

Recent Theories of Pain and Their Possible Impact on Pleasure

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Pain, although indeed not a new philosophical problem, has received a revival of attention in philosophy over the last 50 years as increased medical information has provided us with more information about pain. As such, within the analytic tradition, there have been a significant amount of recent theories for how pain is felt, and its unpleasantness is understood. Theories such as Contemporary Representationalism, Evaluativism, and Imperativism all seek to explain pain's sensory elements and its negative effect. Considering these recent developments, it makes sense to try to apply what we know about pain sensation and effect to our concept of pleasure.

Physical pleasure is commonly thought of as physical pain's natural opposite, as a continuum with pain on one side, pleasure on the other, and indifference in the middle[1]. However, this is perhaps an oversimplification of the matter. As I will show, if physical pleasure is simply an opposite of pain, then the theories of pain should be able to be applied to pleasure. This, however, is not always the case, and each of the pain theories have their own issues when adapted to a pleasure context. I will briefly present the difficulties that pleasure poses to these theories and eventually argue that the perceived symmetry of pleasure and pain is ultimately false and that although pleasure and pain share distinct motivational aspects, that the desire of pleasure is a somewhat different experience than the *desire-to-end* of pain.[2,4]

References

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