

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

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Again, it was a fascinating and even passionate discussion last Sunday on the topic of "Comparing The Pleasure of A Great Physicist Making A Discovery To the Pleasure of a Lion Eating an Antelope or Lamb." Some people have stated in the threads and the discussion that this topic has already been argued and resolved. This debate is far from being resolved, especially the argument that I am presenting here, which will never be definitively determined and will always be debated in different times and epochs, as it has been throughout history, since the ancient Greeks in the Agora of Athens. My final thoughts on this topic will likely be highly controversial for some and even spark a firestorm of debate, but debate is a good thing.

For me, the goal of life is Pleasure, but the guide of life is "Reason." Prudence, as Epicurus stated, is even more important than philosophy." Why is that? It is because prudence is the use of Reason to sort out what is best for one. One can live well without having read any philosophy if they have Prudence. If they are Reasonable people, they can sort out among the many choices what is beneficial for their life. I have personally met illiterate country folk with "common sense" as they call it, who have used Prudence (reason) to navigate skillfully through life, and have known highly educated individuals who have made continuous bad choices. It seems that higher education and academic philosophy did not help them; maybe Prudence would have.

My point here is that with reason we make personal choices, but as a society, "we use reason collectively to decide what is more valuable than other things." Therefore, we make collective "valuations" that may deem one activity "higher" in nature than another, or using another term, "worthier of our time and energy", and seek as a society to promote those worthier activities that we collectively decide are more beneficial to it, such as the study of history, science, philosophy, and the arts over playing pinball, throwing darts in pubs, or watching sitcoms all night. Yes, some individuals have no interest or receive Pleasure from reading history, studying science and philosophy, or composing music and creating paintings. Their pleasures are of the ones mentioned above, and I respect their interests and their pleasures. I also enjoy, in my youth, at times, playing pinball, darts in bars, and watching a sitcom or two. I am dating myself here, but I still enjoy viewing, once in a while, the 1950s sitcom "The HoneyMooners", for relaxation and laughter. ...Laughter is good; it oxygenates the brain.

As understood, in Epicurean philosophy, there are **no objectively higher activities judged collectively as superior, independent of individual experience**. Epicurus held that all value—including the value of activities—is grounded in the individual's own feelings of pleasure and pain, not in an external or collective hierarchy. So, this is my criticism of what we know of

Epicurean philosophy, as scholars estimate that **less than 1% of Epicurus' total written works have survived**. And it is possible that on the other 99% of the writings that we do not have, he may have refined this view.

However, I am not going to fall into the pit of subjectivism and relativism that leads to sophistry by saying that playing pinball, darts in bars, and watching sitcoms all night, though pleasurable, are all equally valuable as reading history, studying science and philosophy, or appreciating art, such as painting, music, and poetry, and all the other intellectual and artistic activities. This subjective vs objective argument is an old debate dating back around 2,300 years to ancient Greece between Socrates and the Sophists. Plato's dialogue that best captures the problem of **subjectivism versus objective truths** is the "**Republic**", especially in Books V-VII, where Socrates contrasts the world of changing opinions and appearances (doxa/subjectivism) with the world of immutable, objective knowledge (episteme) accessed through reason.

Ironically, Epicurus develops a whole philosophical system using proto-scientific ideas that are objectively outside of the larger society's views or understanding. Yet, Epicureans hold that objective valuations cannot be made is a contradiction. Epicurus developed theories of atoms and void, first proposed by Democritus, which were not observable with instruments in his time. These are attempts at objective assertions, scientific assertions, of the world. However, Epicureans maintain that all is subjective, as I was made aware of during our discussion, and objective valuations cannot be made. What Epicureans hold is in contradiction to what Epicurus actually did, which was to attempt to arrive at ideas that he developed through objective reasoning.

Finally, as Socrates warned, subjectivism can lead to social confusion and chaos. In the West, we are experiencing the consequences of overemphasizing subjectivism and relativism, due to many factors, which have led to confusion and doubt about what a man and a woman are, and that one can become the other by just "identifying" with it (subjectivism), and ignoring what science knows about DNA. Our Western heritage and its values have been slowly evaporating. Values that originated in ancient Greece, such as the use of reason and the development of a non-supernatural view of the world and universe, led to philosophy and science. Suppose we, as a society, do not return to evaluating and recognizing the worth of Western Civilization's Values, especially that of reason and science; in that case, we will face its ultimate disappearance as other, more passionate, radical, belief-based societies demographically and politically overtake it, as is presently happening in Europe today, with dire consequences for it.

Finally, for me, to restate...the goal of life is Pleasure, but the guide of life is "Reason." Prudence, as Epicurus stated, is even more important than philosophy." For it gives us the ability to guide us to good pleasures. However, the present Epicurean understanding in my mind is limited due to the paucity of Epicurus' own writings, which are considered only 1% of what he wrote. And there seems to be a contradiction between what he attempted to do "objectively" and thus what Epicureans believe, as only "Subjectivity" is possible. Therefore, in my humble opinion, Epicureanism, as understood by Epicureans in our discussion last Sunday, is lacking in evaluating the truly worthy values and activities, such as Albert Einstein's development of the Theory of Relativity, Beethoven's symphonies, and Leonardo Da Vinci's

paintings, from what appear to me to be mere distractions, such as darts in bars, pinball, and binging on sitcoms all day.