

# Scientific Support for Psychological Hedonism

Post by "Don" of April 21, 2024 at 10:55 PM

## [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Is psychological hedonism the same as saying "motivated by your own self-interest"?

I don't necessarily think working for one's self-interest is bad; however, I also don't see "psychological hedonism" as being defined that way. At least in my mind.

I would see it as closer to the [Britannica](#) definition: "the view that all human action is ultimately motivated by desires for pleasure and the avoidance of pain." That's what makes pleasure the summum bonum and the telos. It's *at the end* of every series of questions asking "Why did you do that?" To make up a contrived example:

- A: Why do you get up in the morning to go to work but still complain about your job (from time to time)?
- B: If I don't get up and go, I'll be fired.
- A: Why do you care if you get fired?
- B: If I get fired, I won't have a job and no money.
- A: Why do you want money?
- B: To buy what I need, like even the basics, food, shelter, and all that.
- A: Why do you need all that?
- B: Well, I'll be out on the street and hungry.
- ....and so on... Until B admits that it feels good to be without the pain of hunger and to have the pleasure of security.

We may not be conscious of every action's motivation ultimately lying in pleasure (positive affect to use the psychological emotional circumplex: Pleasant affect = what Epicurus calls pleasure Unpleasant= what Epicurus calls pain), but the human urge to seek out pleasure/positive affect and avoid pain/negative affect/ is present in ALL life forms, even plants move toward sunlight and food sources and amoebas seek out food and avoid dangers to their existence. Humans have just done a better job of hiding that most basic drive away and covering it over with justifications, rationalizations, etc.

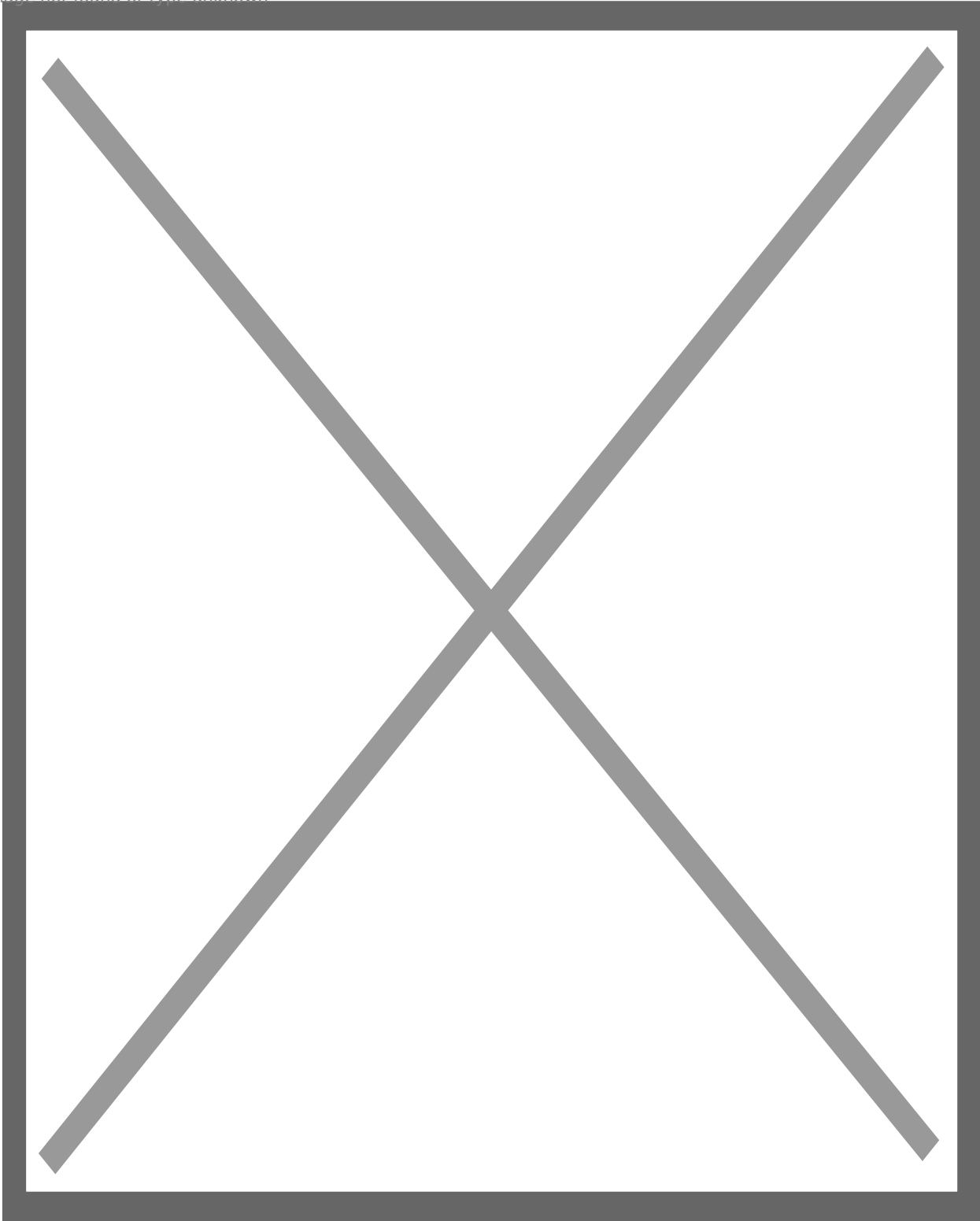
Someone who says they do something because it's virtuous ultimately has to admit ... LOL, well they don't have to admit it... that it makes them feel good... it's pleasurable to them... to act virtuously. And so on.

The "self-interest" part can be selfish altruism. If I treat others well, I hope in turn that they will treat me well. And treating people well and kindly gives me pleasure; results in positive affect. If I treat others poorly, I will experience negative affect... I may be paranoid or anxious that

someone will "get even" and so on.

See also:

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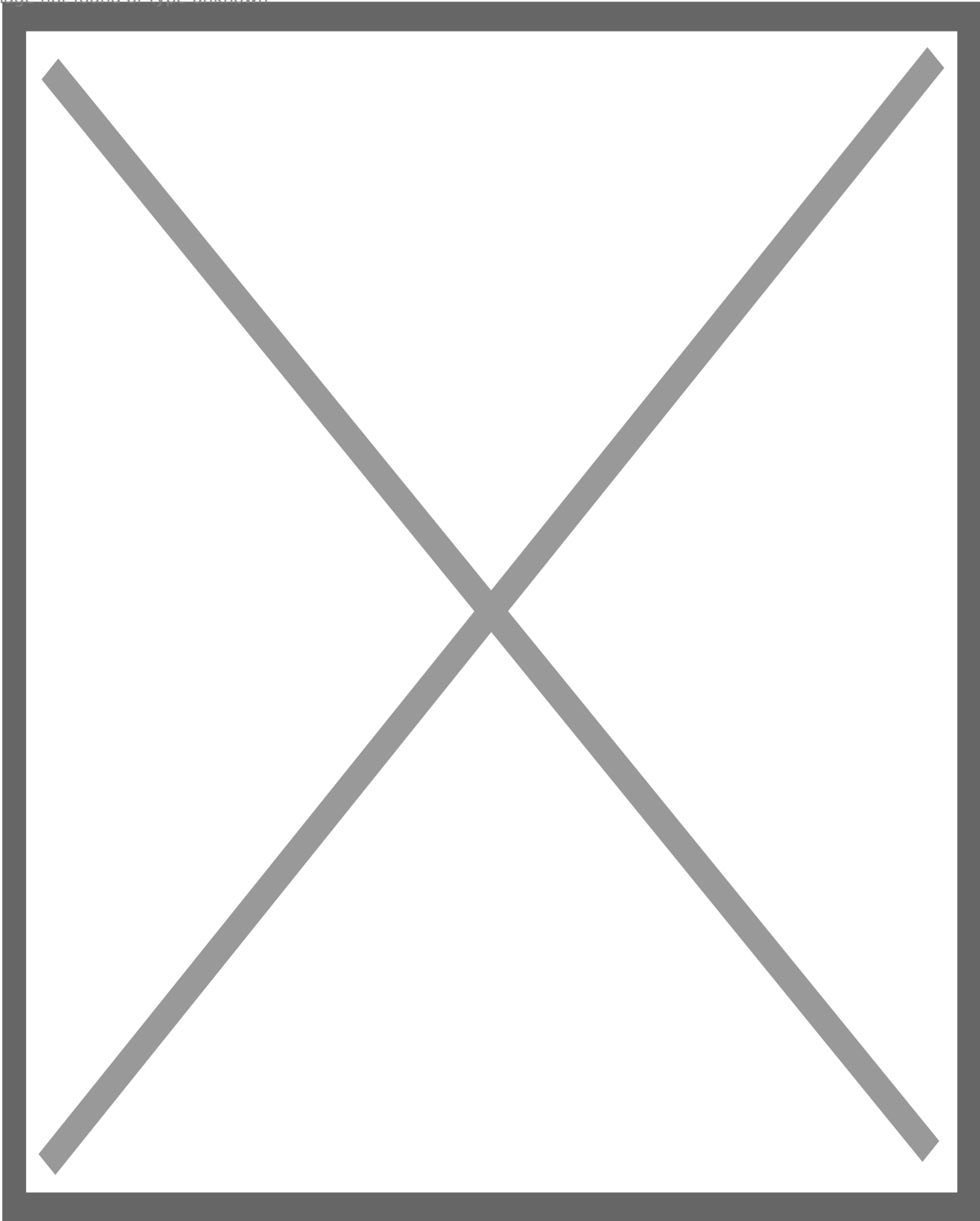
[The Selfishness of Altruism](#)

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Embracing the essence of helping.  
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"there really is no such thing as a completely "selfless" act."

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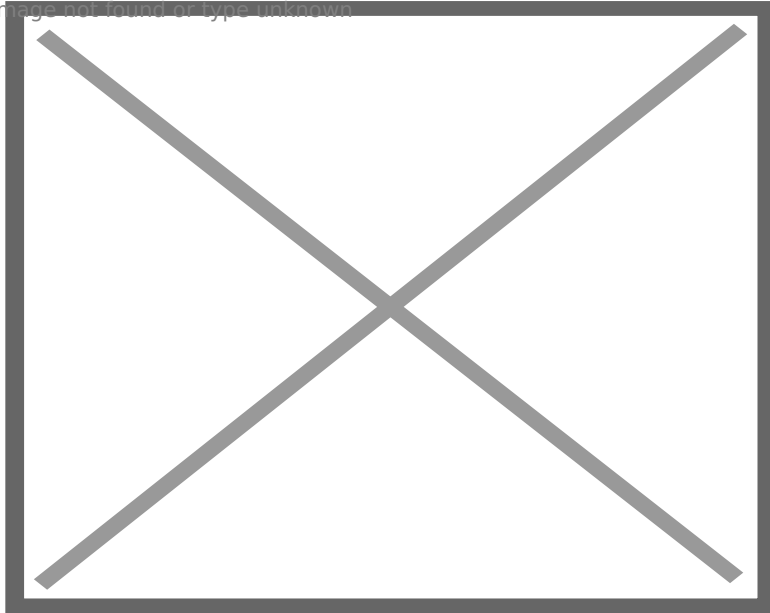


[The Selfishness of Altruism](https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3813-scientific-support-for-psychological-hedonism/?postID=30101#post30101)  
<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3813-scientific-support-for-psychological-hedonism/?postID=30101#post30101>

Here's why you try to "help" whether or not it helps.

[www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

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[Frontiers | Healthy Selfishness and Pathological Altruism: Measuring Two Paradoxical Forms of Selfishness](#)

Selfishness is often regarded as an undesirable or even immoral characteristic, whereas altruism is typically considered universally desirable and virtuous. ...

[www.frontiersin.org](http://www.frontiersin.org)