

Stéphane Lemaire

Université de Rennes 1 et Institut Jean Nicod

Isn't there a version of psychological hedonism that could be saved?

Abstract:

The state of the art in philosophy and neurosciences seems to advocate strongly against psychological hedonism, the view according to which our desires aim at pleasure. However, if this kind of psychological hedonism is certainly false, could we not defend other weaker versions? In this presentation, I review several such possibilities and I explore the evidence available to assess the various direct and indirect links that relate motivation to pleasure. In particular, I wonder whether the experience of pleasure (or displeasure) is necessary in order to acquire new motivations and maybe in order to preserve them (or some of them). Such views may be compatible with the existence of subjects who would be motivated without having any experience of pleasure. However, this may not be a very strong argument if these lives appear devoid of any exciting goal.