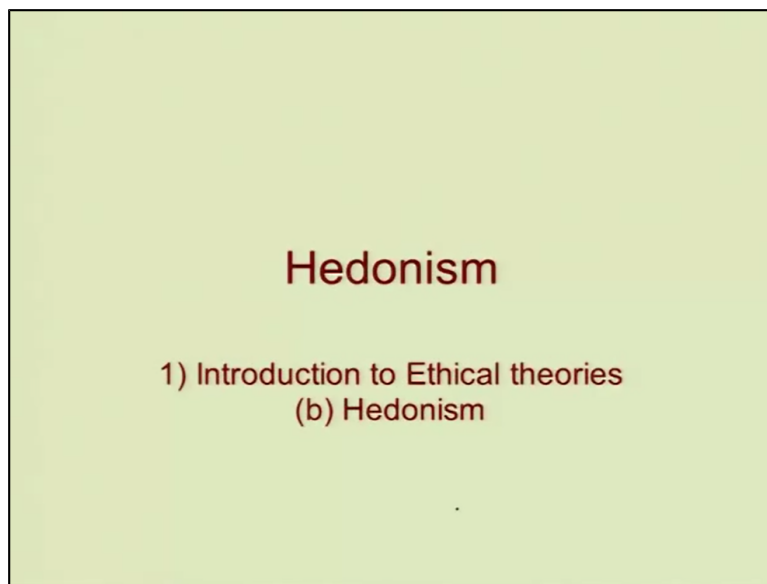


Ethics
Prof. Vineet Sahu
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur

Module No. #01
Lecture No. #05
Hedonism

Hello, everyone. Today, we are going to talk about, Hedonism. This is the second part of, our introduction to Ethical Theories.

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What is Hedonism?

- Attaining the 'good' is a part of consequentialism, that is, an action is right if the consequences aimed/achieved are 'good' ←
- But then, what is the content of this 'good' or what is the description of this 'good'? *Explaining / Defining what is the 'good'?*
- Hedonism proposes an answer to this question: '... that pleasure is the good, the true goal of every living being, and what everyone ought to aim at...'

Now, we have talked about a Consequentialism. We have talked about Consequentialism, as a domain in which, moral character of an action is judged, by the consequences that, the action achieves. Now, in the talk of Consequentialism, well, we have shifted, the moral judgement from the act, to the consequences it attains. But notice, we have not talked about, what are these kinds of consequences.

What is it, that describes these consequences. Now, to describe these consequences, is the job of a Moral Theory. So, this consequence is what, would rightly be called as good. That, any act is in the pursuit of, what is good. But, the question comes to be that, what is this good. "Good". Now, attaining the good, as I read, is a part of Consequentialism. That is an action. Attaining the good, is a part of Consequentialism.

That is, an action is right, if the consequences aimed or achieved are good. Now, are we substituting consequences, with good. But, is this explaining, what good is? Hedonism is a theory, which tries to answer this question that, what is the nature of good. So, it is explaining or defining, what is the good. And, I put it, within inverted commas. Because, it talks about the concept, good. Now, but then, what is the content of this good, or what is the description of this good. Hedonism proposes, an answer to this question.

It says that, the good is that, pleasure is the good, the true goal of every living being, and what everyone ought to aim at. Now, as we see, Hedonism talks about the true goal of every living being, and what everyone ought to aim at. The keyword here, to remember is, pleasure. Now, is pleasure the same thing, as good. Now, the Hedonist claim is that well, attaining pleasure or happiness, there may be a difference between the two. But, for the moment, let us assume them, in the same bracket. That, attaining pleasure or happiness, is what we are naturally equipped with. And, this is our aim.

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Contentions (Frankena p84):

- 'Only pleasures are intrinsically good, or whatever is pleasant in itself is good in itself. A hedonist may admit that some pleasures are morally bad or wrong, or that some are bad because of their results.'

Pleasure/happiness as the final standard, the desired final/perpetual consequence.

GOOD \Leftrightarrow HAPPINESS/PLEASURE

There cannot be something which is 'good' & is not pleasurable in short or long run!

- Anything that is good is also pleasurable
- Anything that is pleasurable is also good

! (h) Hedonism

Now, what are the pleasures. Now, pleasures or happiness, seems to be, natural go phenomena, that we are equipped with. The ability to feel, or no pleasures, is almost introspective. And, Hedonism goes ahead to claim that well, this immediate implicit knowledge of, what is pleasurable, or what is happiness inducing, either in the short run, or the long run, is what ought to be the parameter, for determining, what is good.

Now, and the text referred is, William Frankena. And, on the page 84, he brings about some contentions about, a pleasures. I read. Only pleasures are intrinsically good, or whatever is pleasant in itself is good in itself. A Hedonist may admit that, some pleasures are morally bad or wrong or that some, or that some are bad, because of their results. Now, this is to be noted. Only pleasures are intrinsically good. Or, whatever is pleasant in itself, is good in itself.

A Hedonist may admit that, some pleasures are morally bad or wrong, or that some are bad, because of their results. Now, this is a contention of, as put out by Frankena. Now, the gist of which is saying that, pleasure or happiness is the final standard, the desired final or perpetual consequence. Now, is pleasure the final standard. Now, what is Hedonism saying. Hedonism is trying to put forth that well, if we have the natural ability to know, when we are happy about something, or when we are not happy about something.

This is a natural index, which we are equipped with. And, this natural index is the foundation of moral judgement. This natural index will decide, what is right, or what is wrong. So, what the Hedonist is saying, he is trying to bring about, the relation between two notions. Two notions, which are good, and happiness or pleasure. Now, what is the relation, that is going to be between these two notions, good, and happiness and pleasure.

Now, whether it is that of equivalence, or of definition, or it is not equivalent, that is what, is to be determined. Now, the Hedonist says that well, whatever is good is pleasurable, and whatever is pleasurable is good. So, in a way, there is a relation between the two. In that, anything that is to be termed as good, has to be pleasurable. And, anything that is pleasurable, has to be a part of the domain, good. So, there is a kind of interactive relation between the two, between good, and happiness, and pleasure.

So, anything that is good, is also pleasurable, and anything that is pleasurable, is also good. So, now standing of these two claims, 1 and 2, and that, they are almost being able to be interchange, vice versa. This brings about a kind of definition, to good. However, the Hedonist stops short of defining the good, as that which brings happiness. But, this brings such a strong correlation, that it is almost of an equivalence.

Now, if the Hedonist is true, what the Hedonist is saying that, there cannot be something, which is good, and is not pleasurable, in short or long run. So, this is the essential claim, that there cannot be something, which is good, and is not pleasurable, in the short or long run. Now, this is the claim of the Hedonist, that everything, that is, happiness is the final standard, that we can by which, we can judge things, to be good, or consequences, or moral acts, to be good.

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- 'Pleasantness is the criterion of intrinsic goodness. It is what makes things good as ends. It is not just a coincidence that what is pleasant is good in itself and vice versa.' (Frankena p84)

to be intrinsically good (characteristic of the consequence/ends), the 'good' has to be atleast pleasant, may or may not be more.

Or,

there can be nothing which can be regarded as good and is neither pleasant by itself or in the consequences it brings about

① → Valuable in itself

Doubling ① Good but not pleasant

② Pleasant but not good

① → ②

② → ①

(b) Hedonism

Now, keep in mind that, next theory that we talk about is, Utilitarianism. And, Utilitarianism also subscribes to Hedonism, where it claims that well, happiness is pursued. Notice, we are not talking about the domain of the agent, that happiness for whom, for how many, happiness for, in the short run or in the long run, or happiness, or vis-a-vis, pleasure or satisfaction. So, these are broader areas.

Now, as a student of Hedonism, we need to know is that, it talks about our natural ability, to have a preferential hierarchy between, what may be broadly termed as happiness, pleasure, satisfaction, and what we morally call, good. Now, getting a relation between these two, is the ethos of the Hedonist claim. Now, let us read, what is on the slide. Pleasantness, is the criteria of intrinsic goodness. It is what makes things good as ends.

It is not just a coincidence, that what is pleasant is good in itself, and vice versa. This is again, from our text book. Now, what is this claim saying. It is saying that, pleasantness is the criteria of intrinsic goodness. Intrinsic goodness meaning, valuable in itself. It is what makes things good as ends. It is not just a coincidence that, what is pleasant is good in itself, and vice versa. So, here Frankena's version of Hedonism is claiming that, what is pleasant is good in itself, and vice versa.

That means, there can be nothing that, which is not good, and yet pleasant, right. So, what is this fundamental claim denying. It is denying, 1, good, but not pleasurable, and 2, pleasurable, but not good. So, it is trying to claim that well. It is denying that, there can be nothing, which can be termed good, but is not pleasurable. And, nothing can be termed pleasurable or pleasant, as an archaic language used, which is pleasant or pleasurable, and yet not good, either in the short run or the long run.

So, our natural ability to distinguish between, happiness and pain, is also our ability to distinguish between, what is good, and what is not good. Now, as we put up in the last sentence, that there can be nothing, which can be regarded as good, and is neither pleasant by itself, or in the consequence it brings about. So, for anything to be good, it has to be either pleasant by itself, or it has to bring about pleasantness. So, only with these two characteristics, can something be called good. So therefore, there can be nothing, which is good, but not pleasurable.

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Weigh pleasures?

Happiness -> ambiguous

- Are all pleasures of the same value?
- How can pleasures be graded?
- Quantitative and Qualitative hedonists:
 - Quantitative hedonists (viz., Bentham) maintain that the goodness of an activity is proportional to the quantity of pleasure it contains, but can pleasure be quantified??
 - Qualitative hedonists (viz., Mill) hold that pleasures differ in kind or quality, for example, mental pleasures may exceed in value to physical pleasures

1 (h) Hedonism

Now, a few questions, that we need to tackle. That, we have talked about the domain of pleasures, right. We have talked about pleasures. And, many of you would be wondering right now, that I have loosely, or used pleasure, happiness, pleasant, satisfaction, interchangeably. Now, this is for a reason. This is for a reason because, the Hedonist, what you might have got an impression, is particularly, the inter-indulgent pleasure seeker.

But, Hedonism has a philosophical principle, is just claiming happiness. Now, that happiness can be interpreted in terms of satisfaction, can be interpreted in terms of pleasure. So, giving it a wider domain, that well, some pleasures can fall in the domain of satisfaction, some pleasures can fall in the domain of happiness, some are downright pleasures. So, what about making a category, or what about making a different scale of valuation, for different pleasures, as we see here.

The question that we ask is, are all pleasures of the same value, right. How can we grade pleasures? Now, using the term happiness, is rather ambiguous. Because, it gives the scope of lot of interpretation, right. Now, as the Hedonist, is the creature of the senses. That is, not in a derogatory fashion, being the creature of the senses. The Hedonist is actually saying that, our sensory apparatus enables us to distinguish between, happy or a pleasant state of affair, from an unpleasant state of affair.

And, that becomes our parameter, to distinguish from a good state of affair, to a not good or a bad state of affairs, right. Now, how can pleasures be graded. Now, this you might like to know. And perhaps, those who would like to explore Hedonism in greater detail, can go ahead with these leads, that we will come across right now. So, coming to the slide. There is broadly classification between, Quantitative and Qualitative Hedonist. Quantitative and Qualitative Hedonist.

Quantitative Hedonist like Bentham, maintain that the goodness of the activity, is proportional to the quantity of pleasure, it contains. But, our question is, can pleasure be quantified. When, Bentham is making a claim that, a goodness of an activity is proportional, to the quantity of the pleasure, it contains. But, Bentham tried to work about a quantification of pleasure. But, it does not have to be such a systemic calculation.

Considerate this, by giving the benefit of doubt to, or trying to make an empathetic understanding of the Quantitative Hedonist, look at it this way. Suppose, as a governmental body, one has to decide between, electrifying a village, and providing potable water to another village.

Providing potable water to a village, is higher in bringing about general state of happiness. Or, providing electricity is more important, in getting a better state of happiness.

So, it is this kind of a calculation, that Bentham would talk about. That, there is upgradation. It does not have to be, very accurately numerical. It also includes. People have tried to bring, a very numerical attach numbers, to pleasures. But, by Quantitative, it is meant that, we make distinctions, upgradations, in the amount of pleasure, that can be contained in it. Now, the second qualification, that is talked about is, Qualitative Hedonist. Now, Mill is one such Hedonist.

Qualitative Hedonist's hold, that pleasures differ in kind or quality. For example, pleasures differ in kind or quality. For example, the mental pleasures may exceed in value, to physical pleasures. So, Mill was a more refined Hedonist. Mills claim starts out to be that well, pleasures can be qualified, into either physical, mental, whether it can be in various classifications. And therefore, it is not just in the quantity of pleasure, that we can make gradations. But, there are also kinds of pleasures. Now, the kind of pleasure would determine, what kind of hierarchy, we set about it.

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A classification of hedonism

Psychological Hedonism	Ethical Hedonism
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is human nature to seek pleasure and avoid pain. 2. It describes the way things are - it is a <u>descriptive</u> thesis. <p style="color: red; font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;"><i>Describes a state of affair</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Humans <u>ought</u> to seek pleasure and avoid pain. 2. It <u>prescribes</u> the way things should be - it is a normative thesis. <p style="color: red; font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;"><i>Promotes a course of action or an ideal/normative state of affair.</i></p>

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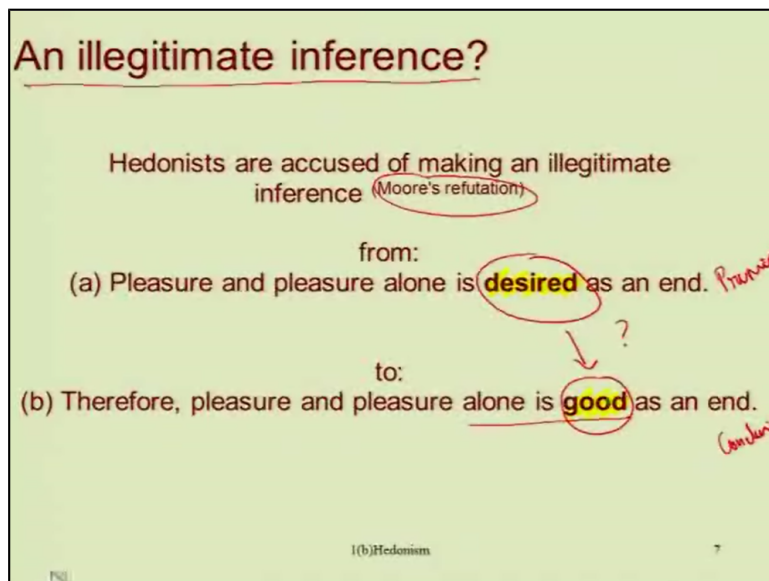
Now, let us encounter, another classification of Hedonism between, which is Psychological Hedonism, and Ethical Hedonism. Now, Psychological Hedonism is a descriptive doctrine. That is, it describes the state of affair. Whereas, the Ethical Hedonism, prescribes a course of action,

or an ideal or normative state of affair. Now, let me read. Psychological Hedonism is claiming that well, it is human nature, to seek pleasure, and avoid pain. Fairly simple.

Ethical Hedonism, on the other hand reads, humans ought to seek pleasure, and avoid pain. Now, the difference between the two is, in the word ought. This is a description. This is a prescription. Psychological Hedonism describes the way, things are. It is a descriptive thesis. And, Ethical Hedonism is a prescriptive thesis. It prescribes the way, things should be. It is a normative thesis.

Now, some things, you might like to know that, if Ethical Hedonism is true, therefore it implies that, Psychological Hedonism also becomes true, right. Ethical Hedonism true, Psychological Hedonism becomes true. But, Psychological Hedonism being true, does not mean that, Ethical Hedonism is true, right. So, Psychological Hedonism is just a description of state of affairs. Whereas, Ethical Hedonism is a prescription, how things ought to be.

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Now, having said this, let us see, what is or could be the problem, with Hedonism. Now, people like G E Moore, a famous philosopher, have argued that, the Hedonist make an illegitimate inference from, this is the premise, to the conclusion. From the premise, that pleasure and pleasure alone is desired as an end to, that pleasure and pleasure alone is good as an end. So, from what is desired, to becoming what is good. Is this legitimate. Now, this again leads from the normative descriptive claim, that we talked about.

Now, if we see, that well, we seek pleasure, naturally. That is a factual state of affair. Now, are seeking pleasure, naturally. Does it become also that, we ought to seek pleasure. That is where, the illegitimate inference, difference, is brought to light by, G E Moore. That, Hedonist make an illegitimate jump from, what is the case, to what ought to be the case. So, what is desired as an end, and what is good, they cannot be linked. Or, there is no reason to see, why one leads to the other.

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Happiness (Satisfaction)

BY PRODUCT

- Pleasure as an accompaniment/ side effect of our objectives and not the objective itself.
- Is 'good' the desired consequence or does the desired consequence become a 'good' ?

Comfortable life

Meaningful life

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Now, there are some more issues, that we need to talk about. Let me give you an example. Let us talk about it. Let us do a thought experiment. Let us assume that, there is a Hedon machine, as philosopher has conjectured that. Or, let us say that, we have something called virtual reality. And, that we are plugged into a virtual reality machine, having all the pleasures, or having the sensation of all the pleasures, that we want.

And, our body is on a life support system, and they survive. And, our life continues to be the string of pleasures, that they are. Now, this seems to be a tricky situation. Are we going to be, as happy as we think, we would be? Would you like to sit, or be plugged, into this virtual reality machine? You could have all the pleasures, that you would require. But, would you call the life, a happy life. Because, it brings forth a deeper question. A question that, is it a comfortable life, and a meaningful life.

What is the relation between, these two? Now, when you are plugged into the virtual reality machine, you have all the sensations and the pleasures, that you would require. But, on a cumulative effect, does this lead to a happier state of affairs. Many of you would be, appalled by the idea of this virtual reality machine. And, you would not consider being plugged into that machine, at least not for life. Whereas, there is something, that is preventing you from feeling this, as the measure of happiness.

Now, those who are thinking that well, this machine, I do not want to be plugged into this virtual reality machine, are implicitly Non-Hedonists. That is, to them, it is clear that, somebody who does something, what he thinks is morally or ethically right, has the certain sense of satisfaction, a certain sense of happiness, or accomplishment for that. Say, why does Mother Teresa. If I ask Mother Teresa that, why have you been sacrificing your comfortable life, and working so hard and giving up pleasures, to serve the poor.

Our country India, is full of examples, of such people. But then, what would Mother Teresa, or any other saint in this matter, reply. That, do I do it for the happiness, I seek. Or, as we have written here, that the pleasure, or the happiness, or the satisfaction, that we get, is an accompaniment, or a side-effect, or a by-product. Okay. Now, let us read, what is written on the slide. Pleasure as an accompaniment, or side-effect, or a by-product, of our objectives, and not the objective itself.

Now, why this idea of being plugged into a virtual reality machine, seems to be appalling to many. It is because, we are not targeting the happiness perhaps, or the pleasure that comes along, or even the cumulative satisfaction that comes along. We need to do the, what is good. Not because, it brings along satisfaction. But, because it is good, and satisfaction comes along with it. Now, this is the kind of an argument, that the Non-Hedonists would make.

That, the Hedonist stands falsified, when he claims that, all that we do is because, it gets a satisfaction. And, only those things, that get a satisfaction are things, that can be called good. So, the second question, that we come up. Is good, the desired consequence. Or, does the desired

consequence, become a good. Now, I will leave this question to you, as an audience. What we desire, does it make something good, that something is desired. X is desired, therefore X is good. Or, X is good, because X is desired.

Now, if your answer is latter, that is, X is good, and therefore it is desired, then you are a Non-Hedonist. But, if your claim is that, X is desired, and therefore X is good, then that is a Hedonistic claim. So, Hedonism is an essential, is an interesting, and a primary mode of impulse, in human behaviour. That, when it tries to naturalise human behaviour to, how we are equipped to come across life. That, our choices of our ability, as sentient creatures, to prefer pleasure over pain, to prefer pleasure, and to share pain, is a natural part of us.

And, that is what should be, perhaps the basis of a moral theory. That, any act is moral, only if it brings about the satisfaction. The Utilitarian takes it further, says that well, it increases the number of agents that, it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number. We will be talking about that theory, next. So, the Hedonist in essence, is making one hierarchy clear that, we prefer pleasure over pain. And, this alone is the fundamental, for making a moral judgement, or making an ethical claim.

Now, the Hedonist therefore denies, that there can be anything, which can be called good. And, is neither pleasurable in the short run, nor in the long run. So, with this, we come to an end of the topic of Hedonism, which is a fundamental moral ethos, in most traditions, to beat the Charvaka's in the Indian philosophical tradition, or the Epicurean's in Greek tradition.

So, this is a very fundamental drive, where it is trying to naturalise human beings, into the creatures, that they are. And, how is it so, as a rebellion, to the extraordinary tenets of morality perhaps founded on religion, which constantly restrict the natural preference order of human beings.