

## HEDONISTIC PERSPECTIVES OF WELL BEING

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### Abstract:

Man is a social animals; no one wants to live in misery or isolation on this earth. One cannot live alone. Man need to fulfill certain basic requirements in order to live. One has to enter into associations with our fellow human beings for living our lives. No one can break the chains of common requirement. Undoubtedly happiness or joy develops the real need of all people. But the ways and means of happiness or joy that one pursues has to be checked. The present study focuses on the new methodological developments about multilevel research which help us to discover the nature of well-being on the basis of psychological as well as literature review. The theoretical as well as the methodological stages show the importance of happiness and its relationship with other dimensions of well-being.

Keywords: prospective, hedonistic, happiness, multilevel etc

### Introduction

The term "hedonism" is derived from the Greek "hedone" meaning simply "pleasure". Hedonism is a school of thought that argues that pleasure and happiness are the primary or most important basic goods and the suitable aim of human life. In common language, hedonism has come to mean devotion to pleasure as a way of life, especially to the pleasures of the senses, and is equal with sensualism, , libertinism, debauchery and dissipation. But the hedonist strives to maximize the pleasure, i.e. pleasure minus pain. According to the philosopher Aristippus of Cyrene, a student of Socrates ,, happiness" is one of the ends of moral actions, while denying that virtue does not have any intrinsic value. He sustained that

pleasure was the highest good, particularly physical pleasure, which he considered more intense and desirable to mental or intellectual pleasures. Over the past few decades, psychologists have tried to identify important

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Components of well-being. These components are selected and carried together differently in various well-being models. As assumed by the majority of psychologists, all these models can be categorized as hedonic (Deci and Ryan 2008). Hedonic models focus the occurrence of life satisfaction, the presence of positive feelings and sensations, and the absence of negative feelings and sensations (Kahneman et al. 1999). However, the hedonistic study has been criticized by some researchers as being arbitrary and unsupported by empirical data (e.g., Kashdan et al. 2008). This criticism is largely based on empirical evidence indicating strong correlations between hedonic well-being and psychological well-being.

People have a welcoming attitude towards the pleasant understandings. Human beings desire to live enjoyably and avoid pain and also prefer pleasurable to painful experiences. Pleasure and pain do not themselves offer any reason for deficient the one and avoiding the other. It is just a basic contingent fact about one's constitution that is disposed to want and seek pleasure and dislike and avoid pain. The pleasure is wanted and pain is unwanted is simple tautology.

#### Hedonistic Well-being

During the Middle Ages Christian philosophers, largely denounced the pursuit of hedonism, which they believed was incompatible with the Christian scriptures. The emphasis on avoiding sin, doing God's will, and developing the Christian virtues of faith; hope and charity were considered the path to holiness and salvation. Christian hedonism is the term coined by Pastor Dr. John Piper, in his book, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian*

Hedonist. The tenets of this philosophy are that humans were created by God with the priority purpose of lavishly enjoying God through knowing, worshipping and serving him. This philosophy recommends pursuing one's own happiness in God as the ultimate human pleasure.

Numerous questions have been raised within the Christian community as to whether Christian Hedonism displaces the greatest and foremost commandment "to love God" with "to enjoy God". A typical apologetic for Christian hedonism is that if you are to love something truly, then you must truly enjoy it. It could be summed up in this statement: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him."

Similarly in the words of Epicurean, the highest pleasure is regarded as something long term and found not in indulgence but in a life devoted to God. He says "It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and well." The hedonist sees the happy life in terms of having the most possible pleasure and the least possible pain. And also they have said the "pursuit of pleasure is our birth right". In the view of Bentham, individuals see

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their interests to seek pleasure and to avoid pain. They seek to “maximize” their happiness expressed by the surplus of pleasure over pain. Indeed, individuals are making a hedonistic calculus. Every action has negative and positive effects, so individuals are looking to achieve those which bring the most happiness. Happiness requires something in its own nature, or in ours, to give it influence, and to determine our desire. Well-being, which refers to optimal psychological experience and functioning, has been vigorously studied in psychology over the past quarter century. To a significant degree, this is due to the work of psychologists such as Diener (1984) who have focused on an exploration of subjective well-being (SWB). From that perspective, well-being is considered subjective because the idea is for people to evaluate for themselves, in a general way, the degree to which they experience a sense of wellness. As an operational definition, SWB is most often interpreted to mean experiencing a high level of positive affect, a low level of negative affect, and a high degree of satisfaction with one’s life. To the extent that one strongly endorses these three constructs, one is said to be high in subjective well-being. The concept of subjective well-being, assessed in this way, has frequently been used interchangeably with “happiness.”

Thus, maximizing one’s well-being has been viewed as maximizing one’s feelings of happiness. Since the publication of *Well-Being: The Foundation of Hedonic Psychology* (Kahneman et al., 1999), subjective well-being has been associated with the hedonistic approach to well-being. The concept of hedonic well-being is thus connected to being free of problems and a sense of being peaceful and comfortable; states that can be described with the emotions such as pleasure, contentment, joy and happiness.

In the view of literature, during the Renaissance period, philosophers such as Erasmus revived hedonism on the grounds that it was God’s wish for human beings to be happy and experience pleasure. In describing the ideal society of his Utopia, Thomas More said that “the chief part of a person’s happiness consists of pleasure”. He argues that God created humans to be happy, and the desire for pleasure to motivate moral behavior. He made the distinction between the pleasure of the body and the pleasure of the mind, and urged the pursuit of natural pleasures rather than those produced by artificial luxuries.

The Utopians argument goes on like this pleasure cannot exist in rest and is only achieved by motion. “Undoubtedly, these pleasures should come right at the bottom of the list, because they are so impure... for the pain is both more intense and more prolonged”(Utopia, p. 78) and illness involves pain “which is the direct opposite of pleasure,

and illness is the direct opposite of the health, therefore health involves pleasure” (Utopia, P. 77)

British author Thomas More compares this status to a battle fought by body.

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Once victory over illness is achieved, the body does not just fall into a coma. It would hardly be possible not to feel the refreshment and to take advantage of the body's victory. In this context both Epicurus and the Utopians the concept of physical health applies just as well to mental well-being, since the troubled mind is just as disturbing as great physical pain. During the eighteenth century, Francis Hutcheson and David Hume also systematically analyzed the role of pleasure and happiness in morality and society, their theories were precursors to Utilitarianism. Hedonism is a sub philosophy of Utilitarianism, which says to act in a way that maximizes utility. Hedonists equate pleasure with utility and believe that pleasure is the master of all humanity, and acts as the ultimate life goal. Hedonists believed that there are only two motivators of human action, pleasure and pain, and that decisions should only be made that further one's pleasurable experience and minimize or eliminate one's painful events. The philosopher Aristotle suggests that happiness in our present social media one-up- man ship where our use of technology means we're becoming starved for human contact. And, more to the point, what can a philosopher who lived almost 2,500 years ago teach us about how to achieve happiness in the twentieth century. He argues that, in order to be happy, one must live in accordance with the function of human nature. In the view of psychology, Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality, the pleasure principle is the driving force of the id that seeks immediate gratification of all needs, wants and urges. Sometimes referred to the pleasure-pain principle, this motivating force helps drive behavior, but because it also wants instant satisfaction

Pleasure is one of the simplest phenomena in psychology. It is a basic aspect of mental life, and an important feature of positive emotions. But pleasure is not entirely simple. New findings in hedonistic psychology and affective neuroscience are revealing intriguing complexities. The pleasure system, on the other hand, plays a different role in the management of our behavior. Pleasure functions as the rewarding aspect while attaining a goal or as regulative to our behavior dominated by satisfaction. (Fredrickson, 1998; Panksepp, 1998)

### Compensatory Behaviors

Compensatory behaviours are behaviors meant to compensate or "undo" eating. They are utilized to relieve guilt associated with eating and consuming more calories than intended or discomfort for a patient; or to relieve anxiety that may not be directly correlated with food/eating but provides physical and/or emotional relief. Examples include: purging via self-induced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, enemas, colonics or diuretics, fasting or restricting intake for a period of time following

consumption, use of diet pills, chewing and spitting, or over-exercising.

### Individual Psychology and Compensation

Alfred Adler, founder of the school of individual psychology, introduced the term compensation in relation to inferiority feelings. In his book *Study of Organ Inferiority and Its Physical Compensation* (1907) he describes this relationship: If one feels inferior weak he/she usually tries to compensate for it somewhere else. Adler's motivation to investigate this was from personal experience. He was a very sickly child. He was unable to walk until he was four because of rickets. Then he was a victim of pneumonia as well as a series of accidents.

### Narcissism and Compensation

Narcissistic people, by compensation theory, mute the feelings of low self-esteem by: talking “highly” contacting “highly admired” persons. Narcissistic children try to compensate for their jealousy and anger by: fantasizing about power, beauty and richness  
Positive and Negative Compensation

Positive compensations may help one to overcome one's difficulties. On the other hand, negative compensations do not, which results in a reinforced feeling of inferiority. There are two kinds of negative compensation:

- Overcompensation, characterized by a superiority goal, leads to striving for power, dominance, self-esteem and self-devaluation.
- Under Compensation, this includes a demand for help, and leads to a lack of courage and a fear for life.

A well-known example of failing over compensation is observed in people going through a midlife-crisis. Approaching midlife, many people lack the energy to maintain their  
Approaching midlife, many people lack the energy to maintain their psychological defenses, including their compensatory acts.

The study shows that happiness has a various range of positive sides that seem to influence the individual, the family and community. Happy people contribute to their effort on the community and social relationships. According to Herbert Spence equated pleasure with a feeling which one seeks to get out of consciousness and keep out. The word “feeling” is not crucial here, and one can experiment with different descriptions of the attitudes involved. Some philosophers defined pleasure as an element of experience which we wish to prolong.

## Conclusion

The above mentioned authors, researchers and psychologists analyzed the hedonism for different perspectives. They applied qualitative and quantitative research methodology to identify the people's well-being. On the other hand philosophers defined the term hedonism means pain is "unwanted" whereas pleasure "wanted." But one has to learn to be honest, work hard, and to delay gratification, but one does not learn to seek pleasure and to avoid pain. On the contrary, we have to be forced to go against the hedonistic nature. Neither life nor death is good or bad in itself, only the quality of our pleasure or pain. Bitterness is good for health but the people used to avoid it instead they intake the sweet which harms health. The well-known statement goes thus, if there is no pain, no gain. Pleasure and pain must go hand in hand which gives experience and shapes one's life.

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