

In this paper I will provide a critique of an example that Justin Garson uses to demonstrate R-hedonism in “Two types of psychological hedonism”. I will first review the points that Garson makes in his paper and discuss how his argument, that I-hedonism should be rejected for R-hedonism in the altruism debate, is made. Then, I will highlight the points of Garson’s argument that I agree with such as, the ability for desires to be reinforced by their association with pleasure. Then, I will consider these points in my critique of Garson’s example of imagination that supposedly demonstrates the relational behavior of R-hedonism. Using counterexamples that describe how an agent chooses what to imagine in order to contemplate satisfying an ultimate desire, I will then establish that imagination does not firmly support the idea that R-hedonism does not require inference.

I will consider potential objections to my critique and therefore I will provide two counterarguments that may concern my critique. The first argument considers how imagination can occur without inference within dreams, or in a mind afflicted with drugs. The second argument considers that not all imagined content is purposefully chosen before they occur in the mind. In an exploration of these two examples, I will prove that they do not negate the critique I presented, rather they highlight the weakness in Garson’s example.

In Garson’s paper, two distinct variations of hedonism are established and referred to as “I-Hedonism” and “R-Hedonism”. The difference in their names is attributed to the difference between sources of hedonic pleasure under each variation.

I-Hedonism describes an “inferential behavior” in moral motivation. Before being motivated to satisfy D, an actor would have to believe that D would result in pleasure. A person would have to *infer* the gain of pleasure and would only then be morally motivated. Garson

claims this is how hedonism is traditionally described and is what Sober and Wilson's argument primarily challenges.

The other form of hedonism is not directly challenged by Sober and Wilson. Garson suggests that this type of hedonism relies on the reinforcement of the human cognitive system. Garson claims that one might be motivated to D because of its *association* with pleasure. Pleasure can be obtained by either the character of D or entertaining D in the brain by imagination. Thus, R-hedonism allows for there to be a direct relationship between D and pleasure whereas I-hedonism requires inference that D would cause pleasure.

Sober and Wilson argue that altruism would be a more reliable motivation for taking care of our children because the type of motivation does not take additional forethought. However, Garson provides that R-hedonism is able to provide a similarly direct and reliable motivation due to a state D's direct association with pleasure. In this case, motivation does not require one to *judge* before they are motivated which is defined by I-hedonism. Therefore, hedonists should reject I-hedonism for R-hedonism in the debate against altruism.

Given that both I-hedonism and R-hedonism exist as equally viable variations of hedonism, I find Garson's argument to deduce a reasonable conclusion. I have no objections to the potential existence of a second variation of hedonism, nor do I disagree that a direct association of pleasure would provide the necessary characteristics to hedonism that allows for a more substantial defense against altruism in the scope of Sober and Wilson's argument for evolutionary reliability.

R-hedonism describes pleasure that directly results from a desire and allows the removal of any generous assumptions toward the inferential behavior of humans. However, Garson proceeds as far as to argue that a desire can be so strongly associated with pleasure that an agent can

receive pleasure by just imagining the desire being satisfied. In particular, Garson provides the example of a monk living in celibacy. The monk can have an ultimate desire for sex but gain pleasure from just contemplating the satisfaction of that desire, and thus the desire is reinforced. I find the use of imagination to be a weak argument for the existence of R-hedonism and in the following paragraphs, I will provide examples that challenge Garson's use of the monk.

Garson argues that given an ultimate desire, the pleasure that results from imagining its satisfaction can allow the desire to be reinforced. This is one of the outcomes for a direct relationship between the ultimate desire and motivation. However, for Garson's monk in celibacy, what does it mean for the monk to contemplate the satisfaction of their life-long desire for sex?

In a cognitively uncompromised agent, what the agent imagines while actively contemplating, is what they have chosen to imagine. If an agent were to have a desired content to imagine, then the agent wills it to a vision in his mind. In reference to contemplating an ultimate desire, an agent would have to know the specific satisfying content to imagine in order to actually contemplate the satisfaction of their ultimate desire. Therefore, in contemplating the satisfaction an ultimate desire, the agent decides which content to imagine.

In order to satisfy their ultimate desire, there must be some semblance of inferring pleasure from the content that is imagined otherwise it would not have been brought to mind as a satisfying content. This is where Garson's argument for the difference between I-hedonism and R-hedonism against the altruism debate is weakened. Inference is still required in order to imagine satisfaction.

If an agent were to have the ultimate desire for revenge and receives pleasure in contemplating the satisfaction of their revenge, the agent would not have contemplated the

definition of revenge and its translations in different world languages. Nor, would they have imagined famous representations of revenge in Shakespeare's plays. They would will the content of imagination to revenge in the case where revenge is exacted against the agent's offender. This would be the only content of imagination where the agent's ultimate desire is directly satisfied, and hedonic pleasure truly fulfilled.

Another agent could have an ultimate desire for world peace. Garson claims that this desire can exist under R-hedonism and be reinforced by its association with pleasure as well. However, what would the agent imagine in order to contemplate the satisfaction of world peace? For this to occur, the agent would need to have an idea of what world peace entails in order to satisfy it in their mind and gain pleasure. They have the option to envision all the world leaders holding hands, and then change it to food in every belly, or no more natural disasters. A different agent who also desires world peace might imagine a singular country governed by a strict autocracy to promote order. Any of these contents can satisfy the ultimate desire by imagination, but what allows each agent to choose what they imagine? The answer is that they must have a belief that what they are imagining will satisfy their ultimate desire, in other words they must infer that an action A would satisfy D. This is how Garson describes I-hedonism, and why I argue that imagination is a fragile example of R-hedonism.

I will now consider two possible objections to my critique. There are instances wherein what a person imagines is not under their control, and yet they still retain pleasure. Dreams are an excellent example where an ultimate desire may persist in the mind and be imagined satisfied without the consciousness of the agent. In this case, there can be no control of what content is imagined, yet a satisfying content can leave the agent with a sense of pleasure in their conscious state. This more readily agrees with Garson's definition of R-hedonism. However, in order for an

agent to remain under R-hedonism, all the contemplations of their ultimate desire must be in a state of limited working consciousness, say in their sleep or while engaged in drugs. There are plentiful instances where an agent can make a conscious decision to imagine a certain content. Therefore, because not all contemplations can remain in a limited consciousness, imagination continues as a weak argument for the lack of inference in R-hedonism.

Another objection may be that one can choose to imagine a certain content and then realize thereafter that the content of their imagination brought them pleasure. In this case, there was no prior inference to be had. Rather, an agent was unconscious of the fact that they had just imagined satisfying an innate ultimate desire. The agent still receives pleasure from imagining such a content, and therefore they unconsciously reinforce their desire. Because their desire is reinforced, the agent will choose to imagine content that continues to bring them pleasure for their newfound desire. And because they found that the original content brought them pleasure, it can be chosen again as imaginative content that satisfies the desire. This is where inference occurs because there must be a conscious acknowledgement between the imagined content and the recognition of a satisfied desire. While I acknowledge certain instances where imagination can occur completely without inference, I also acknowledge that imagination also requires inference in many others. My critique is not to completely reject imagination as an example of R-hedonism but challenges its soundness. Because imagination without inference poses complex and specific requirements, this proves that Garson's example of imagination is not robust.

In my critique, I developed an argument for why imagination is not a withstanding example for R-hedonism. Because the content of imagination requires the will of an undisturbed and conscious agent, imagination requires an initial inference of pleasure in order to define a preferred content that satisfies the agent's ultimate desire. By evaluating the definitions and

distinctions that Garson presents, I deduced that the use of imagination to reinforce a desire under R-hedonism directly conflicts with its definition. I do not argue that R-hedonism does not exist, nor do I claim that imagination does not reinforce a desire. I argue that to coincide with Garson's argument, the contemplation of satisfying an ultimate desire would have to be done in such a way that the agent does not infer pleasure from the content imagined, before it is imagined, and does not consciously control what is imagined. Only then, would prior inference not occur. This provides a basis for an investigation for what other examples of R-hedonism exist, and which ones can provide a more durable argument for the existence of R-hedonism compared to imagination.