

Chapter 4.3-4.6 & 2.2.5

Team 3

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§4.3 The Epicureans

Hedonism Definition : The ethical theory that pleasure (in the sense of satisfaction of desires) is the highest good and proper aim of human life

Epicurean Definition : Philosophy focusing on achieving happiness through a tranquil, pain-free life and mental peace

Avoidance of Pain

Cyrenaics pursue immediate and intense bodily pleasures

Epicureans recognize that the Cyrenaics' pursuit of great pleasures will often lead to pain

Epicureans prefer to pursue stable pleasures that don't have accompanying pains

But pleasures that don't have accompanying pains are often milder than pleasures that risk pain

The Hedonic Treadmill

Hedonic Treadmill: Humans tend to return to a stable level of happiness despite major positive or negative life changes

Over time, intense pleasures tend to dull. But the risk and pain of pursuing them stays the same.

People seek stronger or more frequent pleasures to regain the same level of enjoyment

Epicureanism rejects that the most intense pleasure is the best, naturally counteracting the hedonic treadmill



§4.4 Mill on Higher and Lower Pleasures

We can and ought to evaluate and
discriminate between pleasures

Should we measure pleasure in quantity or quality?

Quantity:

- Commensurability
- Can a lot of little pleasures equal something of higher pleasure

Quality:

- Ignorance of one pleasure may skew results
- Highly subjective

Effectively no difference between approaches, both up to interpretation

Mill's Method: Appealing to Authority

- Any non expert is ignorant and to be disregarded
- Well educated people on the topic should be trusted as judge for pleasurable

Issues with this Method:

- Still subjective
- How do we know if expert has better tastes or simply different

Whose life is more superior?
A pig or Socrates?

Pig:

- A life filled with swinish pleasures
- Fully satisfied

Socrates:

- Philosophical endeavors, though intensely enjoyable
- Finds frustration in the outcome in how little he knows → Dissatisfied

Overall, the appeal to higher and lower pleasures accomplishes little as tastes are subjective. This leads to the theory that it is something other than pleasure that makes things good

§4.5 Sadistic Pleasures

“If pleasure is the only natural good, then any life filled with more pleasure than pain is as good as any other, and it is better than a life filled largely with pain and dissatisfaction.”

Pyromaniac vs Firefighter

Can hedonism distinguish between
morally different types of pleasure?

A Hedonist's Perspective

- Hedonists are not necessarily recommending the life of the Arsonist just because he lives a lifestyle pleasurable to himself
- Hedonists argue that it would be worse for the Arsonist to live their life and cause pain to others if they experienced no pleasure while doing so

4.6 Aristotle on Pleasure

What is meant by “pleasure”?

Pleasure vs Activity

Are all types of pleasure the same?

§2.2.5 From Judgement to Choice

Are moral values **intrinsic** or **extrinsic** ?

Intrinsic

A **WILL** to be virtuous

"Each of us is always free; our actions reflect our inner state.
We cannot enforce morality; it must come from within"
– Professor Sadegh Angha

May not stop conflicts in real world

Extrinsic

Comes from society/incentives

Act because of punishments/rewards

No longer about the “right” thing

Extrinsic

Distributive Justice: “The ethical principle of ensuring the fair and equitable allocation of resources, benefits, and burdens”

how should rewards and benefits be allocated:

1. Libertarianism
2. Utilitarianism
3. Desert-based meritocracy
4. **Rawls' Difference Principle** – Allow inequality only if it helps the least advantaged