

The Axiology of Pain and Pleasure (are they intrinsic good/bad ?)

Post by “Pacatus” of June 4, 2024 at 6:28 PM

[Quote from Little Rocker](#)

I admit that I feel like I've reached a point where every time I hear a passionate argument about altruism I cry a little on the inside, even though I recognize that the possibility of altruism really matters to a lot of people. I think I've just lost sight of why it does.

Just some off-the-cuff thoughts:

For me, altruistic acts – from an Epicurean view – can be important from two different points of view: (1) they give me pleasure (the Stoics might deny that as a criteria, but I think they tend to delude themselves with regard to their own pleasure/satisfaction on this score – as [Don](#) said); and (2) both in terms of local community and friendship, and in terms of a more extended social fabric – based on a social contract to prevent harm by means of preserving an amenable social context in which we perforce live – as instrumentally choiceworthy, even if any reciprocity is not immediately expected. In today's world, that social fabric likely includes at least some global considerations.

And perhaps pleasureable feelings of empathy are evolutionarily derived, supporting humans ability to live in any sense of community – and are still valid *pathé* today in that sense.

None of that relies on some abstract ideal of virtue or “command-morality” (as in the Stoics and Kant, say), which I heartily reject. And, it seems to me, it is the practical instrumentality that those idealists find objectionable.

It does, of course, depend on how narrowly or broadly one thinks of that term “altruism.” But Epicurus did say that one might reasonably die for one's friends.

At least that's my personal reflection ...