

Implementing Personal Hedonic Calculus

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 2, 2024 at 1:10 PM

In last night's Zoom I presented the following [Principal Doctrines](#) (Long and Sedley translation) because these deal with the "limits of pleasure and pain" and are very important for one's personal hedonic calculus. These provide guidance so as not to be overcome by excessive desires or unwanted pains.

I used the Long and Sedley translation of selected [Principal Doctrines](#) and placed them in the following order:

11. “Were we not upset by the worries that celestial phenomena and death might matter to us, and also by failure to **appreciate the limits of pains and desires**, we would have no need for natural philosophy.”

10. “If the causes of the pleasures of the dissipated released mental fears concerning celestial phenomena and death and distress, and in addition **taught the limit of desires**, we should never have any reason to reproach them [i.e. the dissipated], since they would be satisfying themselves with pleasures from all directions and would never have pain or distress, which constitutes the bad.”

(*dissipated - of a person or way of life overindulging in sensual pleasures)

3. “The removal of all pain is **the limit of the magnitude of pleasures**. Wherever pleasure is present, as long as it is there, pain or distress or their combination is absent.”

18. “The pleasure in the flesh does not increase when once the pain of need has been removed, but it is only varied. A **the limit of pleasure in the mind** is produced by rationalizing those very things and their congeners which used to present the mind with its greatest fears.”

(*congener - a thing or person of the same kind or category as another).

20. “The flesh places **the limits of pleasure** at infinity, and needs an infinite time to bring it about. But the intellect, by making a rational calculation **the end and the limit which govern the flesh**, and by dispelling the fears about eternity, brings about the complete life, so that we no longer need the infinite time. But neither does it shun pleasure, nor even when circumstances bring about our departure from life does it suppose, as it perishes, that it has in any way fallen short of the best life.”

28. “Confidence that nothing terrible lasts for ever or even for a long time is produced by the same judgement that also achieves the insight that friendship's security within those very limitations is perfectly complete.”

4. “Pain does not last continuously in the flesh: when acute it is there for a very short time, while the pain which just exceeds the pleasure in the flesh does not persist for many days; and chronic illnesses contain an excess of pleasure in the flesh over pain.”

29. “Natural and necessary [desires], according to Epicurus, are ones which bring relief from pain, such as drinking when thirsty; natural but non-necessary are ones which merely vary pleasure but do not remove pain, such as expensive foods; neither natural nor necessary are ones for things like crowns and erection of statues.”

(excessive quantities of foods would make more sense here compared to expensive (if you are really hungry then food is food whether or not it is cheap or expensive).

30. “Whenever intense passion is present in natural desires which do not lead to pain if they are unfulfilled, these have their origin in empty opinion; and the reason for their persistence is not their own nature but the empty opinion of the person.”

21. “He who knows the limits of life knows how easy it is to obtain that which removes pain caused by want and that which makes the whole of life complete. He therefore has no need for competitive involvements.”

25. “If you fail to refer each of your actions on every occasion to nature's end, and stop short at something else in choosing or avoiding, your actions will not be consequential upon your theories.”