

# Practical Pleasure-Pain Perspectives: How Different is 99% Pleasure From 100% Pleasure?

Post by "Cassius" of October 6, 2023 at 5:39 AM

Going further:

What would be the implications of holding that *\*all\** nonpainful experiences in life are pleasureable? Here are my thoughts on some, and I am sure there are many more:

First, this perspective makes it much easier to be confident in identifying "Pleasure" as your goal. Since you are including every non-painful activity of life within pleasure, you are in no way limiting yourself to "sex, drugs and rock'n roll." You are not phased at all by the Highbrow / Blueblood argument that you are failing to include the "higher" things in life in your overall goal. If the higher things bring pleasure, you as an Epicurean want those "higher things" even more firmly than do other people, because you understand truly *\*why\** you want them. You gain confidence that this is a true philosophy that really has merit, and you grow ever more immune to false philosophic and religious alternatives.

Another major implication is that there would be no drive toward asceticism or minimalism any more than an obsession with opulence and luxury. You would see your best life not as that which contained the least absolute amount of pain, but the life in which pleasure most predominates over pain. Given any particular set of real life pains, a larger amount of pleasure offsets those pains more than does a smaller amount of pleasure. The effort involved in writing a monumental poem that is likely to win you affection and friendship and preserve your favorite philosophy for the ages, or the effort of setting up a school to wage intellectual war against the world of existing priests and philosophers, fades into insignificance compared to the pleasure of realizing what your hard work has accomplished.

A man who suffers from normal types of back pain would want to remedy it completely if he could, but not to the exclusion of all the other benefits of life. In many cases he does not have the ability to completely end the back pain short of suicide, and he knows that his best life involves much more than spending every waking moment pursuing a totally pain-free back. (Again, we're talking normal amounts of back pain.) Such a man would be better served by taking reasonable steps to alleviate his pain and then "drown out" the rest of his pain with experiences of pleasure, by adding activities which bring more pleasure than pain, than he would by reducing his total engagement with life to a mere minimum. This is because in relative terms the back pain is more likely to be offset by the pleasure of ten interactions with ten friends than the pleasure of one interaction with a single friend. While in this example we can use "friendship" as the activity because that is a pleasure that is easier to see as more heavily predominant in pleasure, in truth the individual circumstances will determine which

activities involve the most benefit of pleasure (considering here duration, intensity, and location) at the least cost in pain. And in general, less engagement in life is going to result in the relative magnification of such pains as do exist than would more engagement in life. This increasing predominance of pleasure over pain would be true whatsoever activities you engage in so long as they bring more pleasure than pain.

And there is \*no\* disposition to read "engagement in life" as something that is painful. Rather the opposite is true - all experiences of life are pleasurable unless they involve some specific pain. It is not the norm of life's most important activities that they necessarily bring undue pain. Through the use of prudence you can normally live a pleasurable life that is full and complete while still keeping pain to a reasonable minimum.