

Comparing The Pleasure of A Great Physicist Making A Discovery To The Pleasure of A Lion Eating A Lamb

Post by "Cassius" of September 4, 2025 at 8:25 AM

@Raphael can you comment on this, because this is not the way I understood your question:

[Quote from kochieko](#)

Old debate. Does push-pin give equal pleasure to poetry? It's similar to the debate here with the lion eating his/her prey and the scientist making the great discovery.

Jeremy Bentham supposedly said that push pin was the equal of poetry even though that's a misrepresentation from John Steward Mill, with Mill arguing the quality of the pleasure mattered. Poetry creating a superior pleasure to a children's table game in Mill's view.

Push-pin (game) - Wikipedia

My take on the debate on the thread here is that pleasure is pleasure and the two are of equal value in the moment, but the scientist with his great discovery has the greatest pleasure over time. He gets to enjoy the accolade's as his discovery is confirmed and also gets pleasure from contemplating his discovery. He can use it as well as a springboard for future discoveries and pleasures from that. All consistent with the Epicurean perspective of mental pleasures being superior because they can be enjoyed in the present, past and future.

Focusing on this sentence in particular:

My take on the debate on the thread here is that pleasure is pleasure and the two are of equal value in the moment, but the scientist with his great discovery has the greatest pleasure over time.

As for me, the pleasure I get from a great poem is not at all the same as the pleasure I get from push-pin. I can certainly differentiate the two and prefer one to the other, so I would not agree with the underlined section if the question is how "I" value them to me. The two are not of equal value to me no matter how long the experience.

I'd still like to find the Bentham citation directly to see what is being referenced.

My understanding of the dispute was that Bentham and/or others were considering whether pleasure could be reduced to units of some kind, in which context it would make senses to

consider the greatest good for the greatest number by adding up all the pleasure units to see in which configuration the number is largest.

My further understanding of the situation is that this is impossible - or an invalid approach - because there is no objective standard by which we can compare pleasure units between individuals, which is exactly the issue with comparing pleasure between lions and humans. From the point of view of the lion the eating of the prey is an extreme pleasure, while from the point of view of the physicist the discovery is an extreme pleasure, but there is no "objective" way to measure the units of pleasure being created so as to say that one generated more "pleasure" than the other.

Are we are not trying to focus on the issues involved in comparing the pleasure of a lion to the pleasure of a physicist in order to dramatize the question of whether pleasure can be "objectively" measured? If not, then I don't even know what the discussion is about! 😊