

Odyssey's example of a drug for mental pains

Post by “Onenski” of March 29, 2023 at 4:15 PM

In *Odyssey* Book IV, 220-230 we can read this:

*Then Helen, daughter of Zeus, took other counsel. Straightway **she cast into the wine** of which they were drinking **a drug to quiet all pain and strife**, and bring forgetfulness of every ill. Whoso should drink this down, when it is mingled in the bowl, would not in the course of that day let a tear fall down over his cheeks, no, not though his mother and father should lie there dead, or though before his face men should slay with the sword his brother or dear son, and his own eyes beheld it.*

It was interesting to me the idea of a drug that produces relief from mental pains, and it's specially striking that it's present in a very ancient text.

I know the epicurean point of view on thought experiments (so I think it wouldn't be adequate to ask you if you would take the drug). But I remember the Principal Doctrine No. 10, so, do you think Epicurus would accept Helen's drug?

Also, thinking about Principal Doctrine No. 5, I think it can be interpreted like this: virtues produces a happy life, and a happy life produces a virtuous behaviour. So if that drug produces the absence of mental pain (of course, we would have to keep eating, sleeping, drinking, etc.), then we would act virtuously and pleasurably (and according to VS 79, we wouldn't disturb us or anyone else).

I think there's a common opinion that opposes to this approach (the farmacological), but if we consider the goal (the happy life), are these means adequate? If they are or not, why?

Or what do you think? 😊