Hedonism

4.4 – Higher and Lower Pleasures

Team 6:

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Egoism → Hedonism



Egoism

Q: "What should I do?"

A: "You should do what you want to do."



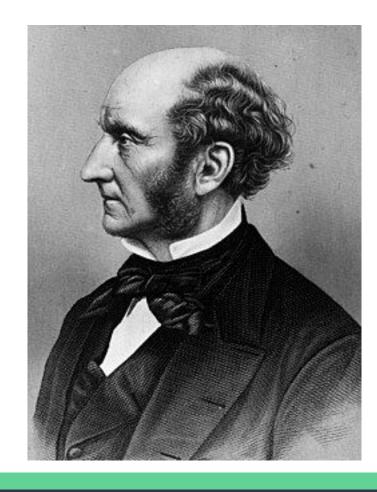
Hedonism

Q: "What do I want to do?"

A: "You want to do pleasurable things, and not painful things."

John Stuart Mills: Hedonism

- 1800s philosopher known for his advocacy for utilitarianism
- Argued that not all pleasures are equal in quality
- Higher pleasures: derived from mental activities like enjoying art, literature, fine dining in moderation, etc.
- Lower pleasures: satisfying basic needs like eating and other bodily sensations



What Makes Something a Higher vs Lower Pleasure?

- Refinement?
 - Artistic merit
 - Intellectual value
- Moderation?
 - "Too much of a good thing"
- Intent? Mood?
- A combination of these?
- None of these?



VS.



Mills' response:

- Ask informed individuals which they believe is a higher pleasure.
- However, he also thought that he intuitively knew what high/low pleasures were, without this test.



Intent

- Does intent make the same act a higher pleasure in some cases, and a lower pleasure in others?
- Even if two people perform the same action, their reasons may place the act on different scales of pleasure
 - Gambling for the sake of gambling (money) vs. socializing
 - Indulging in food purely out of boredom vs. exploring cuisines as a form of art

Higher vs Lower Pleasures: Morality?

- Is the morality of an action related to whether it's a higher or lower pleasure?
 - i.e. Gambling could be immoral, whereas card games could be moral
- Counter: There are examples of lower pleasures that aren't generally regarded as immoral
 - o i.e. Eating a large meal
- Maybe it's a factor, but not sufficient itself

Inherent Value of Pleasure?

- Are higher pleasures inherently higher quality?
- Should we always aim for higher pleasure over lower pleasure, or is the ideal a balance of the two?
 - Is a life of listening to Mozart superior than a life of rampant marijuana usage,
 even if both individuals experience the same amount of pleasure?