



ETHICS OF HEDONISM

PARAMITA BASU

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

BIDHANNAGAR COLLEGE

WHAT IS HEDONISM?

- Hedonism is the ultimate standard of morality.
- *Hedone* means pleasure
- *Pleasure is the normal object of desire*
- *Desire is primarily directed towards pleasure*

TYPES OF HEDONISM

- Hedonism has different forms – *Psychological Hedonism* and *Ethical Hedonism*
- According to *Psychological Hedonism*, *pleasure is the natural and normal object of desire*
- *Ethical Hedonism* holds that pleasure is the proper object of desire

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEDONISM

- Pleasure is the natural end and motive of human action
- We always seek pleasure and avoid pain
- Cyrenaics, Jeremy Bentham and J.S.Mill are advocates of this theory

Criticism of Psychological Hedonism

- Unpsychological as we desire object, pleasure follows as result
- Rasdall's criticism of hysteron proteron, i.e., like to put the cart before the horse
- The word 'pleasure' is ambiguous – a) agreeable feeling or b) feeling of satisfaction
- Defect of Paradox of Hedonism by Sidgwick

Types of Ethical Hedonism

- According to this theory we ought to seek pleasure
- Bentham, Sidgwick, J.S. Mill advocated this theory
- Two types of Ethical Hedonism – Egoistic and Altruistic

EGOISTIC HEDONISM

- According to Egoistic Hedonism, pleasure of the individual is the moral standard
- Egoistic Hedonism may be of two types – Gross and Refined
- According to Gross Egoistic Hedonism - all pleasures are alike in kind, no qualitative difference
- Aristippus, the founder of Cyrenaic School advocated this theory
- Refined Hedonism holds momentary bodily pleasures are not the highest good
- It gives pre-eminence to the intellectual pleasures over the physical pleasures
- Epicurus was the advocate of this theory

ALTRUISTIC HEDONISM

- According to Altruistic Hedonism, the greatest happiness of the greatest number or general happiness is the moral standard
- Jeremy Bentham and J.S.Mill advocate this view

GROSS OR QUANTATIVE ALTRUISTIC HEDONISM

- Utilitarianism because it judges all actions according to their utility as means for the promotion of general happiness or prevention of general pain
- Dimensions of pleasure – a) intensity, b) duration, c) proximity, d) certainty, e) purity, f) fecundity, g) extent
- Hedonistic Calculus – an action is right if it gives pleasure over pain and is wrong if it gives pain or excess pain over pleasure
- Moral Sanctions – Four external sanctions, physical or natural sanction, political sanction, social sanction, and religious sanction

Criticism of Gross Utilitarianism

- Fundamental Paradox of Hedonism
- Impracticability of Hedonistic Calculus
- Egoistic nature of man and altruism cannot go together
- External sanctions can't explain the transition from egoism to altruism
- The dimensions of extent and intensity doesn't go together in all cases
- Bentham did not give emphasize on intellectual pleasure, which is a distinctive feature of human from the other animals

REFINED ALTRUITIC HEDONISM

- J.S.Mill recognizes qualitative difference of pleasures
- Based this theory on Psychological Hedonism
- Mill appeals to the verdict of competent judges to test pleasures
- Accounts for internal sanctions along with Bentham's external sanctions
- Proof of altruistic hedonism – from individual's happiness to general happiness

CRITICISM OF REFINED UTILITARIANISM

- Criticism of general hedonism
- Psychological hedonism does not necessarily lead to ethical hedonism
- Leap from is to ought, i.e., confused with terms what is desired and desirable
- Quality of pleasure is not related to pleasure, but a moral quality in disguise
- Test technique advocated by him introduces elements of rationalism
- Logical argument involves fallacy of composition and fallacy of division
- Sympathy can never be derived from pure egoism
- Internal sanction is authority of reason, not the feeling of pleasure or pain



THANK YOU