

# Consequentialism & Moral Relativism within the context of Pleasure-filled Philosophy

Post by "Don" of March 14, 2020 at 9:51 AM

I sincerely found your post very thought-provoking, [Elayne](#) . Thank you for some intellectually-stimulating reading.

That being said, I'm not sure that I accept all of your premises. Let me further explain my perspective, and then I welcome your response and others'. That's what I'm here for: to share, to discuss, and to learn.

I certainly agree that pleasure is given to us by nature to serve as "the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge of every good thing." (*Letter to Menoikos*). Yes! Fully onboard with that. So, my initial point was not necessarily that sociopaths or psychopaths are not feeling pleasure. I think they could be subjectively feeling pleasure. However, I think an argument could be made that their brains are "wired" differently than the majority of people. In which case, are their feelings of pleasure reliable guides for them? Why else would medications be prescribed for some?

Parallel to that, there are people who are physically unable to feel pain and are unable to tell if they are being injured. There is a literal physical impediment to their being able to use a feeling of pain to make choices and rejections. Could not there also be people who are unable to feel pleasure correctly, similar to those who can't feel pain or even whose sight may perceive the distant square tower as round? Epicurus writes to Herodotus that "Our canon is that direct observation by sense **and** direct apprehension by the mind are alone invariably true." If one is blind or visually impaired, they cannot use the sense of sight to perceive the world and to base any choices or rejections on it. If someone's mental sense of feeling pleasure or pain is impaired, can they use those as reliable standards?

Additionally, Principal Doctrine 25 instructs that "If at all critical times you do not connect each of your actions to the natural goal of life, but instead turn too soon to some other kind of goal in thinking whether to avoid or pursue something, then your thoughts and your actions will not be in harmony." (St-Andre translation) Is the psychopath or sociopath doing this? Are they "turning too soon to some other kind of goal" and so keeping their thoughts and actions out of tune? I would interpret the "natural goal of life" to be "living pleurably." I would further interpret "living pleurably" as defined by Principal Doctrine 5 (emphasis added): "**It is not possible** to live pleurably without the traits of wisdom, morality, and justice; and **it is impossible** to live with wisdom, morality, and justice without living pleurably. **When one of these is lacking, it is impossible to live a pleurable life.**"

It is my contention that we can decide if someone is living a pleurable life or if they're living with a delusion by applying this standard. Similarly, from my perspective, Epicurus also tells us that we can see famous and rich people thinking that they are going to be living pleurably but they're just swapping one set of pains for another (Fragment 479). We could say they believe they're living pleurably but they're delusional in the general sense of the word.

Living pleurably is not the same as feeling pleasure. A prisoner (who is not an Epicurean) can feel pleasure intermittently, but I would contend that they aren't living pleurably. Someone living in abject poverty (who is not an Epicurean) can feel pleasure intermittently, but I would contend that they aren't living pleurably. The feeling of pleasure alone is not a sufficient reason to contend that someone is living a pleurable life.