You can probably infer from my veiled language what the change is. But it's astonishing the hold that some circumstances have on us and how long we are willing to be miserable for.

I have a certain understanding of "free will" that may or may not be purely Epicurean, and sometime in the future may go further into that -- but basically be kind to yourself and forgive yourself, and congratulations on your spring renewal, as sounds like something finally shifted in your life!!!

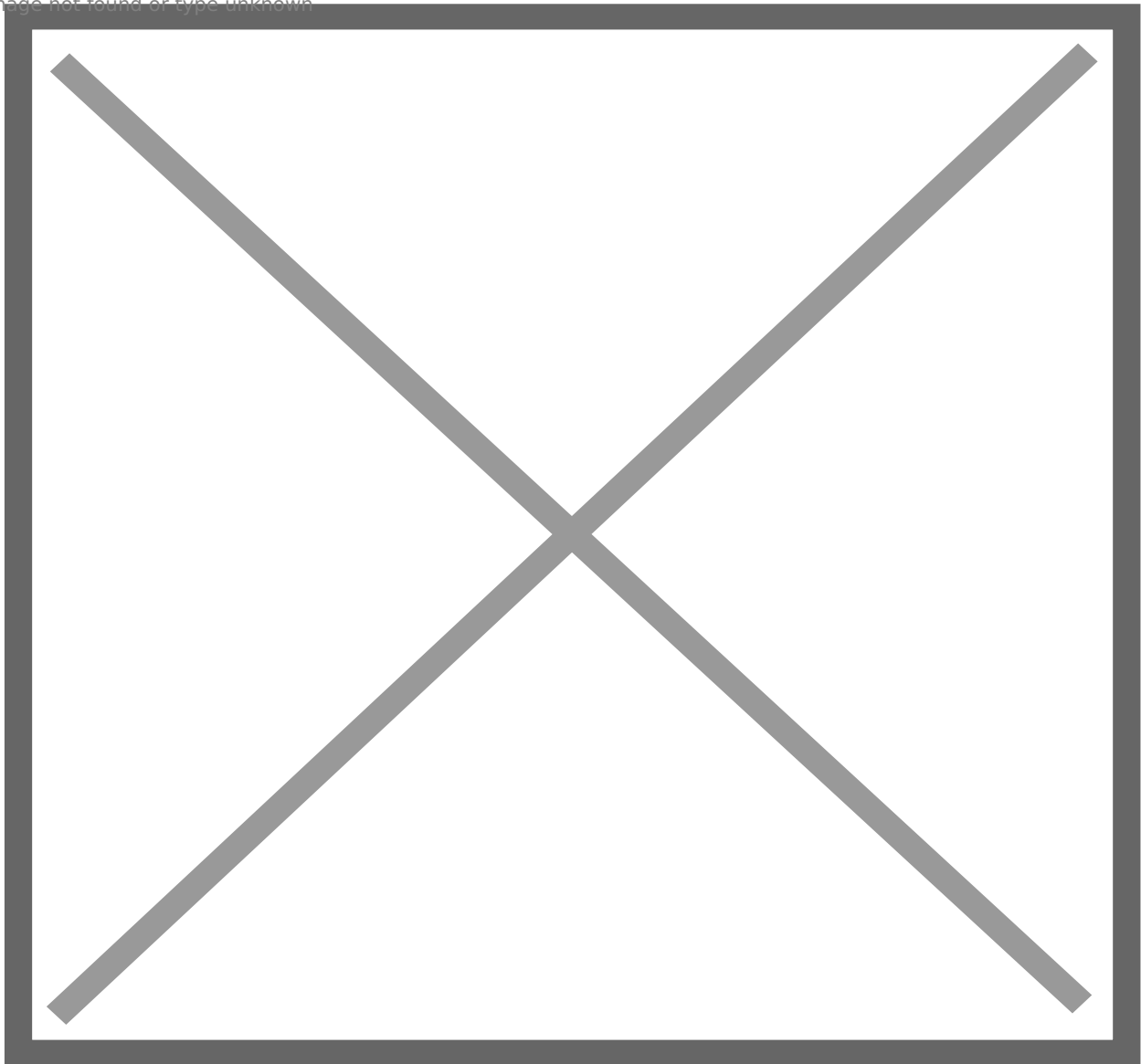
From my own experience, I have found that sometimes it can take some time to figure things out and find a way forward to a better life. And then a small shift begins a quantum leap. Yet life is a mix of experiences -- in our human bodies we will all feel pleasure and pain, both physical and mental. As we use reason and wisdom to move toward pleasure, we can begin to trust ourselves and life -- we can trust that whatever might come in the future, we will find pleasure and enjoyment, and move toward a fullness of pleasure and joy in life.

Post by "Godfrey" of April 9, 2022 at 11:24 AM

It's amazing how often reason is used to justify pain, and it's a challenging process to learn to listen to our Feelings, develop prudence, and begin our reasoning process with our perceptions. I confess that it's a process I'm still learning.

Post by "Don" of April 9, 2022 at 11:36 AM

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[The Sweet Spot: The Pleasures of Suffering and the Search for Meaning](#)

University of Toronto psychologist Paul Bloom shares 5 key insights from his new book, *The Sweet Spot: The Pleasures of Suffering and the Search for Meaning*
nextbigideaclub.com

That's one problem I have with the new book by Paul Bloom. He seems (I've not read the book but heard him on several podcasts talking about it) to see some problem in taking pleasure in things, even things that may have been difficult to achieve. His stress on "meaning vs pleasure" seems specious to me:

Quote from Paul Bloom

Now, one alternative to pleasure is meaning. This drive for meaning is every bit as important as the drive to have a good time, to enjoy ourselves, to be happy.

But from my perspective, that "meaning" he stresses gives one pleasure, so we're right back to an Epicurean square one. It's the hedonist = "a string of drinking parties and festivals" straw-man fallacy that is not what Epicurus advocated.

Post by "Cassius" of April 9, 2022 at 11:36 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

how often reason is used to justify pain

As long as reason is being used to justify pain so that greater pleasure can be obtained then that would presumably be correct reasoning.

I get the feeling that our error is often not so much "listening to reason" vs "listening to the feeling of pleasure" so much as it is that we lose sight of the fact that the ultimate goal of reasoning is to achieve pleasure (even if temporarily through pursuit of pain).

Definitely it's hard to know how to succeed in the face of many types of challenges and that kind of practical learning is required in addition to the raw philosophy.

Post by "Cassius" of April 9, 2022 at 11:39 AM

Don and I crossposted. I am not familiar with Bloom, but what I am coming to in agreeing with Don's criticism is that the term "meaning" ought to be translated (as many of these commentators are using it) as "those types of pleasure of which I (the commentator) approve!

The more I hear "meaning" used as a rhetorical weapon against pleasure the more I am driven to that conclusion.

Post by "Godfrey" of April 9, 2022 at 3:08 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

As long as reason is being used to justify pain so that greater pleasure can be obtained then that would presumably be correct reasoning.

I get the feeling that our error is often not so much "listening to reason" vs "listening to the feeling of pleasure" so much as it is that we lose sight of the fact that the ultimate goal of reasoning is to achieve pleasure (even if temporarily through pursuit of pain).

Agreed, although the Platonic/Aristotelian model prevalent in our society is to divorce reason from feelings. So often this puts us in a position to consciously attempt to "override" our feelings, which are necessary for prudent actions. This seems like the root of the problem, and one of the issues that Epicurus was addressing in making reason subservient to our canonic faculties.