

A Draft Epicurean Pleasure Maximization Worksheet

Post by "Cassius" of July 12, 2019 at 10:21 AM

List of potential revisions:

(1) It would not be correct to assume that an activity which has a +5 pleasure score and also a -5 pain score results in a "neutral state."

Nor would it be correct to presume that totally offsetting pain and pleasure scores that resulted in a **final** score of 0 would represent a neutral state. This is a limitation of the abstraction of reality to numbers, and I will clarify the diagram to warn against that implication, probably as part of the caution that pleasure and pain cannot be reduced to numbers anyway.

PD3. The magnitude of pleasure reaches its limit in the removal of all pain. ***When such pleasure is present, so long as it is uninterrupted, there is no pain either of body or of mind or of both together.***

I think this is a statement that pleasure and pain are discrete - a sensation of pleasure is very different from a sensation of pain. In total their quantities can be compared, but they do not blend together - they are like oil and water and stay separate.z

But an activity can and generally will generate some pleasure and some pain as different aspects of a single activity.

Additional Citations

Letter to Menoecus

And since pleasure is our first and native good, for that reason we do not choose every pleasure whatsoever, but will often pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them. And often we consider pains superior to pleasures when submission to the pains for a long time brings us as a consequence a greater pleasure. While therefore all pleasure because it is naturally akin to us is good, not all pleasure is should be chosen, just as all pain is an evil and yet not all pain is to be shunned. It is, however, by measuring one against another, and by looking at the conveniences and inconveniences, that all these matters must be judged. Sometimes we treat the good as an evil, and the evil, on the contrary, as a good.

Torquatus in On Ends

To take a trivial example, which of us ever undertakes laborious physical exercise, except to obtain some advantage from it? But who has any right to find fault with a man who chooses to

enjoy a pleasure that has no annoying consequences, or one who avoids a pain that produces no resultant pleasure? On the other hand, we denounce with righteous indignation and dislike men who are so beguiled and demoralized by the charms of the pleasure of the moment, so blinded by desire, that they cannot foresee the pain and trouble that are bound to ensue; and equal blame belongs to those who fail in their duty through weakness of will, which is the same as saying through shrinking from toil and pain. These cases are perfectly simple and easy to distinguish. In a free hour, when our power of choice is untrammelled and when nothing prevents our being able to do what we like best, every pleasure is to be welcomed and every pain avoided. But in certain emergencies and owing to the claims of duty or the obligations of business it will frequently occur that pleasures have to be repudiated and annoyances accepted. The wise man therefore always holds in these matters to this principle of selection: he rejects pleasures to secure other greater pleasures, or else he endures pains to avoid worse pains.

(2) It is possible that the "intensity / extent" column should be eliminated as this aspect is likely already incorporated in the present/future bodily/mental pleasure columns