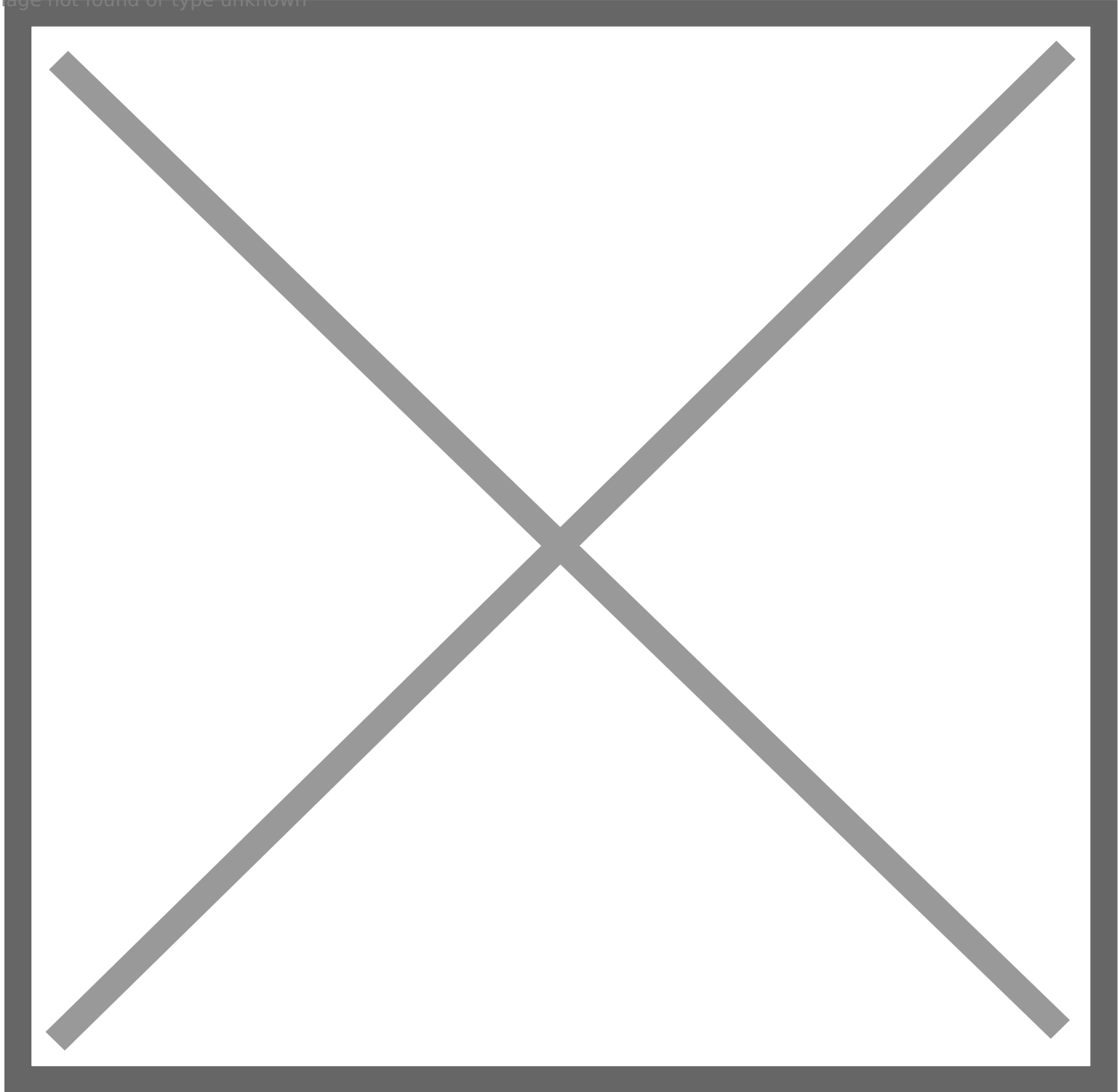


Paul Bloom Dancing on the Head of a Pin

Post by "Don" of May 18, 2023 at 6:06 AM

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[Hedonism is overrated - to make the best of life there must be pain, says this Yale professor](#)

The most satisfying lives are those which involve challenge, fear and struggle, says psychologist Paul Bloom

www.theguardian.com

This is an article - definitely not Epicurean! - by Paul Bloom that summarizes his recent book on the importance of suffering, challenge, and meaning in life. Pleasure isn't enough, he says.

I have real problems with his general thesis and wordplay.

He keeps using words like satisfaction and dances around Epicurus's notion of a pleasurable life.

Quote from Bloom

I argue that we don't only seek pleasure, we also want to live meaningful lives- - and this involves willingly experiencing pain, anxiety, and struggle. We see value in chosen suffering.

But why do we "want meaningful lives"? Because we derive pleasure from that, I would say. Epicurus himself acknowledged that we will sometimes undertake pain for long-term pleasure. Bloom would call that "satisfaction" not pleasure. The Cambridge dictionary defines "satisfaction" as "a pleasant feeling that you get when you receive something you wanted, or when you have done something you wanted to do." Look at that! Pleasure!

So, I'd be curious to hear opinions from y'all.

Post by "Cassius" of May 18, 2023 at 7:01 AM

Just read it. Your criticism is spot on. Deliberate and stubborn refusal to identify "meaning" as "pleasurable" for reasons that probably need a psychologist to drill down to find.

Very similar to the refusal to accept Epicurus' position that healthy functioning life in its normal state - without pain - is itself pleasurable.

This isn't just a dispute over dictionary definitions, there is an agenda behind it to fight against pleasure itself as being given by Nature as the guide of life.

And I would bet that same agenda is behind Buddhism and Stoicism too.

Post by "Eikadistes" of May 18, 2023 at 7:54 AM

I hear that the Ukrainians are currently being blessed with a heightened level of existential meaning.

Perhaps Paul Bloom would like to join them to re-orient himself to a more purposeful life?

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 18, 2023 at 8:08 AM

Perhaps, the Paul Bloom would elect to voluntarily receive a physical disability, perhaps, blindness? Maybe he should go to a doctor and request that his eyeballs be removed so he can find more *meaning* in life.

See, I'm a little confused, because the purpose behind the article is not to inform us about a meaningful life. The purpose of the article is to sell his book. The purpose of the book is not to inform us about a meaningful life. It's to sell copies. He could just publish the PDF online and disseminate it for free (as many of us do). **However**, he is **not**. So his primary goal is generate wealth, and wealth is an instrument to pursue desires, and we desire good experiences, not bad ones.

So this guy is selling books to have a pleasant life, but the book tells people that pleasure is evil.

Sure thing, Paul. Sure thing.

Post by “Little Rocker” of May 18, 2023 at 10:55 AM

I listened to [a Philosophy Bites podcast](#) with him back when I was consuming more podcasts, and I seem to remember Nigel Warburton politely undermining Bloom's point at almost every turn.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Deliberate and stubborn refusal to identify "meaning" as "pleasurable" for reasons that probably need a psychologist to drill down to find.

The last clause of this sentence really cracked me up! I can't make sense of someone saying, 'Reflecting on my highly meaningful life is terribly unpleasant.'

[Quote from Nate](#)

I hear that the Ukrainians are currently being blessed with a heightened level of existential meaning.

Exactly! 'Ah, yes, this war will be wonderful for developing the resilience of our children!' Epicureanism appeals to me for many reasons, but chief among them is the view that there is no meaning or purpose behind suffering.

Post by “Cassius” of May 18, 2023 at 11:13 AM

[Quote from Little Rocker](#)

chief among them is the view that there is no meaning or purpose behind suffering

Great point

Even from the Nietzschean "what doesn't kill us makes us stronger" perspective, there darn well better be a goal of "making us stronger" for engaging in any suffering or else I want no part of it! 😊

Certainly standing alone the idea of fixating on suffering is awful. I haven't really absorbed or am ready to endorse N's view of "pity" as being such a bad thing, but I think he has a point there too which could eventually be made more clear. In my case I concretize the issue by thinking about how easy it would be for me to sit around thinking constantly about people in nursing homes or animals in animal shelters or in factory farms. But I can usually catch myself by realizing that if I did nothing but continue to think about those issues there would be no time for anything else in life, much less the possibility of finding time to help at least a few of them where possible.