

Catherine Wilson interviewed by Michael Shermer

Post by "Elayne" of December 25, 2019 at 3:43 PM

Cassius, I agree completely. The utilitarian position, IMO, is cold and unfeeling. I will not say it is "wrong", but I personally avoid hanging out with folks who think of humans as interchangeable. They could be more likely to be psychopaths. <http://leeds-faculty.colorado.edu/mcgrawp/PDF/Ba...izarro.2011.pdf>

That is one of the primary reasons (among others) that I love this philosophy.

I do not manipulate my feelings about and actions towards other people based on some non-specific golden rule. I let my feelings, observations, and pattern recognition guide me-- who is a friend? Who is not? And choose accordingly.

If you go around manipulating your feelings instead of feeling them, you have lost one of your key pieces of information about reality. Feelings are to guide you towards actions that lead to pleasure. Muck around with them, and who knows what you will choose. It's like deciding to wear rose-colored glasses, so then you don't know what color things really are.

Epicureans use feelings as a guide to act for pleasure-- Stoics change their attitudes instead of their circumstances.

My friends can be secure in knowing my love for them is based on reality, not abstract concepts.

Hiram, this is the major pitfall of proof-texting Epicurus. If you take things out of context, you can make it appear that Epicurus was a utilitarian, but if you look at the whole picture, he clearly was not. That would not be consistent with his Canon or physics. It would be internally inconsistent.

The same thing happens when you go picking "effortless pleasure " out of Philodemus despite over and over again Epicurus saying pleasure, unmodified, is the goal. If he had meant his goal was only effortless pleasure, he would have said it every time.

Because concepts are inherently unable to encapsulate all of the reality they indicate, every philosophy based on concepts will have inevitable internal contradictions and paradoxes.

Epicurus avoided that, because his method of truth relies on primary subjective information, not conceptual ideas. You can't have a paradox about the color you see, the sounds you hear, your feelings of pain or pleasure, or your intuitive pattern recognition.

It grieves me to see people missing some of the most radical and pleasure-giving truths Epicurus gave us.