

# Greetings from a Newcomer

**Post by “Pivot” of May 7, 2018 at 1:40 AM**

Hello everyone,

I'm glad to have found this forum. I'm particularly interested in the ideas of Epicurus, and I have always been. For a long time I have felt that pleasure is the driving motivation for any action a person willingly chooses to do, and this rings very true for me in my own life. I've found it impossible to separate pleasure from human motivation, even in utilitarian and Stoic principles which claim to separate themselves from this intrinsic human hormone.

Having become familiar with Epicurus and now, reading Lucretius, I am excited to enter such a strong and cohesive philosophical sphere of thought with which I can further educate myself.

Hope to see everyone around, cheers!

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**Post by “Cassius” of May 7, 2018 at 6:49 AM**

Welcome to the forum and thank you for saying hello! And [what an excellent first post](#)- thank you!

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**Post by “Daniel Van Orman” of May 9, 2018 at 2:39 PM**

Welcome! We are very happy to have you here.

I am glad you have such a love for the idea that pleasure drives motivation. Just so you know, that is called Motivational/Psychological Hedonism. I think everyone, whether they realize it or not, acts to gain pleasure (or avoid pain). Examples demonstrating this are everywhere.

Being a utilitarian, I feel obligated to correct you and say the motivating strength of pleasure is vital to utilitarianism, as taught by utilitarian leaders:

"Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think" (Jeremy Bentham, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation)

"whether mankind do desire nothing for itself but that which is a pleasure to them, or of which the absence is a pain; we have evidently arrived at a question of fact and experience, dependent, like all similar questions, upon evidence. It can only be determined by practised self-consciousness and self-observation, assisted by observation of others" (John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 4)

I am happy you have joined us and hope you will be a great Epicurean friend.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of May 9, 2018 at 5:08 PM**

Daniel your post is worded oddly. Are you responding to someone else in another post?

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### **Post by "Daniel Van Orman" of May 9, 2018 at 5:40 PM**

I was responding to this post.

Thank you for telling me about my odd wording. I think I have improved it.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of May 9, 2018 at 6:56 PM**

No issues - thanks for posting and look forward to continuing to talk with you!

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## **Post by “Pivot” of May 11, 2018 at 4:17 AM**

Thanks for the welcome Daniel!

I would like to elaborate on what I said about the utilitarian perspective. I should have been more specific - I meant the sort of utilitarian like Peter Singer, where although they believe happiness should be maximized, they believe it should be maximized for as many people as possible. That is, the moral action is that which maximizes total human happiness, not just one's own pleasure or happiness.

I found this to be an unnatural and irrational motivation, and that is what I meant. However, the utilitarian perspective that pleasure should be maximized for the individual according to Epicurus is one that I agree with. Sorry for not making this clear.

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## **Post by “Cassius” of May 11, 2018 at 5:42 AM**

1 - Good points Pivot

2 - Good grief I am sorry Daniel! For some reason when I first read your post above I did not realize what thread we were in and that you were replying to Pivot! My fault entirely and I should not have thought there was anything unusual about your wording. "Negligent reading" on my part!

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## **Post by “Daniel Van Orman” of May 11, 2018 at 12:18 PM**

The emphasis that happiness should be maximized for all has been present in utilitarianism since its foundation: "The said truth is that it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong." - Jeremy Bentham

I find the argument against this interesting. Honestly, it had never occurred to me as unnatural until I spoke with a mormon (they are predominant where I live) about it.

The mormon (who may not have been representing his church) said focus on maximizing the happiness of others leads to stress (because of unnecessary worry concerning others) and anxiety/depression (because of worry of and inevitable failures) while straining one's time and

resources (because of constantly spending them on others).

I think accepting or rejecting this part of utilitarianism comes down to personal opinion. I would love to get your thoughts on this. If you are willing, we can enter a private conversation on the website.

That is fine, Cassius. I appreciate your help and I think it was very good for me to check over that post.

I do appreciate your openness to admit error. I think it shows much about one's character of how they handle when (not if) they are wrong.

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**Post by “Pivot” of May 11, 2018 at 12:40 PM**

It seems to me that is a very sensible argument against the principle of maximal utility, Daniel.

I would agree - it's a matter of personal preference. However, I would like to make the claim that even the man who orders his actions to the maximizing of the happiness of others is doing so only because it is maximizing his own happiness.

I find one would be very hardpressed to find a person who acts out of accord of what he thinks to be for his own pleasure. Of course, irrationality is a trait that all people share at some time in their lives, so I am not trying to claim it is impossible for someone to choose the act that doesn't maximize their own pleasure.

If you would like to make a topic regarding the issue I find it very interesting and would certainly not be opposed!

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**Post by “Cassius” of May 11, 2018 at 3:57 PM**

Yes Daniel, I agree with Pivot. Could you please go to one of the ETHICS forums - scratch that - I will set up a new forum because Utilitarianism will come up a lot - just a sec

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**Post by “Cassius” of May 11, 2018 at 4:04 PM**

[Daniel Van Orman](#) could you please add that question here: [Comparing Epicurus With Utilitarianism](#)

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**Post by “Daniel Van Orman” of May 11, 2018 at 7:03 PM**

[Cassius](#)

Okay, I will make a thread discuss that question.

Please allow me a few days to set it up. I would like its setup to be of high quality.

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**Post by “Hiram” of May 12, 2018 at 9:10 AM**

Utilitarianism can only go so far. We can only aim to please others to an extent, then we lose our ataraxia and our own enjoyment. BUT a good discussion would be on the limits to which we are willing to go for our friends and associates, for the sake of MUTUAL BENEFIT (which = justice). And based on this we can discuss various models of what Michel Onfray called hedonic covenant.

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**Post by “Pivot” of May 12, 2018 at 9:33 AM**

Well-said Hiram. In fact I would say that even those who claim they are living a life solely for others, and not for their own pleasure, are in reality putting their own pleasure above and beyond that of others. For if he did not derive pleasure in helping others, he would not attempt it. If it suddenly became painful for him to help others, that is, if even after toiling he derived no inner satisfaction from knowing that he had helped another, I believe he would no longer help them.

Although this is very interesting to discuss I will restrain myself from going on, because Daniel is preparing a substantial thread about it.

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## Post by “Cassius” of May 12, 2018 at 10:20 AM

Right, we need to save the good stuff for Daniel's thread! 😊 But one of the things I will want to cover is what Pivot just pointed out - that no matter what people say, they are really doing what brings them the most pleasure. That is an argument that is brought up a lot, and I think one very important aspect in addressing it is not to get lost in the trees and not see the forest. Yes it can be observed that people do what they think is most pleasing to them in a very general sense, even it that means embracing pain.

But for a lot of people (I think) that argument ends up being circular and confusing and leads them to conclude SO WHAT? If pleasure is the motivation behind everything, including seeking pain, then why are we even bothering to have this conversation?

And we can't let people get confused and drop out at that point, because that's NOT the real issue they need to understand. The real issue is that by our proofs in Epicurean physics and canonics, we show that the COMPETING ideas of motivations (idealism, rationalism, supernatural religion) are FALSE, and it DOES make a difference that we examine people's motivations. Because the root of PLEASURE is the faculty given us by nature as the "go" signal of life. That puts pleasure in an entirely different status than idealism, rationalism, and supernatural religion, which are at best wishful thinking and probably in truth fraud.

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## Post by “Hiram” of May 14, 2018 at 12:17 PM

### [Quote from Pivot](#)

...he derived no inner satisfaction from knowing that he had helped another, I believe he would no longer help them.

This is hedonic calculus, and the 'search for meaning' can be framed according to our nature as a search for the pleasure of meaning. Many people say they are looking for "meaning", and for many the use of philosophy is to create meaning for life, and this is noble and understandable, but what is this meaning? It's the OBJECT OF PLEASURE that justifies the PAIN we are willing to endure--whether it be the knowledge that our loved ones will be / are safe and happy and/or healthy, or the Master's or PhD degree we will earn at the end of our toils (and higher wages), or the anticipation of any other future pleasure.