

Victor Frankl

Post by “Elayne” of November 22, 2020 at 7:50 AM

[timrobbe](#) -- in all of these examples, Frankl is ignoring that pleasure is exactly what creates the sense of meaningfulness! He is making the same mistake as the Cyrenaics-- only counting immediate present moment sensory pleasure as pleasure. Epicurus divided all feelings into pleasure or pain, so the pleasure of meaningfulness, no matter what triggers it, is pleasure.

IMO, I would avoid viewing friends as instruments, because that will decrease your pleasure in friendship. We have abundant evidence that focusing on extrinsic rewards, a reward viewed as secondary to an instrument rather than intrinsic to it, decreases pleasure in the instrument used. Read Alfie Kohn's Punished by Rewards. The pleasures of friendship are not really separable from the friend-- no need to dissect relationships like that. Here I differ from Epicurus, who emphasized both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of friendship-- but I do so for pleasure maximizing.

Pleasures are not interchangeable-- there's not just one thing, "pleasure", but specific and widely variable pleasurable feelings. What they have in common is that we enjoy them, but in different ways. Epicurus said that if pleasures were all equal in distribution and intensity they would be alike, and what he was pointing out was that this isn't the case. So it's not really using a friend for generic pleasure but the specific pleasures of friendship.

Meaning itself is just pattern recognition and may or may not be pleasurable. $2+2=4$ means something. But meaningfulness is the feeling of pleasure attached to certain patterns, usually social meanings.

When you keep that in mind, it should be easy to see that meaningfulness of friendship is a huge pleasure, and the same for work that feels meaningful.

Even the pleasure of suffering under certain situations creates pleasurable meaningfulness that is stronger than the pain. Think about grieving someone you loved deeply, after the acute pain has lessened-- there's a sense of deeply pleasurable meaning in knowing one has loved enough to grieve. Or think about suffering from fatigue at a job when the income is used to care for one's family-- there can be a feeling of meaningfulness in knowing one cares that much for one's family which is more pleasurable than the bare fatigue. If not, a person wouldn't likely value those types of suffering. Pleasure provides the value.

Some people prefer these sorts of meaningfulness pleasures more than any others, because they can be so intense.