

Hedonism

Dharnish B.R., Emerson C., Connor A.,
Jasmine C., Anderson L.

Remy the Rat (callback to Wed's presentation)

- The question was basically about whether or not it was better to commit crimes/morally abhorrent actions out of pleasure or not out of pleasure (it can be for any other reason)
 - Regular people would say there is “something wrong” with the person doing bad things for the purpose of pleasure ('sadistic pleasure'), and that it 'feels' worse to do it just for pleasure than any other reason.
 - Hedonists, however, would (ostensibly) take the opposite stance: since pleasure was the supreme attribute that mattered the most, it would have been worse if the person who did those things did not get any pleasure out of it.
- **What do you guys think? Any thoughts or questions.**

Pleasure and Happiness

Pleasure: is something that is associated with instant gratification- 'feeling good' immediately. You can think of it as a burst of positive emotions or reward

Happiness: can be understood as a long(er)-term state of mind than 'pleasure.' It's the idea of having a fulfilling life

- E.g., One can be 'happy' for a whole day, while one feels 'pleasure' for an infinitesimally short period of time.
- The polar opposites of 'pleasure' and 'happiness' would be 'pain' and 'sadness/failures' respectively.

Hedonism and happiness

- **Hedonism:** proposes that pleasure is the highest (perhaps only) good there is, and pain is conversely the highest evil.
- In terms of understanding what is a pleasurable life:
 - We need to understand What Is Happiness?
 - Pleasure and Happiness are not entirely two different things, and technically correlate to each other.
 - "The pleasure arises from the happiness."

The Dream Machine

Imagine a machine that could simulate perfect pleasure and joy

- Would you plug into the machine for life?
- Is happiness real even if it's disconnected from reality?
- Authentic Experience vs. Pure Pleasure

Hedonism Treadmill

People adapt to pleasure quickly – new things make us happy for a bit but then we return to baseline

- If pleasure fades, should we still chase it?
- Is long-term happiness about learning to want less?

Hedonism Treadmill

People adapt to pleasure quickly – new things make us happy for a bit but then we return to baseline

- If pleasure fades, should we still chase it?
- Is long-term happiness about learning to want less?
- Is it better to suffer for something meaningful or maintain an ideal, comfortable life with minimal obstacles?

Hedonism vs Aristotle

- Aristotle (384-322 BCE) asks for a specific definition of “pleasure”.
- Hedonists simply assert that pleasure is “natural good” and the opposite of pain, “natural evil”.
- Hedonism: “I enjoy the activity because it gives me pleasure.” vs Aristotle: “The activity gives me pleasure because I enjoy it.”
- Aristotle sees that the “goodness” of activities must arise from something other than merely being pleasurable- that there are also different kinds of pleasurable activities, while Hedonists believe that people should only do activities because it gives them pleasure and that pleasure gained is measured on quantity.
- Both believe that the best life is filled with the most pleasure.

Practicality of Hedonism

Reid: morality is not some inherent quality of objects, but something we reason about practically for social purposes

- Distinction from subjectivism: hedonism *doesn't* say you have to respect the moral beliefs of others if they cause you pain/displeasure
- If everyone's pursuing their own pleasure to the detriment of others, what's the practical use of this as a moral system? (cyrenaics)
- Does epicureanism deem those unable (monetarily, socially) to pursue "higher pleasures" (fine dining, intellectualism, detachment) a worse kind of people?
 - Strangely similar to moral realism - if this person hasn't succeeded in pursuing pleasure, must they have been a "bad" person all along?

Meeting Notes

Presentation Outline:

- Callback
- Pleasure vs Happiness - Anderson
 - Intersections and Differences - Connor Atha
 - Examples / Debate
- Aristotle on Pleasure - Jasmine
 - Aristotle vs hedonism
- Examples / Debate - Emerson
 - Inflicting pain/pleasure upon others
 - Link to sadistic pleasure?
 - Reid: "ethics is based in practicality" - does hedonism work with this?