

# **Critiques of Hedonism**

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# 02 Hedonism: A brief recap

## Hedonism vs Egoism

- **Egoism**

- Self-focus
- Rejects altruism

- **Hedonism**

- Pleasure is good
- Pain is evil

# 03 Schools of Hedonism

## **Cyrenaics**

- Indulge this moment
- But: pain = consequences

## **Epicureans**

- Refined, lasting pleasure
- Require restraint

## **Miller**

- Higher pleasure > lower pleasure
- No proof that higher pleasure is “better”

# Small Discussion

Just an idea, on the topic of pleasure.

It's common that addicts typically want a bigger high when the pleasure they experience hits baseline.

- What might a Cyrenaic or Epicurean say on this statement?



# 05 A Brief Interlude

- Pleasure is good
  - But whose pleasure is important?
  - What if my pleasure comes at another's cost?
- The hedonist viewpoints discussed all talk about pleasure in terms of the *individual*, and don't consider anyone beyond

# 06 Sadistic Pleasures

**Discussion:** Is it better if a person derives a benefit from harming another, as opposed to causing harm with no personal pleasure?

**Low stakes example:** Consider two people: one is a kleptomaniac, who steals small items (e.g. a pastry from a bakery) out of compulsion, but doesn't enjoy it. Another steals the pastry for the satisfaction of eating it. The harm (to the baker) is incidental.

**High stakes example:** Is it better for a country to be controlled by a dictator who enjoys exerting his power over others, or an unfeeling puppet that rules the same way?



Remy the Rat steals to live...is that meaningfully different from stealing for fun? Are these both sadistic pleasures?



# 07 Aristotle's View on Pleasure

- Activities are worth pursuing because they are enjoyable and pleasure comes from that enjoyment
  - This differs from Hedonism
- Pleasures are only distinguished by their types, not their intensities
- Therefore happiness should be the criterion. Pleasure is preferred if it is the byproduct of happiness.

# 08 “Not all pleasures have an end different from themselves”

## 2 Types of Pleasure:

1. They are the point of the activity.
2. Some pleasures are pursued for the sake of something else (eating for nourishment)
  - a. The pleasure might come as a bonus, but it's not the main goal.

### Listening to Music

This activity is inherently enjoyable  
The pleasure is a part of the activity (or they are considered the same thing)

This is a complete kind of pleasure it's not just a means to something else



### Eating Junk Food

Pleasure comes after eating - its not embedded in any noble purpose  
Pleasure is separate from the activity; short term and could even be regrettable

This is fine in moderation, but not ideal or fulfilling





# 09 Critiques of Aristotle's Views

1. **Hedonist view:** All pleasures are equal in kind; ranking them is elitist.
2. **Subjectivity of Pleasure:** Pleasure is experienced differently; Aristotle's view is too rigid or idealized because it talks about the multiple types of pleasures one can experience