

Would You Rather Live For A Week As (1) Epicurus During the Last Week of His Life or (2) An Anonymous Shepherd Laying In The Grass In The Summertime With No Pain At All?

Post by "Godfrey" of September 9, 2023 at 3:54 AM

Sorry, I'm playing catch-up.... Referring to [PD09](#), I'm reading that the variables that cause pleasures to differ are intensity, duration and extent (parts of the body and aspects of the mind). If this is the case, then intensity, duration and extent can be considered useful ways to evaluate potential pleasures. This is of course in the context of what each particular individual considers pleasurable in a given situation.

Which is interesting, because the duration part of this seems to conflict with these PDs:

[PD19](#). *Finite time and infinite time contain the same amount of joy, if its limits are measured out through reasoning.*

[PD20](#). *The flesh assumes that the limits of joy are infinite, and that infinite joy can be produced only through infinite time. But the mind, thinking through the goal and limits of the flesh and dissolving fears about eternity, produces a complete way of life and therefore has no need of infinite time; yet the mind does not flee from joy, nor when events cause it to exit from life does it look back as if it has missed any aspect of the best life.*

Measuring it out through reasoning (if you will), it seems that [PD19](#) & 20 are comparing finite and infinite time, whereas [PD09](#) is dealing strictly with finite time and therefore there's no conflict between these.

With this in mind you can evaluate hypothetical #1(Epicurus) and #2 (shepherd) like this:

- intensity: #1, intense pain, intense pleasure; intensity of pleasure outweighs pain by uncertain amount. #2, uncertain pain, uncertain pleasure; uncertain which predominates and by how much.

- duration: #1, one week. #2, one week.

- extent: #1, great breadth of mental pleasure, somewhat localized physical pain. #2, uncertain breadth of mental pleasure, uncertain physical pleasure and pain.

So to properly evaluate this hypothetical you need to get a sense of the uncertainties. We have Epicurus' letter describing his situation, but we don't know much about the shepherd. Do they love or hate their job? Are they allergic to grass? What's the breadth of their mental pleasure in this circumstance: does it align with their innermost desires? We therefore need to make up

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answers for all of these uncertainties, which of course is what makes this a hypothetical in the first place 😐