

A Draft Epicurean Pleasure Maximization Worksheet

Post by "Cassius" of July 12, 2019 at 8:49 AM

CLARIFICATIONS:

An Epicurean Pleasure Maximization Worksheet

Nature Provides No Authority Higher Than Your Own Feelings To Guide You Among The Choices Available To You

				Feelings Of Pleasure (+)		Feelings of Pain (-)			
Sleep				10	10	0			
Go to Work			4	12	7	-5	-2	-3	
Have Lunch with Friends	6	5	7	20	20	0			
Go to Gym	4		1	11	3	-8	-4		
Go to Museum	5	5	5	15	15	0			
Read Lucretius	8	8	8	23	-1	-1			
Read Plato				0	-21	-21	-7	-7	-7
				92	57	-35			

Choose Activities To Maximize The Pleasure Score >> << At A Cost In Pain You Find To Be Acceptable

Scoring Considerations: (1) The goal of life is to maximize the score in the gold box - to attain the largest net positive score possible to you under your circumstances. (2) This is done by choosing activities which maximize pleasure, but at a cost in pain that you find to be acceptable to you. (3) The highest possible pleasure is attained when that pleasure is not accompanied by any pain. (4) The highest possible pleasure is attained when that pleasure is not accompanied by any pain. (5) The highest possible pleasure is attained when that pleasure is not accompanied by any pain. (6) In predicting the cost in pain of any activity, consider the "natural/necessary" classification system. Choosing pleasures which are neither natural nor necessary will frequently (but not always) exact the greatest cost in pain; choosing pleasures which are both natural and necessary will generally exact the least cost in pain. (7) In considering the total results, remember to consider how your pleasure will be increased or decreased by the impact of your choice on your friends.

You can choose to organize your life to maximize this number (net pleasure)....

..or you can organize your life to minimize this number (total pain)

But as a practical matter the two goals are not the same!

Epicurus taught maximal net pleasure - not minimal total pain.

The point of "**As a practical matter the two goals are not the same**" is to emphasize this distinction:

If one's overriding goal were truly minimizing the number of painful experiences in life, then one would never choose any activity (getting a shot from a doctor; going to the gym; fighting to protect oneself) which involved any element of pain whatsoever.

The true goal is not *avoiding pain at all cost*, but *maximum net pleasure*, which is why Epicurus described the reasoning this way:

Quote

And since pleasure is our first and native good, for that reason we do not choose every pleasure whatsoever, but will often pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them. And often we consider pains superior to pleasures when submission to the pains for a long time brings us as a consequence a greater pleasure. While therefore all pleasure because it is naturally akin to us is good, not all pleasure is should be chosen, just as all pain is an evil and yet not all pain is to be shunned. It is, however, by measuring one against another, and by looking at the conveniences and inconveniences, that all these matters must be judged. Sometimes we treat the good as an evil, and the evil, on the contrary, as a good.

And it is important to emphasize the limitation stated in the heading: **There Are No Absolute Scores, and Nature Provides No Authority Higher Than Your Own Feelings To Assign A Relative Score To Each Item**

Feelings cannot be reduced to numbers. A Worksheet can only serve as a primitive method of conceptualizing the relationships between them for our own personal reflection. There is no target maximum number of "maximum net pleasure" applicable to everyone. To the extent that thinking about feelings in terms of numbers is helpful at all, it is only to the extent that ranking their values to us might be of some help in organizing our activities to emphasize the ones that will in the end bring us the largest net benefit.