

Why Do We Consider The Absence of Pain To Be Pleasure?

Post by “Julia” of November 8, 2024 at 6:21 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

But we need not embrace or glorify them. And yes, some negative feeling/pain is sometimes necessary for achieving positive feelings/pleasure by one's future self. My go to example is exercise. Those who claim to glorify pain as in "no pain, no gain" are actually saying that they will willingly experience pain but you know what... They leave out the gain, which is taking pleasure in the results of their action!

I think here it depends quite a bit on one's subjective understanding of what "to embrace" means: In my understanding of the words, I willingly embrace some calculated pain (eg physical exercise), because I keep the results firmly in mind. If I were to reluctantly, grudgingly endure it, I would not be able to maintain the task (and thus forgo its favourable long-term effects).

I don't glorify pain, it is not an end in itself, but I do embrace pain and discomfort, because I know it is not just one, but indeed the only path towards pleasure, which is my goal and guides my selection of which pains to embrace and which to shun (because it either does or doesn't outweighing the pain previously endured to attain it).

In my understanding of "no pain, no gain" to stress this cause-effect relationship as a means to assist the athlete in enduring by firmly holding in mind "Pain now brings gains later!", to help focus on the ends more than the means.

As such, "No pain, no gain" and similar sentences for me are a way to avoid being overly mindful to the present moment (where the work is being done), and to instead help me stay mentally in the space of my goal, where I want to go. It also helps me to remember that (almost always) the more I get done now, the better I will feel later. This is just hedonic calculus; after all, I say: "No pain, no gain." and I do not say: "Whatever the gain, I'm here for the pain!"

This brings to mind three quotes of Epictetus (yes, that guy!), which can easily be distorted (from their historical meanings) to fit Epicurean philosophy:

- "No great thing is created suddenly." → Exercising for 10 seconds won't keep me fit.
- "Say to yourself what you would be; then do what you have to." → I want to keep fit; I won't allow my mind to weasel its way out of it with ludicrous excuses; exercise is not up for debate!
- "The greater the difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it." → The greater the difficulty, the more satisfaction in surmounting it. → Chopping the entire stack of firewood in fall is a

massive chore, but the pleasure I will get from this for the next months to come makes it worth it, and knowing I have it done will be very satisfying, so let's not be mindful of the present moment, but instead keep that future pleasure in mind!

I, by virtue of being human, gravitate towards pleasure and comfort naturally; this happens on its own, I don't need to actively maintain it, as it is its own reward; I don't need to embrace it, I merely need to welcome it. However, unless I embrace painful activities), I will run out of pleasures and comforts (I will run out of money, become unhealthy, and neuro-adaptation will make me suffer boredom, depression, and irritability even though I am warm, fed, and safe). To shy away or at best reluctantly engage in them destroys my drive and discipline; to glorify pain displaces pleasure as the proper guide. This is why, to me, to embrace specific, calculated pains is simply the correct middle ground, and a means to an end, just like virtue. As a matter of fact, I think it prudent to embrace these pains (but certainly not all pain, as in Stoic fatalism).

To sum up my take: Such sentences all serve to avoid mindfulness to the painful present, and serve to hold firmly the in mind the pleasant future.