

# Atlantic article about enjoyment vs. pleasure

Post by “reneliza” of May 4, 2022 at 12:41 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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I've realized through this discussion that between Epicureanism and neuroscience there's a whole lot of interesting questions about the function of the senses.

And there's this constant crossover between the observation of "how they function" as opposed to drawing conclusions from those observations.

That's of course a deep philosophical discussion in itself, but I think it's worth noting that no matter how much progress we make in unwinding the "how" in terms of the biological or electrical or whatever processes we dig into, there's always another level of "how" that goes deeper than our current understanding.

I say that to emphasize that a lot of people seem to think that just by peeling back another layer of the "how" we'll be making a lot of progress when we observe a deeper level (there is some really good material in Frances Wright on this issue). And in a sense new observation does generally help us, but no matter how far we dig into the "how" we're always going to have to make some higher-level conclusions about our "world-view" with less information than we would like to have. We would "live" to be omniscient and know everything about everything, but we never will.

Oh I completely agree - I don't mean the simple electrochemical and mechanical function, but more how that impacts our understanding of what is sensation and where the line is drawn between sensation and cognition (with regard to the understanding that the senses are truly reported but may be misinterpreted) and how they both interact to bring pleasure or pain.

I mean there's the obvious clichés like the experience box but I think there are a lot of deeper questions to ask given that we don't observe the world /directly/ (tbh I can't even conceive of what that would mean) but through the filter of our senses (in the sense that there are frequencies we can't hear or see and individual variation in sensitivity, but also that the horse we see is "reported" to our brain as a stream of neurochemicals meant to represent the shapes and colors that make up a horse)

None of this to imply that we SHOULDN'T trust our senses, because we obviously should. Without that we have absolutely no basis in how to choose our actions. I think there are

answers to these questions that relate directly not only to what we know and what is real, but also to how to accomplish the goal of reducing pain and enhancing pleasure.

Further on the topic of uncertainties: I always said that the reason I chose to major in neuroscience was that so often when questions were asked in class, the answer was hands spread wide, "we don't know." I have work to do with learning to deal with uncertainty in daily living but I have no problems with it in my general understanding.