**Hedonism**

The name derives from the Greek word for "delight" ἡδονισμός- **hedonismos**

Utilitarianism is a modern form of a much older theory called **hedonism**

* argues that pleasure has the ultimate importance and that humanity's most important pursuit is **sensual self-indulgence**.
* The father of Hedonism was **Aristippus of Cyrene**. He taught that pleasure is the **universal and ultimate object of endeavour**.
* **Epicurus** also became an advocate of Hedonism, stating that the greatest good a man could do would be to maximise pleasure and avoid pain, and that it was **both pleasure and pain that influenced our judgements on things**.
* Both **Plato and Aristotle** also agreed that the greatest ‘good’ was equated with the greatest happiness.
* **Dionysus** (Greek God) or Bacchus (Roman God) as he is sometimes known, was the God of wine and became a mascot for Hedonism due to his desire to be happy and experience all pleasures.
* **The Portrait of Dorian Gray** (By Oscar Wilde) is a more recent exploration of hedonism in this dark novel that demonstrates the extent of human interest in the philosophical idea of self gratification and pleasure as the ultimate aim.

**NOTE-Pleasure is NOT the same as happiness, as happiness results from the use of reason and cultivating pleasure to an intellectual and long term satisfaction. E.g. It is only if we take pleasure in good activities that pleasure itself is good and can become the greatest happiness.**

**Bentham Built on Hedonism**

* **Bentham’s theory of motivation:**
* Human beings are motivated by **pleasure** and **pain**.
* He is thus a Hedonist. He believes that **pleasure is the ultimate motivation**.
* *“Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters”* -pain and pleasure
* *“It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do as well as to determine what we shall do”*
* All humans pursue pleasure and seek to avoid pain.
* **This is a moral fact** because pleasure and pain identify what is a good or a bad action
* For humans the sole good is pleasure and the sole evil is pain.
* For this reason Bentham’s Utilitarianism is also known as ‘Hedonic Utilitarianism’.

(It is also known as **Act Utilitarianism** but we will come onto that later)