

PD09 - Condensed Pleasure

Post by “Elayne” of March 25, 2019 at 3:00 PM

On to the second conclusion of DeWitt, that intensity goes with kinetic pleasure and less intensity with static pleasure, my personal experience does not fully agree. There are plenty of kinetic, active pleasures which are wonderful but not intense, such as taking a walk on a Spring day. There are static pleasures, such as the afterglow from sex, which is not more intense than orgasm but is more intense than the pleasure of a nice walk—and the afterglow is not active. I am not actively thinking or doing anything during that time to produce it. It is literally an abundance of neurotransmitters produced by the orgasm which are still flooding my body. There is an afterglow of actions like having given a gift to one of my children that they really liked—I am not doing anything particular to ramp that up, but it is a warm happy feeling that persists for quite some time. There is the static pleasure which persists after having thought about the fact that I am fed, warm, safe, dry and have friends, which lasts beyond the time when I am actively thinking about it. This is all due to neurotransmitter effects, nothing mysterious. But I do not find that activity and intensity are tightly bound in my experience, when comparing one pleasure to another.

However, I can make a definite case for the static component of a particular kinetic pleasure being less intense, which would match the typical pattern of neurotransmitter action. Is this possibly what DeWitt is referring to?

I cannot think of any static pleasure which was not initiated by a kinetic one, kinetic including a thought or a perceptible bodily action. Can you?

A few loose ends

I have some cautions to suggest in evaluating intensity and kinetic pleasure vs static. I notice that some people make the mistake of guessing the intensity of a pleasure from the stimulus or from the person's outward expression. We know from temperament research (need citations) that one person may feel a given stimulus much more intensely than another. We also know that outward expression of felt intensity may vary widely from one person to another. Someone can feel intensely angry, for instance, and have a guarded poker face. Another person may not feel intensely angry but can be in the habit of using vigorous body language associated with anger. I would avoid guessing the subjective intensity whenever it is possible to ask the person involved. If time-based condensation of pleasure holds up at the neurotransmitter level—more hits in a shorter time = more intensity—then it is only at that level where we might be able to predict intensity from the objective position.

The same is true for kinetic vs static. A person can be moving around but be mainly feeling static pleasure from a prior kinetic pleasure. A person can be lying in a hammock and actively producing pleasure by thinking of happy memories.

From the Letter to Menoeceus, we have “When we are pained because of the absence of pleasure, then, and then only, do we feel the need of pleasure.” So, how does the person who has learned to prolong static pleasure become motivated to get off the sofa? One who has already studied enough science to be entirely free of fears of the unreal? If they are not feeling pain, where is the desire going to come from, to change positions? This is when planning is also very important, because staying on the sofa all day in a state of bliss is not likely to lead to long term pleasure. For long term pleasure of the body, some exercise is needed (insert quote from Jefferson talking to his friend). For long term friendship one must get off the sofa and be with friends. Similarly, one must usually act to have income for food, shelter, and other needs. There is nothing wrong with prolonged static pleasure in itself, unless failing to intersperse kinetic pleasure will result in more pain later. The most pleasure producing mix of static and kinetic has to be determined on a case by case basis.