

As we remember from our last set of readings, Bentham combined Hedonism with the Principle of Utility. He is not the only person to find this combination appealing. His nephew, John Stuart Mill, found this combination compelling. Mill, however, found the problems that Bentham's Utilitarianism faced (which we discussed last week) as very worrying. As such, Mill modified Utilitarianism in the following ways.

Bentham

- Hedonist
- All pleasure equally valuable
- Act Utilitarian
- Teleological, impartial, relativistic, maximising

Mill

- Hedonist
- Quality of pleasure matters: intellectual versus animalistic
- Viewed as rule utilitarian
- If strong rule utilitarian, not clear if teleological or relativistic
- Impartial, maximising theory

Importantly, Mill distinguishes between *higher* and *lower* pleasures. This distinction, for Mill, is important because it helps explain why a life lived smoking cigars and drinking whiskey is less moral / valuable than a life devoted to, say, mathematics. Bentham would have a hard time explaining how one is more valuable than the other; it's all just one kind of pleasure for him!

"It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is only because they only know their own side of the question"
J. S. Mill, 'Utilitarianism', p. 281.

In order to help flesh out what he means, Mill says that in order to know, for any two pleasures, which one is more valuable than the other, what we need are *competent judges*.

The test of the competent judge: if those who are in a position to make a comparison between, e.g., reading good novels and drinking white wine, judge that doing the former is more valuable than doing the latter, then we can say that reading good novels is a higher pleasure, whilst drinking white wine is a lower pleasure. To be clearer: what makes an experience more valuable than another is not the fact that it is ranked as such by competent judges; rather, the fact that it is ranked as such gives us good reasons to believe that it is more valuable. When there are disagreements between experienced judges, we go with the majority verdict.

Does this avoid the problems that we discussed last week in regards to Bentham's theory? Even if it does, who decides who the competent judges are? What happens in cases of disagreement?