

# Catherine Wilson's January 2021 article: "Why Epicureanism, Not Stoicism, Is The Philosophy We Need Now"

Post by "Don" of January 14, 2021 at 7:19 AM

(1) She's saying Epicurus would say "Don't take the pill."

(2a) Short answer: No. 😊

(2b) Longer answer: The drug's effects, once taken, would serve as a barrier between me and the cosmos and I would no longer be able to prudently make decisions about how to achieve my own pleasure. Prudence is instrumental in achieving the goal of feeling pleasure. Prudence and wisdom don't sit above pleasure. Some might say, "but you've achieved pleasure with the pill." I've achieved pleasure but it's someone else's definition of pleasure. The creator of the drug has decided for me the hormone levels (dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin) that will produce "my" pleasure. I have a similar reason for not wanting to upload my mind into a computer to live forever. Who owns the hardware? What parameters have they programmed into it? Same way with this hypothetical pill (that I'm defining here as producing hormone levels determined by someone else's chemistry). The pill is someone else's hardware. The only way in this universe to achieve pleasure is to make choices and rejections based on one's own senses, one's own reactions of pleasure and pain, and whatever the prolepses are.

My take is that this is the crux of Wilson's argument expressed in the least number of words for her article.

## Quote

Most would rather experience hardships, ups and downs, and the pains of off-and-on deprivation that keep our appetites sharp.

The Epicurean can agree entirely. A bliss drug would not be a source of real pleasure because it would wipe out experience. Blissed out, we would not be encountering the world as it is, but a distorted world in which the causes of physical and psychological pleasure as well as pain were obscured.

To bring this back to Wilson, she's not saying experiencing hardship and pain are somehow superior to pleasure. She's saying without encountering the real world, we have no way to make choices of how to achieve pleasure. We don't \*want\* or desire to experience hardship or pain, but we recognize that the world is full of both. Having the \*choice\* of either experiencing the world \*as it is\* and making \*my\* choices and avoidances based on the input of \*my\* senses etc. or being "blissed out" on someone else's definition of an abstract ideal "pleasure" for me,

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1833-catherine-wilson-s-january-2021-article-why-epicureanism-not-stoicism-is-the-phi/?postID=10526#post10526>

I'd choose the " hardships, ups and downs, and the pains of off-and-on deprivation." It's not a Stoic glorification of enduring pain. It's a proclamation of the fact that I have one life to live; it should be lived pleurably; and the only path I have is for me to make my choices and aim at that goal - directing myself as best I can using the Canonic faculties I've been given by natural evolution.