

Hedonism and Its Effect on Society

Hedonism is the philosophy that teaches that the supreme objective in life is to have pleasure. To some extent it is simply an attempt to put into philosophical terms an attitude that is largely characteristic of the entire human race. From birth on we seek what will satisfy our cravings and give us a pleasant feeling. Such attitudes occupy a considerable part in the life of every human being. The distinctive feature of hedonism is that it consciously makes this the primary objective of life.

Feelings of pleasure are a normal part of the human mechanism. Making these feelings an end in themselves and placing their satisfaction above all other objectives is what characterizes hedonism.

The human body is a marvelous mechanism, though many of its intricacies are only slightly understood. Its possibilities of physical pleasure have the purpose of leading us to do what is necessary for our continued existence and for the continuation of the species. Yet to make physical pleasure the object of the body's existence is just as foolish as to think that the meaning and purpose of an automobile is the sensation it might be thought of as having when it takes on gasoline or pours out smoke, or the feeling of exhilaration it might have as it moves rapidly along the highway. The automobile is made to carry its owner where he desires to go--to perform the tasks for which it was brought into being. The same is true of the human body. To make physical pleasure the purpose of existence is unreasonable.

If one truly seeks to do the will of God he may at times receive less pleasure than someone else, but he will usually find that over a period of years his personal pleasure is far greater than that of the person who makes pleasure his objective. Even in the case of that minority of Christians who experience less pleasure in this life than the hedonist does, we can be sure that the balance is far more than redressed in the life that follows this one. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

In its simplest form hedonism is quite unrealistic. If left to himself a child would seek only the immediate gratification of temporary impulses and probably would not continue to exist very long. He has to be taught to control many of his impulses.