

Eric's personal outline

Post by "Eric" of September 16, 2024 at 4:17 PM

I thought that I might write my outline in separate posts as I go through DeWitt's book. I already had the time to write some of my own thoughts on knowledge and then revised the logic and language a little after I read the relevant chapters of the book.

My thoughts on knowledge

The sensory organs send raw unprocessed (i.e. "true") sensory data to the brain when something in this world stimulates them. Using the sensory data with the innate sensory data processing mechanisms, the brain makes interpretations of the data and assigns quantifiable "importance" to it with it in memory based on spikes of neurotransmitter activity modulated by:

- the feelings acquired by comparison with previously acquired or imagined or innate (anticipated) interpretations (comparison result: cognitive consonance or dissonance)
- the feelings already present at the time of the sensation. (drugs, hunger, having a good time/boredom etc. can influence the "importance" of an interpretation)

This importance is what manifests (or simply is?) our confidence/faith/trust in the interpretation. When the "importance" is high enough, we are confident that the information is true and we may call it knowledge.

Confidence is pleasurable. Lack of it can be painful, particularly for important or profound issues under processing. Skepticism (the confidence in that nothing can really be known) erodes confidence in the trueness of one's senses, anticipations and feelings, and naturally - as lack of confidence is painful - will not be tolerated forever and we usually eventually find a way around this pain by trusting something. The wise person chooses to be confident in the honesty of his senses, anticipations and feelings; yet shall not be hasty in his interpretations; and shall revise his interpretations when evidence to the contrary presents itself. Perceptions and interpretations can be false on all stages of processing as can be demonstrated via experienceable examples such as optical illusions (initial processing) or delusions (later processing).

Sensations, anticipations and feelings should be taken as priority over reasoning as they are direct information from the environment (or the environment of your ancestors as is the case with anticipations) for you to use, and reason is only indirect information of the environment.

I feel like I could maybe say more or try to make myself more clear but I am content with posting the above.

Comments and criticisms are welcome :)

Post by “Godfrey” of September 16, 2024 at 8:27 PM

[Quote from Eric](#)

Sensations, anticipations and feelings should be taken as priority over reasoning...

It may be more accurate to state this along the lines of "Sensations, anticipations and feelings should be taken as preceding, and a verification of, reasoning...." Reasoning can be a check on information from the senses, anticipations and feelings, but it also needs verification by the senses, anticipations and feelings. Reasoning that doesn't begin with the sensations, anticipations and feelings isn't grounded in reality. This is probably what you meant by "taken as priority;" I'm just thinking that it would be helpful to be more specific in this particular description.

Post by “Eric” of September 17, 2024 at 8:29 AM

Thank you Godfrey for your advice. Yes indeed, that is what I meant by "taking as priority."

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2024 at 8:35 AM

[Quote from Eric](#)

Perceptions and interpretations can be false on all stages of processing as can be demonstrated via experienceable examples such as optical illusions (initial processing) or delusions (later processing).

This would be another comment similar to Godfrey's as to shades of meaning, but most of the time I don't think we see "perceptions" and "interpretations" linked as similar concepts that can be right or wrong. I generally see "perceptions" as used to refer to individual "sights" or "sounds" rather than the labeling of them. At any rate, it's important to be clear that the senses are not right or wrong themselves, it is the interpretations we draw from the senses that can be right or wrong.

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 17, 2024 at 9:26 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

At any rate, it's important to be clear that the senses are not right or wrong themselves, it is the interpretations we draw from the senses that can be right or wrong.

This gave me some difficulty in the past, so I want to see if I can finally get it. Can we say that the senses are the mechanics of how the mind collects "data"? Then just like a microscope may have a scratch on the lense, the eye could have a defect which slightly alters the incoming data? It would take some further effort to determine that there was a distortion in the data, by running further experiments or comparing what others are observing - and the data wouldn't be 100 percent incorrect, only skewed. This would be dealing with "correct vs. incorrect".

But then there is a different judgement of the morality of something when the words used are "right vs. wrong". So for example a video recorder can record information, but it takes human judgement to both interpret and say if something was "right or wrong".

Not sure how much it matters to say "correct vs. incorrect" compared to "right vs. wrong" for everyone else, but it seems to helps me. Another wording could be "accurate vs. inaccurate".

Which then we could ask: Do the senses always report accurately? (I am still not getting this 🤔).

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2024 at 11:00 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

This gave me some difficulty in the past, so I want to see if I can finally get it. Can we say that the senses are the mechanics of how the mind collects "data"? Then just like a microscope may have a scratch on the lense, the eye could have a defect which slightly alters the incoming data?

Yes. The microscope does not "tell" the doctor or scientist what he is looking at - the microscope simply collects and magnifies light and passes it on to the eyepiece. It's up to the observer to make an accurate assessment of what he sees.

If a lense has a scratch, then the light transmitted to the eyepiece is affected to greater or lesser degree by the scratch. But that doesn't affect the "truthfulness" of the microscope, because at no time is the microscope "telling" anyone anything.

We're separating the "collection of data" from the "assessment of data." The collection isn't "true" or "false" - the collection function simply is what it is.

That's why it is possible to say that the senses always report "accurately" or "truthfully" -- they are not injecting their own "opinion" about what they are displaying. They aren't reaching any conclusions at all. The observer has to account for any scratches on a lens the same way you account for the lens being out of focus, or not having enough light to see what you're looking at.

It's "opinions" that are right or wrong or accurate or inaccurate.

So it's essential, if you're going to make any sense of Epicurean canonic at all, to "get the point" that tools like the eyes or ears are never "accurate" or "inaccurate" in the way that they report. They report what they report, and it's the *interpretation* of the data in the mind that is accurate or inaccurate.

"Accurate" or "inaccurate" applies to saying that the tower at a distance is round or square. When someone says "all senses are true" or "[all sensations are true](#)," they aren't talking about the conclusion about whether the tower is square or round. They are saying that the senses report "truly" in the sense of "honestly without any added opinion of their own."

Post by "Cassius" of September 17, 2024 at 11:07 AM

I think a lot of people miss why this is so important.

The point is that the other philosophers, typified by Plato with his cave, allege that the senses "lie" to you and that they are therefore unreliable sources of information about how to live. If the senses lie, then you need to look for some other faculties that you **can** rely on to replace them.

If you're Plato, you come up with geometry or dialectic or some other way of symbolic "logic." If you're more into straight religion you come up with some kind of prayer or divine revelation. No doubt there are other substitutes as well but (1) rationalism/logic and (2) mysticism are the big ones.

Epicurus rejects both of those and says that we rely on the senses that nature gave us, and we don't have to invent imaginary substitutes. He further points out that in addition to the five senses, there are two other categories of natural faculties (1 - the feelings of pleasure and pain, and 2 - the "prolepsis") which are also natural mechanisms that report "truly" without their own opinions. That's why these three categories are "canonical" - they don't give us any opinions of their own about what to do, but they are natural "straight edges" or "rulers" that we can reliably use to test our own individual contexts. They operate naturally, so when held up to situation after situation they give us reliable data that we can then act upon. No need for divine revelation or circular rationalism.

Post by “Eikadistes” of September 17, 2024 at 2:14 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The point is that the other philosophers, typified by Plato with his cave, allege that the senses "lie" to you and that they are therefore unreliable sources of information about how to live.

I'm terribly near-sighted, and I like to use the example of eyesight.

Without glasses, everything is dangerously blurry: *precisely* as it **should** appear to someone with an elongated eyeball. If I saw the world "*as it really is*" (i.e. "*not blurry*"), then my senses would be lying to me, leading me to believe that my eyeball is round. But it doesn't, because it isn't.

Evaluating sensory data is like asking a toddler a question about your physical appearance: the toddler doesn't know how to manage that delicate, social interaction; they will probably blurt out the first, unfiltered impression they have, without any thought as to the implications.

There is also a strong contrast here, not only against Plato, but also, against Democritus. Both philosophers would have seen near-sightedness as evidence that the senses are unreliable, and that the objects of perception are just illusions that come from a more fundamental reality.

Post by “Eric” of September 23, 2024 at 7:44 AM

Continuation of my outline:

My thoughts on the nature of the universe

NOTE: I am aware that this post does not go with Epicurus' ideas about the nature of the universe and gods. The continuing post on ethics will be much more in line with Epicurus' words.

I have only experienced a material universe through my senses and feelings, and there is nothing I have experienced which felt spiritual/supernatural that couldn't be explained by materialism to my satisfaction. Therefore, I believe that it is best to make my life choices as if the universe is fully material.

As far as I can observe and reason, the universe consists of atoms, void, energy and forces.

Things that exist in reality, be they emergent properties of atoms or even the atoms themselves, only exist because they have properties that make them exist. If they don't have such properties or lose them over time, they stop existing. I don't know why atoms exist and am likely limited by my human intellect to understand “how things really work”. I can only get to a certain level of understanding of reality with a level of confidence that is not a hindrance for the good life, a life of pleasure/happiness and minimal pain, and am thus okay with not knowing everything.

Life exists due to its property of self-replication. Any properties hindering this self-replication are pressured to be removed by competition of properties that promote self-replication. I am a living being and thus I am influenced by this self-replication of properties that promote the self-replication and thus existence of life. I am wired to action that promotes the self-replication of life. The wired action **statistically** aims to promote the spread of the genes contained in me or assists the spread of the genes of my family/tribe/country/world (life).

A significant mechanism in the wiring of life is the experience of pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain are life's “GO” and “STOP” signals respectively. All lifeforms naturally seek pleasure and avoid pain. Thus, I (my body and soul) also naturally seek and value pleasure, and avoid pain. Because of this life's restriction, there is no way around this. I may be fooled by others or

my genes to think that something else transcends pleasure and pain in value (like virtue or preservation of life). Yet, the only reason I would naturally remain to think like so is if I gain pleasure from thinking that these are valuable to pursue over pleasure (and/or if I experience pain from the thought that these are not valuable in of themselves over pleasure). As I stated in my “My thoughts on knowledge” post, when there are spikes of neurotransmitter (including at least dopamine in a prominent role) activity (at least strongly associated with the feeling of pleasure) accompanying a thought that we have, our confidence that the thought is correct increases, and it will influence our actions to that direction. Our brains cannot make conscious decisions, memories, or beliefs without going through our reward system.

I believe in causal determinism. Epicurus’ “swerve” of atoms or the modern theory of quantum uncertainty do not convince me that there is something that is the “real me” guiding this body and soul through some other means than what is dented into my body by my environment since my consciousness emerged or by my genetic code. However, it is highly beneficial from the perspective of pleasure and pain to conduct one’s life as if determinism is false in some cases such as to avoid the pain and pleasure-inhibiting stopping power of fatalism. “Some things happen out of chance, some out of necessity (pre-determined) and others by our own volition” is useful and I will cover this and others in the ethics section.

Short note about gods and death: I don’t believe they are physically real as I’ve never seen/felt them other than under conditions where my brain is demonstrably highly prone to making errors (yet these states are highly pleasurable. More on this in the continuing post). If supernatural gods/creators exist, I doubt they have the same faculties as we do. Therefore, the idea that they would use the same criteria for reward/punishment as we do based on moral properties we evolved as social species seems unlikely to me. Therefore, I don’t fear the gods or aim to control any reward or punishment given after death or anticipate it. For me it is reasonable to expect that my sensory experience ends when I die as my body, including its reward system (which governs pleasure and pain) stops working.

Again, I am sure I could be more clear but I feel this is good enough for posting. Comments and questions are welcome!

Post by “Cassius” of September 23, 2024 at 8:17 AM

[Quote from Eric](#)

As far as I can observe and reason, the universe consists of atoms, void, energy and forces.

I know you said you don't represent your views on this topic as orthodox Epicurean, but your phrasing here made me think of an issue that applies outside your routine:

I see a parallel between the best way to discuss tranquility and pleasure and that of discussing atoms and void:

In Epicurean terms tranquility and all other nonpainful experiences are thought of as falling under "pleasure."

Likewise, energy and forces are best thought of as falling under "atoms" since as Epicurus meant the term it was simply indivisible particle, and we use "atom" to refer to a particular arrangement of particles "above" atoms.

Not suggesting you need to think that way yourself.....just thinking out loud about terminology.

Post by “Martin” of September 23, 2024 at 11:46 AM

Quote

Likewise, energy and forces are best thought of as falling under "atoms" since as Epicurus meant the term it was simply indivisible particle

Energy is not indivisible except for transition energies between states of matter. Likewise, forces are not indivisible either. It is good to be aware that forces at a distance (fields) and energy are not covered by Epicurus' and would need to be added as new items to update Epicurean physics.

Post by “TauPhi” of September 23, 2024 at 12:27 PM

[Eric](#) My thoughts are similar to yours on the majority of topics mentioned in your post so I don't think you will benefit much from a fork praising other fork for being a fork. However, I do want to say that I had a big smile on my face reading your latest post. Not because I kept nodding to myself in agreement but because your clarity of thoughts is a pleasure to experience. Loved it.

Thanks for sharing.

Post by “Eric” of September 23, 2024 at 3:48 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Likewise, energy and forces are best thought of as falling under "atoms" since as Epicurus meant the term it was simply indivisible particle, and we use "atom" to refer to a particular arrangement of particles "above" atoms.

By atoms I actually did mean the indivisible particles. I am aware that atoms (as in a Beryllium atom) are composed of smaller particles and so forth. It is good that you brought this up for clarity's sake. Sometimes I have the habit of assuming people understand what I mean.

However, as Martin already said, energy can be quantized (such as the energies of atomic orbitals) or continuous (such as the energy of a photon). I'm actually not familiar with quantum field theory but my understanding is that even though there are particles involved, the forces themselves are continuous. It's been some time since I studied these, so correct me if I'm wrong.

I am not sure why this indivisibility of matter/energy is important regarding the philosophy though. What are the philosophical implications if matter/energy is indivisible and what if it is not (other than whether Epicurus was right or not)?

It doesn't really matter to me if Epicurus was wrong in some aspects of his physics as his Ethics and epistemology send my experience into high energies. I was forced to make these puns. I couldn't avoid it.

Post by “Eric” of September 23, 2024 at 3:53 PM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

[Eric](#) My thoughts are similar to yours on the majority of topics mentioned in your post so I don't think you will benefit much from a fork praising other fork for being a fork. However, I do want to say that I had a big smile on my face reading your latest post.

Not because I kept nodding to myself in agreement but because your clarity of thoughts is a pleasure to experience. Loved it. Thanks for sharing.

Hey thanks! You're welcome. Glad you liked it.

Post by “Cassius” of September 23, 2024 at 4:43 PM

[Quote from Eric](#)

What are the philosophical implications if matter/energy is indivisible and what if it is not (other than whether Epicurus was right or not)?

As you indicated, I will answer this on a philosophical level without representing that I have any ability to argue the latest physics research. Keep in mind I don't represent that I am the reincarnation of Epicurus - I am just trying to do a reasonable job of reconstructing his thought processes, and offering one possible way of doing that. Your mileage will vary.

First, it is well document that Epicurus thought that taking positions on the implications of infinity was very important in constructing a rational view of existence in which we can hope to live happily. In doing so it seems he was as much concerned about the harmful implications of what I will call "inward" infinity as he was about the helpful implications of "outward" infinity.

The implications of "outward" infinity of the universe is first of all logical (as a matter of definition, what could possibly be "outside" of everything that exists?). This approach to infinity gives us a means of explaining how our particular world came into existence from an eternal universe without the intervention of supernatural forces. This is a very powerful antidote to the "intelligent design" and similar arguments based on complexity and similar reasoning.

On the other hand, "downward" infinity would imply something at or very close to a violation of the "nothing goes to nothing" observation. The presumption that there is at some point a "smallest" that has an unchanging nature gives us an explanation for the regularity of the universe that allows us to have confidence that the regularity need not be supernaturally created and sustained. It doesn't matter whether the source of the regularity is at what we call today the molecular or atomic or subatomic levels. What matters is that "somewhere" on the way down there is a point of unchanging nature which sustains the regularity that we see at our level. It appears Epicurus was thinking that it is as important to have a reasonable theory to give us confidence in regularity of nature without supernatural control both on the upside and the downside.

I would equate this to why Epicurus thought it was important to posit the existence of life in the universe other than only here on Earth. The implications of thinking that we are the only living things in the universe, or that we are the highest, are too profoundly disruptive to ignore without taking a position.

In the end you're right that it doesn't matter to some people whether the mechanism of natural regularity is different from the way Epicurus explained it. It also doesn't matter to some people if the Earth is the only place in the universe where life exists. But many people (and I would argue it's the large majority of people) find that leaving such questions without an answer that comports with the logic of what we see around us is a very unsatisfactory thing to do. They want to know that they are living their best life, to the best of their ability given the information available to them, and they want a logical foundation for their decision-making while they are alive. They can't afford to wait for next year's or next decade's or next centuries' scientific research.

We've had numbers of discussions in the past touching on the overall issue you are raising. Epicurus was not primarily a Physicist. He was a philosopher whose major concern was doing the best he could for himself and his friends and anyone who would listen to come up with a rational way of life that makes the most sense for people who reject supernatural explanations which have no evidence to support them. I wouldn't go to Epicurus to construct a nuclear reactor any more than I would go to him for brain surgery.

It's two separate contexts: If someone's primary interest is the very latest research in physics, you go one place. If you want a rational evidence-based way to live your life, you go to another place. Everyone has to pick their focus and their goal and decide what is most important to them. There's no necessary conflict between the two, but if the ever-changing opinions of the latest physics research leads someone into radical skepticism, then that's a very bad result.

Post by “Godfrey” of September 23, 2024 at 5:40 PM

[Quote from Eric](#)

If supernatural gods/creators exist, I doubt they have the same faculties as we do. Therefore, the idea that they would use the same criteria for reward/punishment as we do based on moral properties we evolved as social species seems unlikely to me. Therefore, I don't fear the gods or aim to control any reward or punishment given after death or anticipate it.

Cicero and the Stoics and their ilk apparently believed that they understood the morality of the gods (or God), while at the same time ridiculing Epicurus for postulating about the physical

facts of the gods, and about their blessedness and incorruptibility. And Cicero and company promoted the idea of rocks that orbit in space are gods. All of these trains of thought are *beginning* to converge in my mind to provide a logical context for the [Epicurean gods](#). So thank you [Eric](#) for posting this.

Post by “Eric” of September 24, 2024 at 5:44 AM

Thank you, [Cassius](#) for your answer to my question. I can see that this is an issue of reducing uncertainty and protecting one's confidence when faced with external ideas that may induce fear. At this moment, I am not bothered by some level of existential uncertainty, so this is not a problem for me and am not really interested in discussing physics for now. Perhaps I will be interested later. I appreciate and respect your thoroughness.

Thought I'd make this clarification on my beliefs: I also find the ever-changing opinions of science an issue and prefer to experiment and think for myself instead of believing everything scientists say. I do not consider myself a skeptic. I have my own opinions that very strongly convince me that I should not fear death, or fear that pursuing happiness/pleasure for its own sake is somehow punishable way to conduct my life. That is why I'm not very interested, not because modern scientific consensus appears to contradict Epicurus' physics.

Post by “Eric” of October 1, 2024 at 12:46 PM

My thoughts on living well

Continuing from my "My thoughts on the Nature of the Universe" post, the most honest purpose of action for living beings is to seek and enjoy pleasure and avoid pain. One may think that they have some other purpose but even that thinking is motivated by pleasure and pain. Everyone that has a reward system, is honestly a hedonist but may simply extend their hedonic calculus to life after death which is not grounded in reality.

Pleasure and avoiding pain are the only thing intrinsically valuable to humans. Other values are always based on these.

One cannot reject pleasure/pain as the guide to and goal of life without using pleasure/pain to make that decision. A person who "renounces" pleasure isn't really getting rid of pleasure. They are simply choosing (often unwisely) a different pleasure and/or trying to avoid some pain.

What is pleasure? What is pain?

Pleasure is any experience that feels like you would be okay with being in this experience longer for the experience/feeling itself.

Pain is any experience that feels like you would not be okay with being in this experience longer for the experience/feeling itself.

One may be experiencing pleasure and pain signals simultaneously but if the overall experience is acceptable to be in for itself, one is feeling pleasure.

The limit of pleasure

The limit of pleasure is reached when all pain is removed. After that, pleasure cannot be increased but the experience varied. People who are not in pain do not need to increase the intensity of their pleasure signals as they are utterly content. People in pain may choose to increase the intensity of their pleasure signals in an effort to escape from their pain.

Managing pain

Acute pain does not last for very long and if pain is mild/moderate, it is tolerable. Ideally, if I cannot fix the source of the pain, I try to just wait it out instead of trying to hide it by foolish things that will cost me pleasure or cause me pain in the future.

Necessary needs vs Unnecessary desires

Necessary needs are those that which if not fulfilled, by the lack of themselves alone without externally acquired stress from added opinion/social pressure/addictions/triggers, will eventually cause death through loss of bodily functions. These lead to permanent pain at some point until satisfied. These include food, water, sleep, shelter, physical social presence (I would argue this is not an externally learned pressure as the detection is lack of social presence that intrinsically causes the body to stress itself to motivate returning to the safety of social groups) and movement (exercise). Necessary desires are desires that lead to the fulfillment of these needs.

Unnecessary desires are desires originating from beliefs, addictions, and the triggering of some innate reactive mechanisms (such as from the sexual or sociomoral brain systems). Such desires can be left unfulfilled without them leading to death, and any pain from the unfulfillment of the desire is temporary. External pressures may make feeding these desires practically necessary for survival or for coping with pain but without these circumstances, these desires are not necessary to engage in, and more (especially continuous) pleasure can be acquired and pain avoided by weakening these desires by not engaging in them or by avoiding their triggers. Some examples of unnecessary desires are the desire for involvement in politics, reading the news, engagement in sexual/romantic relations, and use of drugs.

Note: I am not saying taking pleasure from unnecessary desires is bad and advocating for total asceticism. Unnecessary desires are practically essential for building and maintaining friendships and for coping with life stresses and for keeping the mind sharp and body healthy and strong. The mind and body deteriorates if it is not used. What I am saying, is that asceticism can be used to gain more pleasure and lessen pain if done wisely and sparingly.

Personally I need more of this myself to function in this world but am aware that some people have more capacity to live well without much of it.

Friendship

Friendship can provide the fulfillment of the necessary need for physical social presence but can also provide security against external or internal threats be they threats to wisdom, threats to financial security, or threats of physical harm. The confidence of receiving help if times get tough wards against fear (pain) even if we will never actually need help (which is desirable for the sake of our friends and for ourselves).

Also, friendship allows us to experience the joy of helping people we like. I like my boss and colleagues, and I like my family and friends. It brings me joy to help them and I may go through great efforts to help them and feel very satisfied and happy when I do so. This is a worthwhile desire to keep alive and engage in in moderation taking into account one's personal circumstances and resources.

I personally choose to live my life in such a way that I keep the reason for having friends as "I want friends because talking to them and helping them makes me feel joyful and secure" in my awareness instead of "I want friends because they will give me something or solve my problems". The former is easier for me when I am more sensitive to joy and being sensitive to joy is achieved by reducing pain and by reducing over-stimulation via avoiding unnecessary desires.

Determinism (not very epicurean stance maybe)

As I wrote in my previous post, I believe in causal determinism.

Determinism is a double-edged sword: On one hand, I shouldn't be punished by my actions after death as my actions and thoughts are pre-determined (another potent cure for fear of death) and on the other hand, I logically should not be proud of my accomplishments as I merely had a better starting point and environment than others which I didn't choose. Thus I consider pride (sense of superiority over others) to be a kind of false opinion and it is easier for me to ignore and let go than vainly defend it. Furthermore, people do not like arrogant people so this humility helps me in finding friendships that are not based on competition which is peaceful.

I am aware that in some ways it does not feel good to not have true agency. Thus I choose to go a little bit with the illusion of agency so that I may feel like I have control over my actions and be happier that way. I am aware that I am in a way lying to myself just to be happier. "[There is no necessity to live under the control of necessity](#)" speaks to me in this way.

Virtues

Virtues are not ends in of themselves. They are simply tools for gaining pleasure and avoiding pain. Following some virtues provide external goods and others internal goods. Some virtues are based on biology, others are based on social phenomena in the culture we live in. Not all virtues need be cultivated, but they exist for a reason (remember: everyone is a hedonist) and

should be investigated why and considered for adopting into one's life based on individual circumstances.

Some quick thoughts about some specific virtues

Honesty: Conducive to peace of mind. Reduced pain of anticipation of being caught in a lie and punished. Less internal cognitive dissonance to deal with.

Temperance: Too much of a good thing can lead to pain and if not pain, reduced ability to feel pleasure later.

Wisdom: Helps in learning actions that increase pleasure and minimize pain in life. Studying the nature of the universe and experiencing life leads to wisdom.

Justice: Do not harm and people will not harm you. This is simply an agreement. Breaking this rule will bring the fear of being caught which will inhibit pleasure via having to create and manage lies. Same with following the laws. There is no absolute justice

Courage:

Sometimes risks need to be taken to avoid a larger pain or to obtain continuous pleasure. To do this, fears need to be overcome.

Gods and spirituality

I don't believe gods are real but I can still sometimes experience gods or whatever by making myself sensitive to what is happening inside me via e.g. meditation, fasting and/or sensory deprivation. My brain makes errors and I can sometimes (rarely nowadays) feel a presence. I take an attitude that this presence is friendly and thus, it is friendly (much in the same way how I can skillfully influence my dreams by imagining the intent of the entity in the dream or the events). It is a nice experience and yet doesn't seem to have any harmful effects when I get out of the state compared to e.g. sex or videogames which leave me more numb than I was before indulging. In fact, I find myself refreshed. It is a sort of pretending play which I find highly pleasurable. I'd rather not be hostile to gods in attitude and don't pooh pooh all religious/spiritual practices, and instead try to learn the pleasure in them. Spiritual practice is valuable to the very least in regenerating one's ability to feel and be aware of pleasure and positive emotions (via e.g. upregulation of neurotransmitter receptors).

Security

Greatest security is acquired by staying away from the awareness of the multitude and from a quiet life surrounded by good friends.

I could write more but this seems a good enough start. Comments, criticisms and questions are welcome.