

What amount of effort should be put into pursuing pleasure or removing pain?

Post by “Godfrey” of June 25, 2025 at 2:23 AM

Lately, as a way to encompass the idea of the full range of pleasure, I've been equating pleasure with "a good feeling" (or feeling good, or a good Feeling). Similarly, equating pain to "a bad feeling".

A good feeling might come from simply taking a deep breath. It might also come in the midst of wrestling with intensely painful (feeling really bad) emotions or other struggles. Or a good feeling might come after a day of intensely focused or otherwise effortful work. Or after earning a PhD in ancient Greek philosophy. Or raising a child. Or an exceptionally sweaty workout, or a victorious competition. Or while viewing art that you connect with. Or seeing a random act of levity on your drive home from work.

Looking at it in this way, maybe the amount of effort involved in pursuing pleasure isn't necessarily the effort involved in performing the activity leading to a good feeling, which obviously can vary greatly from one activity to another. Instead, the effort involved in pursuing pleasure is the work to be done to make available the mental bandwidth to notice and appreciate good feelings and to weigh potential good feelings against potential bad feelings. If this work is done, joy can be had in even the most intense effort applied to a specific task, in enduring intense anguish or in the briefest moment of perception.