

Is pleasure as the natural goal of life falsifiable?

Post by “waterholic” of February 5, 2023 at 10:24 AM

[Matteng](#) after I posted this question, and helped by kind contributions from [Cassius](#), [Joshua](#) and [Pacatus](#) I arrived at the following thought process, which might be helpful:

1. There is nothing outside the material world (Epicurean atomism), so there is no way for us to observe or experience virtue. One cannot accept as a goal in life something that cannot be tested, observed or defined.
2. We can observe that humans (even newly born) are attracted to pleasure (e.g. bread for a hungry person) and try to avoid pain. Like most things in Epicurean philosophy, this is based on observation and is perfectly testable.
3. The broader interpretation of pleasure by Epicurus and followers (pleasure of friendship, knowledge, tranquility etc.) explain how this goal does not result in a society breaking down into selfish individuals.
4. Finally, when we observe and understand evolution by natural selection, it becomes clear that pleasure and pain are random chemical mechanisms that have developed by chance but have proven to be an effective set of guiding principles for complex animals like us. What we call virtue, on the other hand, is just a behavioural pattern condoned by a group, which may or may not have been based on a real benefit to the group at some time in the past or in present.