

Is There A "Paradox of Hedonism"?

Post by "LAMAR_44" of April 4, 2026 at 7:27 AM

Hi Cassius, thanks for welcoming me. I wanted to speak about the paradox of hedonism. This isn't me arguing against hedonism, but just something I've had trouble in resolving and would love to get everyone's viewpoints here.

Essentially, since we know that pleasure is the sole good, and pain is the sole evil, everything else that we should pursue has the characteristic of being instrumental towards pleasure, and everything we avoid has the characteristic of being instrumental towards pain. This helps significantly in judging what is worthy of pursuit and what isn't. However, it's hard for me to think of this with relationships. I think it makes sense to evaluate before starting a friendship or romantic relationship whether there will be net pleasure or pain, but doing this inside of relationships seems to make them feel shallow and transactional, at least for me.

So now I'm in a paradox. To be a consistent hedonist, I must say that there is no intrinsic value in my relationships with my loved ones, they only have value in so that they're instrumental to my pleasure, but in doing this, I lower my experience of pleasure within these relationships. But that would result in less net pleasure than if I decided to disbelieve in hedonism, so to live according to hedonism, I need to disbelieve in hedonism.

But how can I live according to hedonism while disbelieving in it? And how could I believe in hedonism but not live according to it?

Thanks again everyone!