

Enlightened Hedonism



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In our society, hedonism is an insult and austerity is vastly over-reported. Hedonism asserts that the only ultimate motives are pleasure and pain, and that everything humans do is intended to seek pleasure or to avoid pain; despite the fact that our intentions often backfire. It might appear that hedonism would exclude the higher motives to which we aspire, but this is not the case. It is also commonly supposed that hedonism leads to excess, but this is not true either. In fact, I think hedonism has been set up by sanctimonious moralists to take the rap for gluttony, which is the real culprit.

Enlightened ancient Greek and modern American hedonists agree that moderation is essential to all types of sensual and aesthetic pleasure, and that moderate deprivation enhances the pleasure of moderate consumption even further. There is no spice like hunger! Although

bingeing and gluttony also yield a crass momentary satisfaction, nobody will seriously defend this approach except in order to justify some oppressive compulsion or addiction

In order to understand our more elevated motives in terms of the pleasure principle it is important to recognize that pleasure actually occurs in the mind and not in the body; which is to say that it is a matter of interpretation. This is why anesthetics, distraction, placebo, and philosophy can all effectively mitigate pain. In fact, pleasure is at least as likely to be stimulated by social feedback and other abstract cognitive processes as it is by direct sensory experience. Chocolate and a glass of wine are nice, especially when you are hungry and sober, but election to the Presidency of France may be even more pleasant; especially at first.

Elevated motives are prerequisite to admiration, which is extremely pleasurable to anyone who has cultivated a taste for it; which is everyone. Enlightened hedonists understand that pretentious motives are easily detected and they therefore tend to be genuine, consistent, and reliable. Enlightened hedonism is the foundation of all altruistic and philanthropic behavior, despite nearly universal claims to the contrary. There is no need for you to feel guilty about your hedonism and, in fact, guilt will certainly get in your way. Embrace and harness your natural hedonism! Trust me, call me.

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