

PD24 - Commentary and Translation of PD 24

Post by "Cassius" of March 10, 2026 at 12:13 PM

Quote

[Quote from Cassius](#)

That's a high price to pay to just to win a pat on the back from modern philosophers.

Agreeing with your post, but I don't catch your meaning of this part.

My explanation for this applies to much of the reason that Dave and I appear to disagree - but I don't think we are really that far apart.

I would like to be proven wrong, but my own perception is that the problems posed by skepticism and how to unwind them are much deeper than what many seem to think.

Dave and I have a legal background and we are familiar with the position that "the law" requires finality. You can't go on debating who is right and who is wrong forever on legal matters, so you have to come up with a standard of proof and a mechanism for applying it. In the English-speaking countries that has generally been done by a jury system in which we have rules of evidence as to what types of evidence can even be submitted to a jury, which is held to have the ultimate authority to find the facts of a case. It is a major issue in legal theory as to whether juries should be allowed to be ultimate factfinders, or whether that should be delegated to "experts" in particular fields.

The English common law system has traditionally held that randomly selected "jurors of our peers" are best positioned to deliver justice, even though they are not "experts" in their fields. In fact, judges instruct jurors that even where "experts" are allowed to testify as to their opinions about a case, the jurors do not have to accept their opinions. The jurors are specifically allowed by our system of justice to accept or reject some or all or none of what an expert says.

And a large part of the reason for that rule is that it is almost always possible - depending on how much money you have to spend - to find an expert who will say almost anything. Trials turn into 'battles of experts' with highly-credentialed experts on totally opposite sides of almost every question. Our system of justice has traditionally held that we are not going to delegate final decisions to anyone but the "jury of our peers" because that is where we find the most common sense and the least prejudice.

This is as stated in Jefferson's letter to Peter Carr in referencing ploughmen vs professors:

Quote

Moral Philosophy. I think it lost time to attend lectures on this branch. He who made us would have been a pitiful bungler, if he had made the rules of our moral conduct a matter of science. For one man of science, there are thousands who are not. What would have become of them? Man was destined for society. His morality, therefore, was to be formed to this object. He was endowed with a sense of right and wrong, merely relative to this. This sense is as much a part of his Nature, as the sense of hearing, seeing, feeling; it is the true foundation of morality, and not the [beautiful], truth, &c., as fanciful writers have imagined. The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. It is given to all human beings in a stronger or weaker degree, as force of members is given them in a greater or less degree. It may be strengthened by exercise, as may any particular limb of the body. This sense is submitted, indeed, in some degree, to the guidance of reason; but it is a small stock which is required for this: even a less one than what we call common sense. State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well, & often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules. In this branch, therefore, read good books, because they will encourage, as well as direct your feelings. The writings of Sterne, particularly, form the best course of morality that ever was written. Besides these, read the books mentioned in the enclosed paper; and, above all things, lose no occasion of exercising your dispositions to be grateful, to be generous, to be charitable, to be humane, to be true, just, firm, orderly, courageous, &c. Consider every act of this kind, as an exercise which will strengthen your moral faculties & increase your worth.