



Hedonism As a Theoretical Framework for Human Values

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Abstract

This paper is a critical inquiry into hedonism as a theoretical framework for human values. In particular, through an ethical lens, it critically evaluated whether hedonism is a one-sided valuation tool that bestialises man. Leveraging the virtues ethics, natural theory, and Kant's deontological law ethics, this paper argues that hedonism offers a useful theoretical framework for understanding human values today, though not without serious ethical shortcomings. It adopted conceptual analysis as an analytical tool and drew from the author's intuition and the extant literature, embodied in online and offline books and journals. Using the above tool, this paper broke down the basic concepts underlying the topic and isolated the useful content from irrelevant aspects. It analysed hedonism by identifying its proponents, its basic tenets, and its strengths and weaknesses. The findings showed that hedonism has positive and serious negative implications for ethics. Therefore, this paper concluded that hedonism is insufficient as a theory of human values, given its limitations amidst its strengths. Subsequently, it recommends adopting multiple theories to evaluate human values, a strategy that would accommodate the two dimensions of man: body and spirit.

Keywords: *Altruism, Ethics, Hedonism, Human Values, Pleasure*

I. Introduction

Human values are crucial to people, as they provide a moral guide for daily engagement. Given their strategic importance, scholars have developed many theories to define the best approach to them, spanning the ancient to the postmodern eras. These theories include Aristippus's hedonism and Aristotle's virtue ethics (ancient period), Bentham's (2017) and Mill's (2009) utilitarianism, and Kant's (2015) deontology (modern epoch). In the contemporary era, the focus was on theory formation and was prominent in the work of psychologists and sociologists.

Nonetheless, the postmodern epoch oscillated between viewing truth as objective and as socially constructed. Among the prominent thinkers within the above frame of thought were Nietzsche (1989) and Foucault (1977). Others were Rokeach (1977) and Schwartz (1992). However, this paper argues that hedonism is a useful theoretical framework for understanding human values, though not without serious shortcomings. Hence, this paper is a critical inquiry into hedonism as a theoretical framework for evaluating human values. This inquiry entails investigating the strengths and the shortfalls of hedonism as a theoretical framework, using virtue ethics, natural law theory and deontological ethical theories as guideposts.

II. Conceptual clarifications

2.1 Hedonism

A clear and distinct conceptualisation of hedonism requires its thorough analysis to establish its meaning and typology. The term hedonism comes from the Greek *hedone*, meaning pleasure. Hence, it holds that man is by nature a pleasure-seeking animal, one who considers pleasure the only good desirable for its own sake. However, there were changes in the understanding of the term hedonism along various epoch, leading to many strands of hedonism: psychological hedonism (Bentham, 2017; Freud, 1955, 1958), axiological hedonism (Locke, 1996; Sidgwick, 1981), ethical hedonism (Xenophon, 1994; Epicurus, 2012; Bentham, 2017) comprising egoistic hedonism, and altruistic/utilitarian hedonism such as qualitative hedonism (Mill, 2009) and quantitative hedonism (Bentham, 2017), evolutionary hedonism, and present-day version of hedonism such as attitudinal hedonism (Feldman, 2004), materialist/atheist hedonism (Onfray, 2015), and animal ethics hedonism (Singer, 2009). These nuances in interpreting and understanding hedonism necessitated conceptualising its typology in this paper.

2.1.1 Typology of hedonism



The conceptualisation of hedonism above identified six categories: psychological, ethical, axiological, Egoistic ethical hedonism, evolutionary, and present-day hedonism.

2.1.1.1 Psychological hedonism

Psychological hedonism, a species of psychological egoism, holds that man is naturally a pleasure-seeking animal. For psychological hedonists, pleasure is the foundation of every human engagement, implying that the search for pleasure is the aim and end of all human actions. For them, pleasure defines every human action, whether proximately or remotely, directly or indirectly. Bentham (2017) was one of the proponents of this view. He argued that nature has placed humanity under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. According to him, they (two sovereign masters) alone indicate what humans should do and determine what they shall do. Further, he stressed that the standard of right and wrong, and the chain of causes and effects, are both fastened to their throne.

2.1.1.2 Ethical hedonism

Ethical hedonism is an ethical theory that conceives pleasure as the only value worth desiring for its own sake and holds that all human values should aim to procure pleasure (Omoregbe, 2006). It regards pleasure-producing actions as good and pain-producing actions as evil. Proponents of this theory were Aristippus of Cyrene, Epicurus, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, etc. It means that Jeremy Bentham upholds two kinds of hedonism. On his part, Mill (2009) argued that "desiring a thing and finding it pleasant, aversion to it and thinking of it as painful, are phenomena entirely inseparable, or rather two parts of the same phenomenon"(p.5). Nonetheless, there are two species of ethical hedonism: hedonistic egoism and hedonistic utilitarianism.

2.1.1.2.1 Hedonistic egoism or egoistic hedonism

Hedonistic egoism champions the pursuit of personal pleasure as the goal of life and the standard of moral evaluation. Aristippus and Epicurus belonged to the above category. Nonetheless, they differ in their emphasis on pleasure. For instance, while Aristippus stressed attainment of physical pleasure irrespective of the subsequent consequences, Epicurus (1925) emphasised *ataraxia* (equanimity or tranquillity of the mind) and *aponia*, that is, the absence of corporeal pain. He called pleasure the "alpha and

omega of a blessed life, people's first and kindred good, and the starting-point of every choice, and of every aversion" (p.655). However, he noted that "not all pleasure is choiceworthy, just as all pain is an evil and yet not all pain is to be shunned" (p.655). Further, he argued that "ofttimes we consider pains superior to pleasures when submission to the pains for a long time brings us as a consequence a greater pleasure"(p.655). This implies, according to Omoregbe, that Epicurus opted for long-term pleasure against immediate pleasure (Omoregbe, 2006).

Thus, it is crucial to indicate that Epicurus's version of hedonism is Epicureanism. As an ethical theory, Epicureanism does not consider all pleasure as good. It detests sensual pleasures such as sexual pleasure, the one derived from eating and drinking, gluttony, drunkenness, etc. Clearly put, Epicurus (1925) notes;

When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or wilful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of revelry, not sexual love, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul (p.657).

However, despite its reliance on human reason, Epicureanism is defective because it makes pleasure the end goal of man.

In a related development, Pradhan (2015) observed that egoistic hedonism obtains its sanctions from altruism. He identified four types of altruistic sanctions: political, physical, social, and religious. Political sanctions arise from neglect of existing principles or norms. Physical sanction embodies bodily pain, arising from a violation of natural laws. Social sanction is a form of pressure that compels an individual to act for societal approval. The religious sanction is a response to fear of hell and longing for paradise.

Pradhan (2015) also identified other forms of egoistic hedonism: gross egoism and refined



egoism. The advocates of gross egoism were Helvétius (2010) and Mandeville (1962). Helvétius maintained that self-love is the only basis for a useful morality. Likewise, Mandeville (1962) notes that "man centres everything in himself and neither loves nor hates but for his own sake. Every individual is a little World by itself, and all Creatures, as far as their Understanding and Abilities will let them, endeavour to make that Self happy" (p.191).

Thus, Mandeville sustains that self-love is the only virtue, and describes it as unwarranted and foolish to sacrifice the present for the future. Hence, he called for enjoyment of the present to the fullest. However, refined egoism is a critique of gross egoism, as it emphasises the role of reason in the attainment of pleasure, insisting that, though pleasure is the end in view, it is not attainable without the agency of reason. This brand of egoism is found and propelled by Epicurus.

2.1.1.2.2 Altruistic Hedonism/Hedonistic Utilitarianism

The above type of hedonism stresses maximisation of pleasure for the greatest number, implying that the usefulness of an action to the greatest majority defines its acceptability or non-acceptability. It consists of two species: quantitative and qualitative hedonism, respectively. The former (quantitative) argues that all pleasures are equal (Bentham, 2017), while the latter (qualitative) differentiates between higher intellectual pleasure (such as philosophy) and corporeal or bodily pleasure (Mill, 2009). Qualitative hedonism considers the former as superior to the latter.

2.1.1.3. Axiological hedonism

Axiological hedonism conceives pleasure as the one reality that has inherent good value. The above idea is evident in Locke (1996), who viewed good and evil as rooted solely in pleasure and the lack of pleasure, respectively. It means that good is rooted in the presence of pleasure, while evil is rooted in its absence. Aligning with the above view, Sidgwick (1981) conceived pleasure as the one and sole good.

2.1.1.4 Egoistic ethical hedonism

Egoistic ethical hedonism identified the ultimate good with pleasure; hence, the attainment of the ultimate good means obtaining pleasure. It implies that pleasure supersedes all other virtues. However, this category of hedonism conceives pleasure as the ultimate pursuit and argues that it ought to be grounded in the principle of rational

self-love, which reaches its climax when supported by prudence, benevolence, and justice (Pradhan, 2015). Incorporation of the above three principles means that self-love is not possible where one neglects and denies others of pleasure. So, Sidgwick (1981) notes that, "each person is morally obliged to regard the good of anyone else as much as his own good, except when he judges it to be less, when impartially viewed, or less certainly knowable or attainable by him" (p.186). It implies that Sidgwick (1981) transcended the limitations of egoistic ethical hedonism by delving into the region of altruistic hedonism, given that he emphasised sacrifice in pursuit of self-love, etc. Hence, Henry Sidgwick was an advocate of egoistic ethical hedonism.

2.1.1.5 Evolutionary hedonism

Evolutionary hedonism views man as a functional element of society, whose well-being rests on the welfare of the society. Ipso facto, Pradhan (2015) argues that, following evolutionary hedonism, man's mutual interactions in society determine his welfare, as he enjoys welfare when society is well. Besides, evolutionary hedonism tied man's moral behaviours to biological survival. It argues that man undertakes actions for the sake of pleasure. Likewise, he avoids taking actions if they lead to pain. Thus, it implies that his actions are not sporadic but arise out of biological survival instincts. Proponents of evolutionary hedonism included Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Henry Sidgwick, and others. It is crucial to note that Charles Darwin first proposed the theory that paved the way for evolutionary hedonism. Herbert Spencer was actually the person who developed it alongside hedonism. Likewise, Henry Sidgwick discussed it extensively.

2.1.1.6. Present-day notion of hedonism

It is significant to indicate that today there are other species of hedonism: attitudinal, materialist, and animal ethics.

2.1.1.6.1 Attitudinal hedonism

Attitudinal hedonism views pleasure in terms of the constructive or positive impact an action has, pointing to how it can change a person's behaviour and the psychological impact it exerts. Defending attitudinal hedonism's thesis, Feldman (2004), one of its proponents, argued that the value of a thing depends on the positive psychological position one maintains towards it.

2.1.1.6.2. Materialist/Atheist hedonism



This species of hedonism dismisses religious values while stressing the bodily, or corporeal, mode of being. Onfray (2015) defended the above species of hedonism in his attempt to revive Epicureanism.

2.1.1.6.3. Animal ethics hedonism

There was also a deliberate effort to expand hedonism to other sentient or sensitive creatures (Singer, 2009). This effort gave rise to animal ethics hedonism, proposed by Peter Singer. He called it speciesism. Animal ethics hedonism holds that, because animals can feel pain and pleasure, they deserve moral consideration in their treatment. By implication, it means doing things that would increase their pleasures and decrease their pains. Singer considered doing the contrary as a form of bias.

2.1.2. Basic tenets of hedonism

Despite the diverse variants of hedonism, there is a basic thread of aryna uniting them. Pradhan (2015) identified four of such, namely;

- i. Happiness equals pleasure or pleasantness,
- ii. There is an inherent goodness of all pleasure,
- iii. Pleasure is the only inherent good, and
- iv. Pleasantness is the criterion for inherent goodness.

Furthermore, Pradhan (2015) identified two criteria for assessing the maximum pleasure an individual derives: the intensity of the pleasure and the duration of the pleasurable experience. He identified four principles for determining the pleasantness of an action: certainty, probability, fecundity and extent. It is crucial to note that Bentham (2017) had earlier identified a similar hedonism calculus, but designated them as four features of calculating any pleasure or pain, considered individually. These features for measuring hedonism are intensity, duration, certainty, and proximity. Therefore, these features not only measure pleasure and pain, but also delineate the nature of pleasure and pain, and, ipso facto, constitute basic tenets of hedonism. Nonetheless, it is crucial to consider theories that are critical and corrective of hedonism to address its loopholes. These theories include virtue ethics, deontological ethics, and natural law, respectively.

2.2 Virtue theory

Virtue theory, also known as virtue ethics (the Greek word for virtue is *arete*), originated from Socrates and was furthered by Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. Livy, Plutarch, and Tacitus brought it into historical discourse.

Cicero introduced it into Roman philosophy, while St Ambrose of Milan embodied it into Christian moral theology. However, St Thomas Aquinas elaborated on it in his *Summa Theologiae* and *Commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics*.

Unlike hedonism, virtue theory underscores the centrality of virtue. Hence, it is a normative ethic that emphasises being (or character) rather than doing (or action). Virtue theory does not focus "on what rules to follow, but on what kinds of people (or organisations) we should be, and what kinds of ethical exemplars we ought to imitate" (MacDonald & Marcoux, n.d.). Virtue theory focuses on individual behaviour to determine whether it aligns with appropriate behaviour. In other words, it asks whether this or that behaviour is the proper character an individual should exhibit. Does it reflect the designated character at issue? For instance, when someone is said to be merciful, the next question is whether their behaviour shows mercy. However, some ethicists differ in their response to the above question. To Aristotle, for one to regard such action as virtuous, it must be habitual. The action must spring from the person's inner disposition, "a permanent state of mind inclined towards good actions which springs spontaneously from it" (Omogbe, 2006, p.165). It implies that mere performance of a virtuous act does not qualify a person as virtuous. Instead, it must be an action stemming from the person's internal disposition, towards which he/she permanently tends.

Though virtue ethicists underpin virtue, their views on its place differ. For instance, Socrates considered virtue and knowledge identical and affirmed that no one does evil willingly, implying that the performance of evil acts results from ignorance. Of course, Socrates' position is controversial as it contrasts with experience, which shows that people perform good actions or commit evil even when they are aware of such. Some have argued that, by 'knowledge,' Socrates meant a deep personal conviction (Omogbe, 2006, p. 159). It means that when a person is well convinced of the true nature of an act, the person will respond appropriately to it.

Plato aligned with Socrates' notion of virtue, conceiving happiness as man's life goal with virtuous living as a means to its attainment. Plato distinguished four virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice (Republic, Book IV, 426-435, Protagoras 330b). "Wisdom is the virtue of the rational aspect of the soul (reason), courage is that



of the spirited part (the higher emotions), temperance is the subordination of both the spirited and appetitive part (that is, both higher and lower emotions) to the rule of reason" (Omogegbe, 2006, p.161). Then, justice is the highest virtue, embodying other virtues. It is equivalent to Christian love (agape). To Plato, justice is neither aligned with Thrasymachus's view that might is right (implying that justice is to the advantage of the stronger party) nor the denial of good to one's enemy and according to one's friend. Instead, a just man should be better than an unjust man and not vice versa. He/she should better the world and not worsen it.

Nevertheless, Plato noted that the four virtues are one, as possessing one of them implies possessing all of them and vice versa. Therefore, it is incongruent to claim to possess one and lack others. It is noteworthy that Plato did not devote any particular work to ethics. Instead, his ethical teaching is scattered over all his dialogues.

Aristotle's ethical theory comprises the Nicomachean Ethics and the *Magna Moralia*. In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle regarded virtues as means to an end, considering happiness as the ultimate end, sought primarily for its own sake. Nonetheless, eudemonism is another view that supports the above. Besides, Aristotle identifies virtue as the soul's activity in tandem with perfect virtue (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Bk. 1, Ch. 12, No. 1102a. 13, 5, p. 950). Also, in the Nicomachean Ethics, he distinguished intellectual from moral virtues. The former owes its birth and growth to teaching, including philosophic wisdom, understanding, and practical wisdom. The latter, moral virtue (also called *ethike*), results from habit and embraces liberality and temperance (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Bk. 1, Ch. 13, No. 1103a, 5; Bk. 11, Ch. 1, p. 952). Also, in the above work, Aristotle maintained that virtue lies in the middle, which accords with the teachings of Asian thinkers such as Buddha and Confucius (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Bk II: Ch 6, 1107a, p.959). This ethical position detests extremity and advocates moderation, a mean position between excess and defect. Another name for it is the *doctrine of the golden rule*.

Scholars have criticised virtue theory from diverse perspectives. Some accused it of cultural relativism, given that what constitutes a virtue varies across societies. For instance, while Aristotle proposed nine moral virtues (justice, fortitude,

courage, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, and temperance), others, such as Kaufmann (1961), put forward four cardinal virtues: love, courage, ambition/humility, and honesty. Another criticism stems from certain qualities that people previously attributed to women, but that are no longer applied today, given the tide of events across different societies. In contrast, one critical feature of virtue theory is its claim about the universal applicability of virtue. Besides, virtue theorists, such as MacIntyre (2007), argued that virtues are the product of society's practice of them. Also, some scholars faulted virtue ethicists for emphasising only the qualities someone must possess to be virtuous rather than underscoring morally permissible actions. Despite the criticism above, virtue theory remains critical across all fields of morality and is part of hedonism.

2.3 Deontological theory

Deontology is from the Greek word *deon*, meaning duty or obligation. Deontological ethics views an act's moral rightness or wrongness in terms of its intrinsic value. So, it maintains that people's duty to perform or avoid an action depends on the nature of the action and not on its consequences (Lawhead, 2015). Kant and many classical Christian moralists advocated this theory.

Deontological theory assumes that:

- i. There are certain acts which are always ethically right or wrong, irrespective of their consequences (examples: suicide, abortion, adultery, rape, denial of faith, moralists, breach of confessional secret, etc.). Such prohibitions are moral absolutes (Peschke, 1996, pp.126-127).
- ii. Moral judgment is a priori, implying that one does not need to evaluate the circumstances behind an act before making a value judgment. Besides, it means that human actions are ontological.
- iii. Divine command theory constitutes one of its bedrocks. This theory underpins God's commandment as the primary and inescapable rule for humans. Obedience to it means living a morally upright life, and doing the opposite means living a morally wrong life.
- iv. It also rests on meta-ethical realism as it underscores the reality of moral absolutes, which make actions moral despite their circumstances.

According to Peschke (1996), the deontological argument rests on the order of being. Thus, this argument maintains that beings have inherent qualities and faculties that enable them to perform proper functions. By analysing these qualities and faculties, along with their inherent



operational laws, one can determine the rightness or wrongness of an act. Such confers a moral obligation, making appropriate use of beings and their nature a matter of moral duty rather than a matter of free discretion.

However, Peschke (1996) observed that deontological theory has some limitations. One such is insisting that things serve men best only when they use them according to their nature. Such a position neglects the possibility of using things contrary to their nature and giving them a higher value. Also, deontologists' view of human action as ontological is defective, given that one cannot judge any action in abstraction. It is always in context, considering the actor's intention and circumstances. Hence, it implies that deontological theory is an insufficient template for morals. It requires the support of other theories.

2.4. Natural law theory

Natural law theory is another critique of hedonism, as it emphasises that intrinsic laws of nature regulate the rightness and wrongness of human actions, which form the basis of moral principles. Another name for this is divine natural law, given that it originates from and is traceable to God's will. Hence, it is an intrinsic or inherent law.

Therefore, natural or moral law "is that law of human conduct which arises from the full reality of human nature as ordered to its ultimate end and which is recognised using reason, independent of positive Christian revelation" (Peschke, 1996, p.105). It is that moral order arising from the nature of man and creation, and recognisable by human reason. Peschke observed that the concept of human nature is taken broadly to comprise the full reality of human nature, with its generic and individual traits, as well as the nature of all those beings to which man's activity is related. He noted that it also embodies that modification of nature, which is effected by Christ's redemptive work, not only in the baptised but in all humanity, and includes the share in grace that all men possess. It implies that the ultimate end is no longer the natural one but rather the concrete, final destiny of man, which is the same for all men and for the divine (Peschke, 1996, p. 105).

Following the above submission, Peschke (1996) noted that natural law is:

- i. Universal: It binds every man at all times and everywhere.
- ii. Immutable and dynamic: It is unchangeable, given that the full reality of human nature remains

stable but dynamic in its understanding and application down the ages.

iii. Indispensable: No human authority can dispense or excuse one from the demands of natural law, given that it is identical to God's will. Only God can dispense from it, as in God's order to Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. However, such an exemption must be through divine revelation.

iv. Personal and situational character: Though the three properties above are the core features of natural law, natural law's personal and situational character is thanks to the influence of situation ethics. It simply applies to the concrete application of natural law, which should take cognisance of the concrete individual situations, for no two situations are perfectly identical. Similitude does not mean exactitude. At this point, it is important to look at human values.

2.5. Human values

Human values are fundamental to man as they offer a moral lens for regulating human actions and uniting people. Thus, human values are of strategic importance for all people (Kanyakumari, 2021). Their strategic societal significance also depends on their role in making life meaningful and ensuring peaceful coexistence among people. Besides, they are essential as a moral guide for children in school (Rani et al., 2022). In fact, human values are fundamental to human existence, providing a moral template for society despite individual differences (Sharma, 2024). Examples of human values include brotherhood, friendship, empathy, compassion, love, openness, listening, welcoming, acceptance, recognition, appreciation, honesty, fairness, loyalty, sharing, solidarity, civility, respect, and consideration. (Kanyakumari, 2021). There are other ways of categorising human values (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 2012). These variant typological approaches imply diverse interpretative approaches to human values. Despite these aforementioned approaches, Schwartz (2012) noted the following as threads of aryna uniting them, namely that human values:

- i. Are beliefs that are inextricably related to affect,
 - ii. Refer to desirable goals that inspire action,
 - iii. Exceed specific actions and situations,
 - iv. Serve as ideals or criteria,
 - v. Are ordered by importance relative to one another,
 - vi. Are multiple in nature and guide human action.
- Therefore, human values are basic beliefs that guide people in achieving their life goals. They are moral templates invisibly ordering humans to pursue these goals in the order of their relative importance.



III. Evaluation of hedonism as a tool for human value

Human values define basic moral templates regulating human actions, enabling humans to live meaningfully in society. This meaningful living requires the integration of different dimensions of man. Then, given that man is astride of two worlds, spiritual and corporeal, his authentic existence requires a proper integration and harmony of these two elements. Hence, man requires both the spiritual and bodily dimensions, with their respective sub-features. From the spiritual domain, man needs the intellectual bequeathal it offers. It means that he has to live existentially as a rational animal with all the intellectual capabilities attached for rational operations. In the same vein, as a corporeal being, he requires the exercise or expression of his somatic nature to exist authentically. Inability to live up to any of these features renders his actions somewhat short of human ones. Ipso facto, given that the somatic nature of man bequeaths the capacity for sensation, a theoretical framework that evaluates this sensation becomes important in human value analysis. As this framework helps determine the nature of sensations in human life, it also serves as a veritable tool for studying elements of sensation, such as pleasure. In this consideration, it offers a moral template for understanding the place of pleasure in human life. It implies that hedonism provides the basic platform for inquiry into pleasure as a somatic feature in man. In this way, hedonism portrays the importance of pleasure in human life, presenting it as what spices up life and serves as a means to an end.

However, the above advantages notwithstanding, it is significant to underscore that hedonism is an imperfect and, ipso facto, a faulty theoretical framework given its substitution of a means (pleasure) for an end (happiness) and its relegation of reason in human values. Admittedly, some variants of hedonism, such as egoistic hedonism and refined egoistic hedonism, have sought to remedy the defects by emphasising that the pursuit of pleasure ought to be grounded in the principle of rational self-love. Some hedonists have also argued for considering others in pursuit of pleasure (Sidgwick, 1981). Nonetheless, their input could not save the matter, given their stance that pleasure is the ultimate endpoint of man, a position that many scholars have severely fractured (Pradhan, 2015). Subsequently, this paper further raises three arguments to dismiss hedonism as a theoretical framework for human values.

3.1 Hedonism offers a set of human values that disregard altruism in man.

Hedonism, especially psychological hedonism, erred in advocating that man, by nature, seeks pleasure, thereby negating man's altruistic nature. So, granted that man sometimes seeks pleasure in his actions, it is wrong and fallacious to assert that he seeks pleasure in all his actions. Experience shows that men have done certain actions out of sacrifice. For instance, Christians believe that Jesus Christ died on the Cross to save humanity. Also, Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison for the liberation of his country, South Africa, to name but a few. The sacrificial actions above were not contingent on pleasure-seeking but rather on altruism. People engage in such actions out of love, not out of self-love and self-interest, with their attendant pleasure. This thrust towards altruism is a testimony to the fact that the ultimate goal for man is not pleasure, but something superior to it. That was why virtue theorists advocated happiness as the ultimate goal of life, with virtuous living as a means to its attainment (Plato, 1997; Aristotle, 2009; Ambrose, 2001; Aquinas, 1981). The thesis of virtue theorists was reinforced by Kantian deontological theory and also by natural or moral law theory (Kant, 2015; Peschke, 1996). Unlike hedonism, natural law theory emphasises that intrinsic laws in nature regulate the rightness and wrongness of human actions. Hence, its major stress is on the rightness or wrongness of human actions, rather than just on their consequences. The above submission implies that hedonism is an imperfect theoretical framework for framing human values as it tilts towards self-love and interest, thereby promoting a society bereft of altruism.

When one builds a society on self-love, it results in anarchy, as self-interest becomes its overriding driving force. People will no longer act in the best interest of society and for the common good. Rather, they will be engrossed in what satisfies their egos and selfish ambitions. Under such a scenario, the end justifies the means, as what matters is not the process's adherence to the expected outcome but the final result. Human values in such a society are nothing other than discordant, immiscible, and parallel self-egos parading as values for humanity, when humanity is nothing but a projected self. Thus, in the actual sense, one cannot talk of universal human values in this sense. Instead, what obtains are individual and personal values that serve the whims and caprices of those who possess them.



3.2 Hedonism offers a lopsided view of human values.

As a theoretical framework for evaluating human values, hedonism is lopsided. It goofed in advocating pleasure as the only thing desirable for its own sake, forgetting that some pleasures are bad. For instance, a student who squandered his school fees could claim that he enjoyed his money, yet such a pleasurable experience is only transient and bad. So, since pleasure is insufficient to stand as the only thing desirable for its own sake, hedonism subsists as an imperfect framework for evaluating human values. At most, it is a partial framework, playing second fiddle to valuing human values, given that pleasure concerns man's somatic activities. It means that a good theoretical framework for evaluating human values should account for the two dimensions of man: the somatic and the spiritual or rational. Recourse to hedonism alone is insufficient and susceptible to error as it builds its judgment on only one aspect of man, the somatic dimension. Leveraging such judgment is not only erroneous but also presents human values on a shaky, fluid moral template. Subsequently, the human values derived from the above template are unreliable and cannot serve as a dependable basis for moral judgment and societal well-being.

3.3 Bestialise human values

Hedonism by making pleasure the ultimate good for man, bestialises man, reducing him to an animal level, as animals are by nature pleasure-seeking. Such is not the case with man, as he sometimes engages in heroic acts, as exemplified in the lives of Christian martyrs and in social activities, among others. Animals, on the contrary, act by instinct. So, by their instinctual nature, animals respond to eternal stimuli by virtue of a prefabricated behavioural pattern. The term 'prefabricated,' in this context, conveys the idea that animals' pattern of response to eternal stimuli cannot adapt to prevailing circumstances, but rather is one born of a preestablished mode of responding to such a situation. Such a response arises from an animal's nature as devoid of rationality and, in effect, cannot rise from the instinctual to the rational level.

The same is not true about man, for even though he possesses instinct by virtue of sharing some features with other animals, he rises above them by his rational features. Hence, though man is capable of portraying and demonstrating instinctual behaviours, he is also naturally endowed with

reason. By his rational part, he is an animal with a difference; a combination of animality and rationality. While his instinctive power enables him to experience sentient activities, his rational aspect equips him with the capacity for activities that transcend the senses. Therefore, any framework for evaluating his values must take into account his two dimensions. By implication, any theoretical framework that falls short of the above is fundamentally erroneous and subsequently an ineffective and inefficient tool for evaluating human values. Interestingly, hedonism is one of such tools, as it centres mainly on the somatic component of man.

IV. Conclusion

Human values are primary moral templates for human actions. They guide humans' optimal decision-making, thereby helping them attain their life goals. Given their strategic importance in human life and development, many scholars have proposed different approaches towards their attainment. Among these theories is hedonism, a view that man fundamentally seeks pleasure as his ultimate goal. While not dismissing pleasure as a goal, this paper, drawing on virtue, deontological, and natural law theories, argues that hedonism is an insufficient moral template for evaluating human values.

This paper discovered that hedonism offers human values that disregard altruism in man. In contrast, it argued that man is capable and has indeed performed altruistic actions transcending pleasure-seeking. This is exemplified by those who sacrificed their lives for an altruistic cause, such as in acts of martyrdom. Thus, this paper insists that a society based on self-love and pleasure is anarchy-bound and unsustainable. Besides, this paper argued that hedonism offers a one-sided view of human values, given that it grounds man's ultimate goal in pleasure, which is subservient to reason. Hence, this paper argued that human values grounded solely in pleasure are unreliable and defective.

Furthermore, this paper held that hedonism bestialises man, given that pleasure constitutes its ultimate good for man. So, this paper argued that upholding hedonism risks reducing man to an instinctual animal level, since such animals are naturally pleasure-seeking. Thus, man does not only seek pleasure. Fundamentally, he also seeks higher values, namely happiness, which, strictly speaking, regulates his other aspirations. This paper, therefore, concluded that hedonism is inadequate as



a theoretical framework for evaluating human values, given its emphasis on pleasure as man's ultimate goal at the expense of higher values such as happiness. Subsequently, this paper advocates for a hybrid theoretical framework for evaluating human values, one that must take into account the somatic and spiritual or rational aspects of man.

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