

# How would you respond to an existentialist who says "You Epicureans have chosen pleasure as your meaning but it's not universal" do Epicureans hold that pleasure is the universal Good?

Post by "Cassius" of June 13, 2023 at 11:38 AM

Not that what Frances Wright thinks is determinative of anything, but in this quote below, what position is she taking as to (1) "inability to help our belief" and (2) "inability to help our actions"?

Is she saying that we cannot choose to disbelieve what our senses reveal to us, but we can choose to decide how we act upon what the senses reveal? Is she then saying that pleasure and pain are given to us by nature and cannot be second-guessed, but that we can choose to act on other than pleasure and pain? Would she then be disagreeing with the view that "everyone is a psychological hedonist?"

The "with reason" causes me to say that, but then as she continues on it does not seem like she is following up with a clear position. Seems to me that this is a similar question as to what LittleRocker is discussing.

[Quote from Frances Wright / A Few Days In Athens](#)

"Does the human mind possess the power to believe or disbelieve, at pleasure, any truths whatsoever?"

"I am not prepared to answer: but I think it does, since it possesses always the power of investigation."

"But, possibly, not the will to exercise the power. Take care lest I beat you with your own weapons. I thought this very investigation appeared to you a crime."

"Your logic is too subtle," said the youth, "for my inexperience."

"Say rather, my reasoning too close. Did I bear you down with sounding words and weighty authorities, and confound your understanding with hair-drawn distinctions, you would be right to retreat from the battery."

"I have nothing to object to the fairness of your deductions," said Theon, "But would not the doctrine be dangerous that should establish our inability to help our belief; and might we not stretch the principle, until we asserted our inability to help our actions?"

“We might, and with reason. But we will not now traverse the ethical *pons asinorum* of necessity — the most simple and evident of moral truths, and the most darkened, tortured, and belabored by moral teachers. You inquire if the doctrine we have essayed to establish, be not dangerous. I reply — not, if it be true. Nothing is so dangerous as error, — nothing so safe as truth. A dangerous truth would be a contradiction in terms, and an anomaly in things.”