

Is motivation to pursue pleasure the same as the motivation to remove pain?

Post by "Godfrey" of February 10, 2022 at 12:46 PM

There's also a matter of degree. For instance there are times when I've just powered through situations, whereas if I had allowed myself to be more aware of my Feelings I might have prevented future increasing stress and disease. (These situations occurred before I was aware of EP and was operating more from my Christian upbringing.) In my experience, situations which lead to chronic pain (mental or physical) tend to begin very gradually and develop over time. So it's always important to be aware of pleasure and pain in making choices and avoidances.

I also agree that it's possible to try to paper over pain with pleasure, with detrimental results. Responding to pain and pursuing pleasure should both be done prudently. And, yes, sometimes it's effective to choose something painful in order to obtain a greater pleasure.

However in response to the original question about the motivation to pursue pleasure or avoid pain, I don't see these as the same. The only Feelings are pleasure and pain, and absence of pain is therefore equivalent to pleasure. But I see the motivation to pursue pleasure as multi-faceted, as is the motivation to avoid pain. And I see the motivation to pursue pleasure as different from the motivation to avoid pain. To me this is an important distinction.

But thinking further, how important is the distinction? If a baby or an animal has an "instinct" toward pleasure and away from pain, are we as adults any different? We still have that "instinct". The difference is that we override our instinct due to other motivations. On the instinctual level of the organism the "motivations" might be the same. But on the conscious, thinking level I think the motivations come from and/or lead to a mindset over time. In this way they are different, and lead to different results.