

Pleasure and Reality

Post by "Elayne" of April 8, 2019 at 2:02 PM

Cassius, yes, I should have been more clear. I mean two distinct ideas-- the "higher and lower", as you say-- there is no distinction. And then the intrinsic pathways of pleasure vs the extrinsically mediated pathways-- I am tempted to call these natural vs unnatural, but that might be a stretch. There seems to me a definite difference between our pleasure systems responding to reality vs a molecule bypassing part of the intrinsic pathway to mimic our innate pleasure systems.

For the substance- mediated pleasure which sort of "hijacks" our innate pleasure pathways-- bypassing the ordinary workings of these feelings--I do not mean that the pleasure itself is differently felt, but I am wondering if the frequent sense of hesitation many people feel about these pleasures is because of an intuitive apprehension that there will be net pain. It may be a learned apprehension from having seen people go down the road of addiction, but I am not fully sure that is all that is going on. With all the sense-altering plants in the world, that would be a constant danger if humans (and other animals) had to use reasoning every time to decide about them. Generally, instead, humans use the substances but have built up all sorts of rituals and prohibitions about them.

So I am wondering if we have an intuition, an anticipation/prolepsis to be cautious with what Elli called the "fantastic", when we were talking about someone lying on the beach forever with margaritas, in altering our sensory input. I am not calling this a different type of pleasure, in the felt sense. But like justice, I wonder if we are innately suspicious. Animals that make themselves intoxicated frequently would not survive to reproduce-- they would fall, be unaware of predators, etc. Loss of contact with reality is precarious. Humans can reason this out-- we can do hedonic calculus-- but that might be too fancy of a skill to have been present early in evolution.

Even lab rats will skip extrinsic mediators like cocaine and opiates if they are having pleasure from a natural environment. Even if they haven't experienced addiction and withdrawal pains. I don't think they are reasoning this out.

In that thought experiment asking people if they would chose the completely blissful simulated life vs the real life, I think this is behind an intuitive preference for the real vs the unreal. The unreal feels intuitively unsafe.

The closest I can come to finding a PD that would support this is PD 23:

" If you fight against all your sensations, you will have no standard to which to refer, and thus no means of judging even those sensations which you claim are false."

The extrinsic mimics of our pleasure pathways "fight against" our sensations, in a way, by rendering them unreliable as signals about reality. Sometimes only with the pleasure pathways and sometimes including our sense organs as well.