

Pleasures of Suffering

Abstract

Many psychologists and philosophers believe that people are hedonists, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. But what about our appetites for spicy foods, hot baths, horror movies, sad songs, BDSM, and hate reading? How can we explain our choices to suffer—in pursuits such as art, ritual, sex, and sports, and in longer-term projects such as training for a marathon or signing up to go to war? Drawing on research from developmental psychology, social psychology, anthropology, and behavioral economics, Professor Bloom suggests that we are driven by non-hedonistic goals; we revel in difficult practice, we aspire towards moral goodness, and we seek out meaningful lives.