

Desire Theory

1. Objectives
2. Administrivia
3. Desire theory

Objectives:

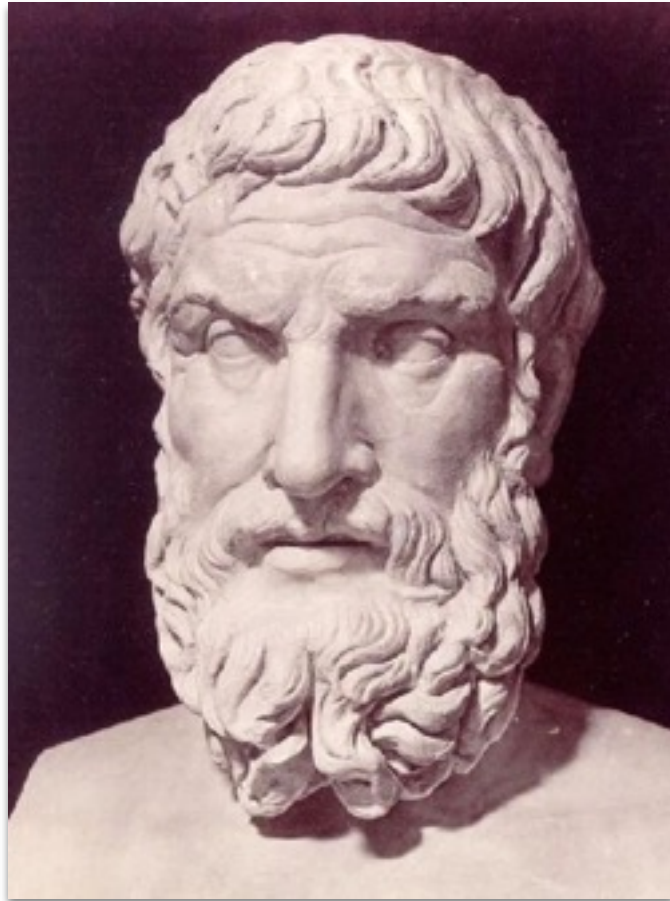
By the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. Differentiate between hedonism and desire theory;
2. Defend your view on the subjectivist/objectivist debate

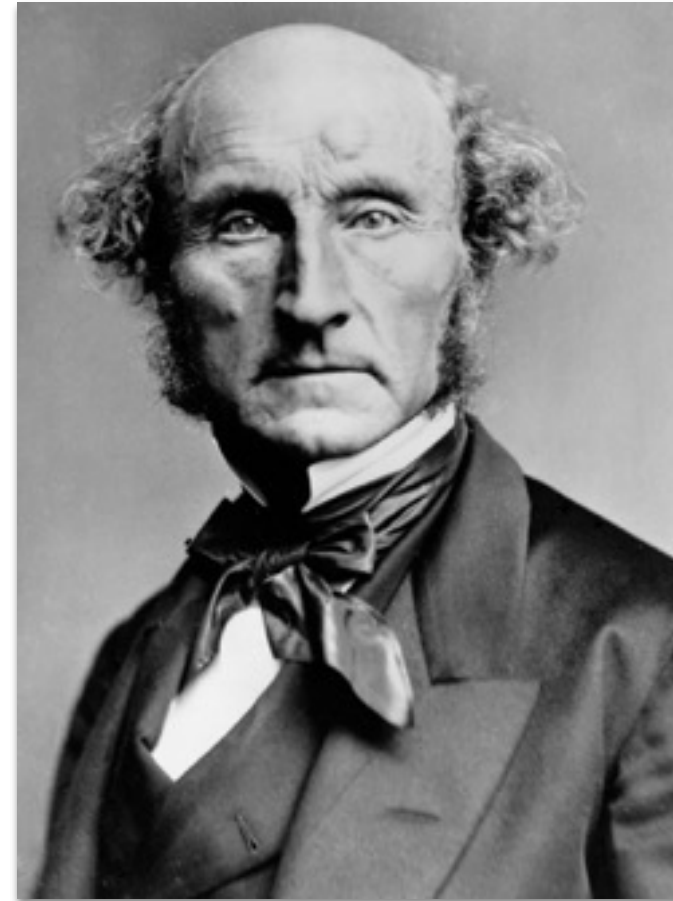
1. Written Reflection #3 today

Anything Else? Anyone?

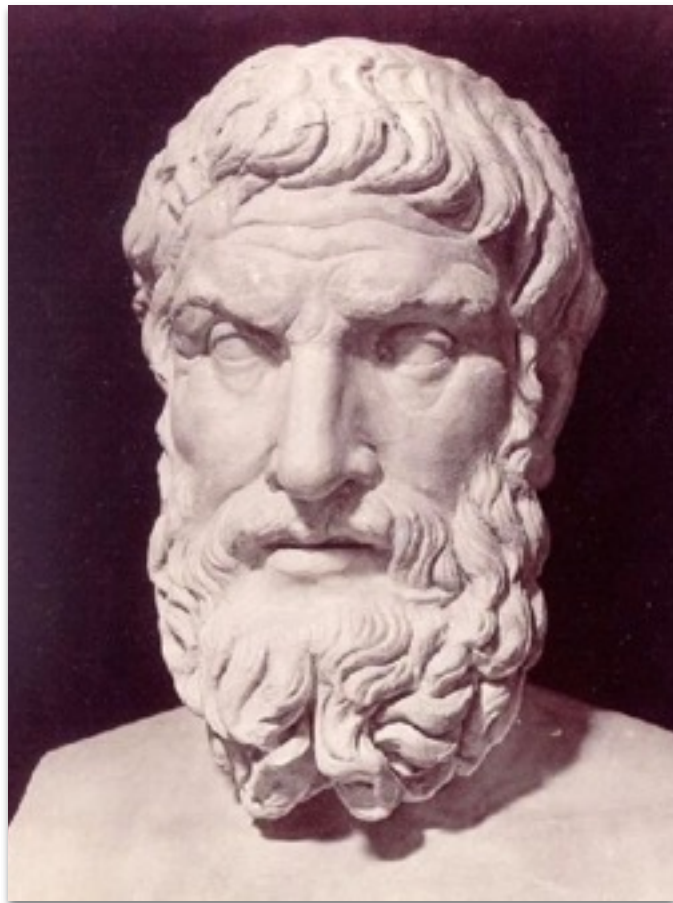




Epicurus (341-270 BCE)

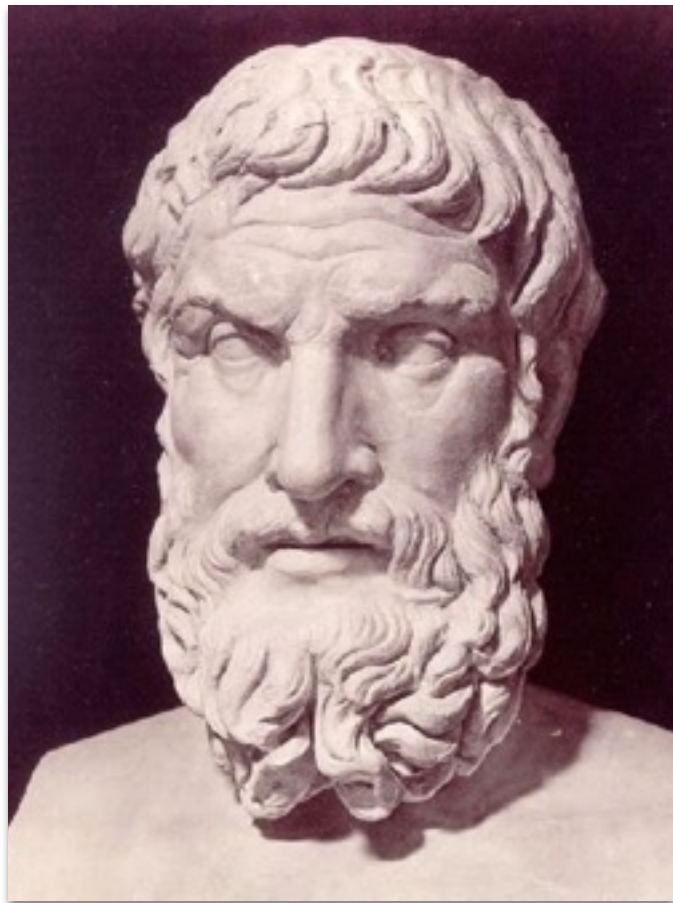


J.S. Mill (1806-1873)



Epicurus (341-270 BCE)

Acknowledge that “pleasure is the alpha and omega of a blessed life”



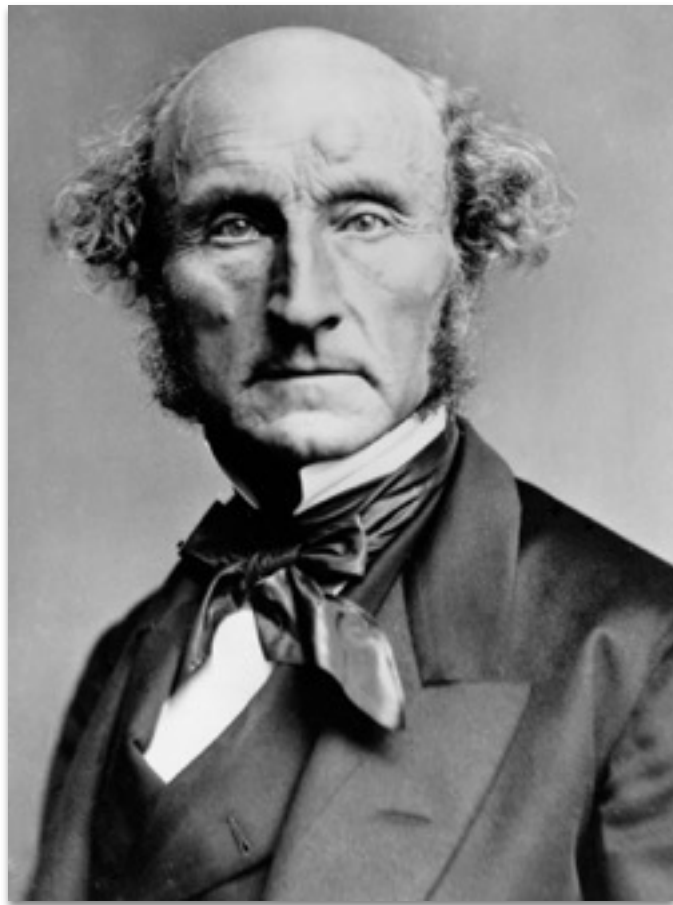
Epicurus (341-270 BCE)

“

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...

- Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*

”

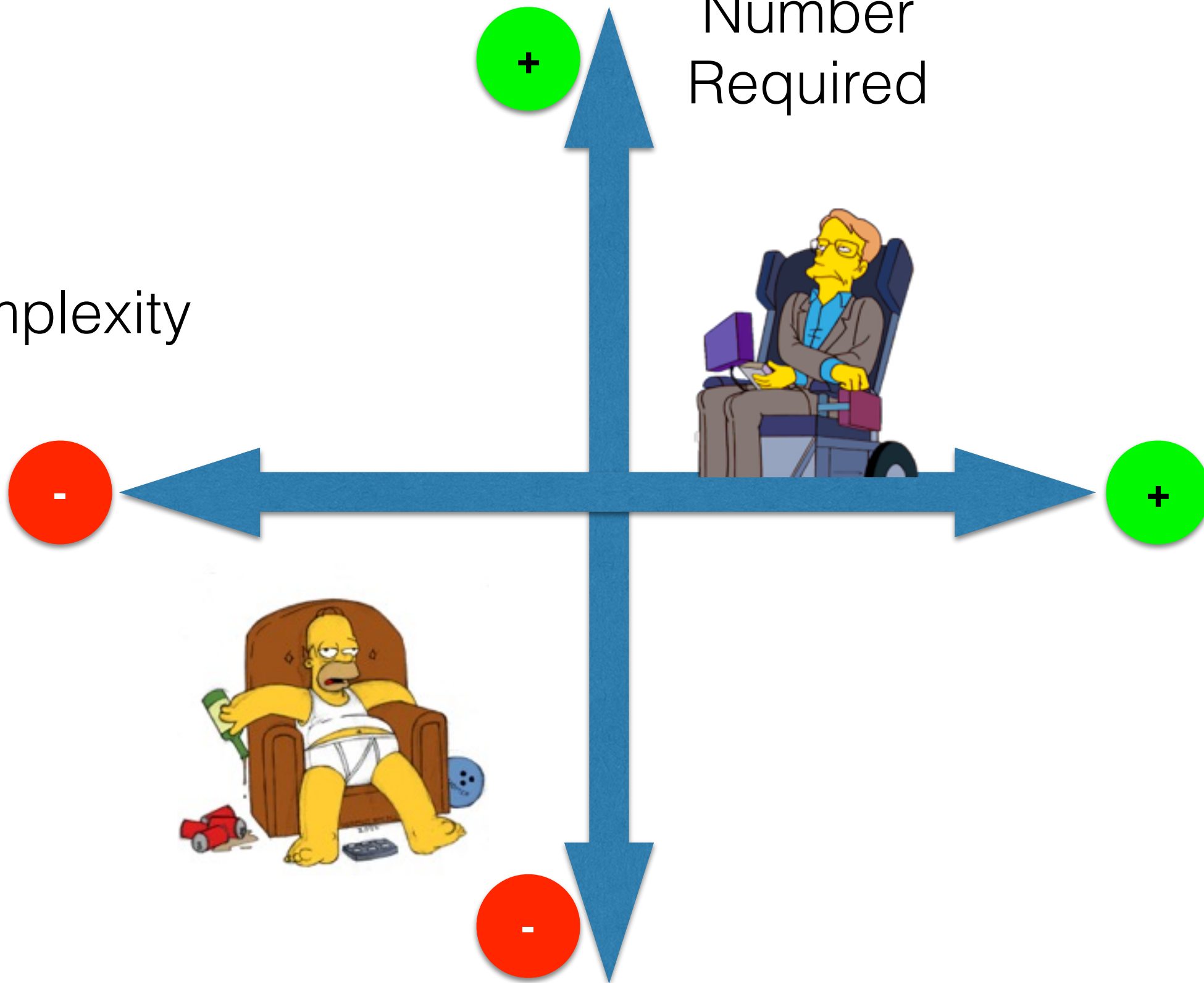


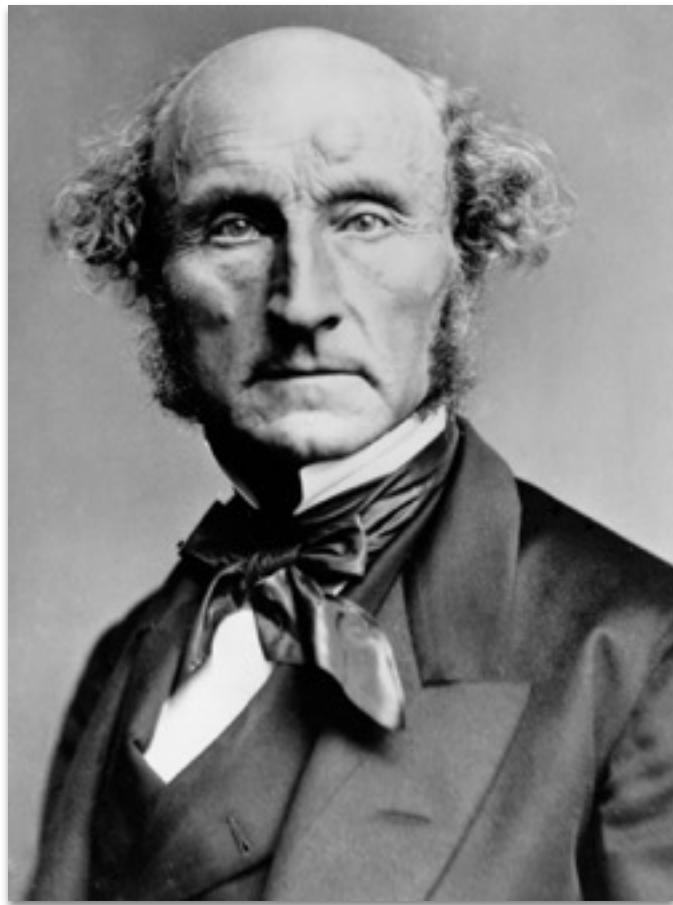
J.S. Mill (1806-1873)

Not all pleasures are equal. Intellectual pleasures are better than animal pleasures

Complexity

Number
Required





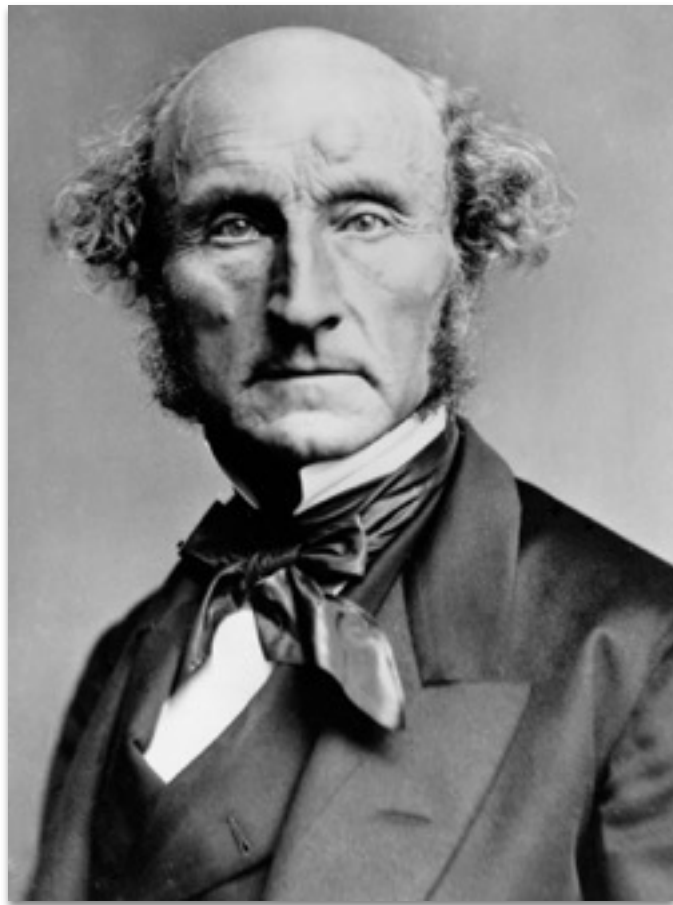
J.S. Mill (1806-1873)

“

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 are of a different opinion...

- J.S. Mill, *Hedonism*

”



J.S. Mill (1806-1873)

“

...it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.

- J.S. Mill, *Hedonism*

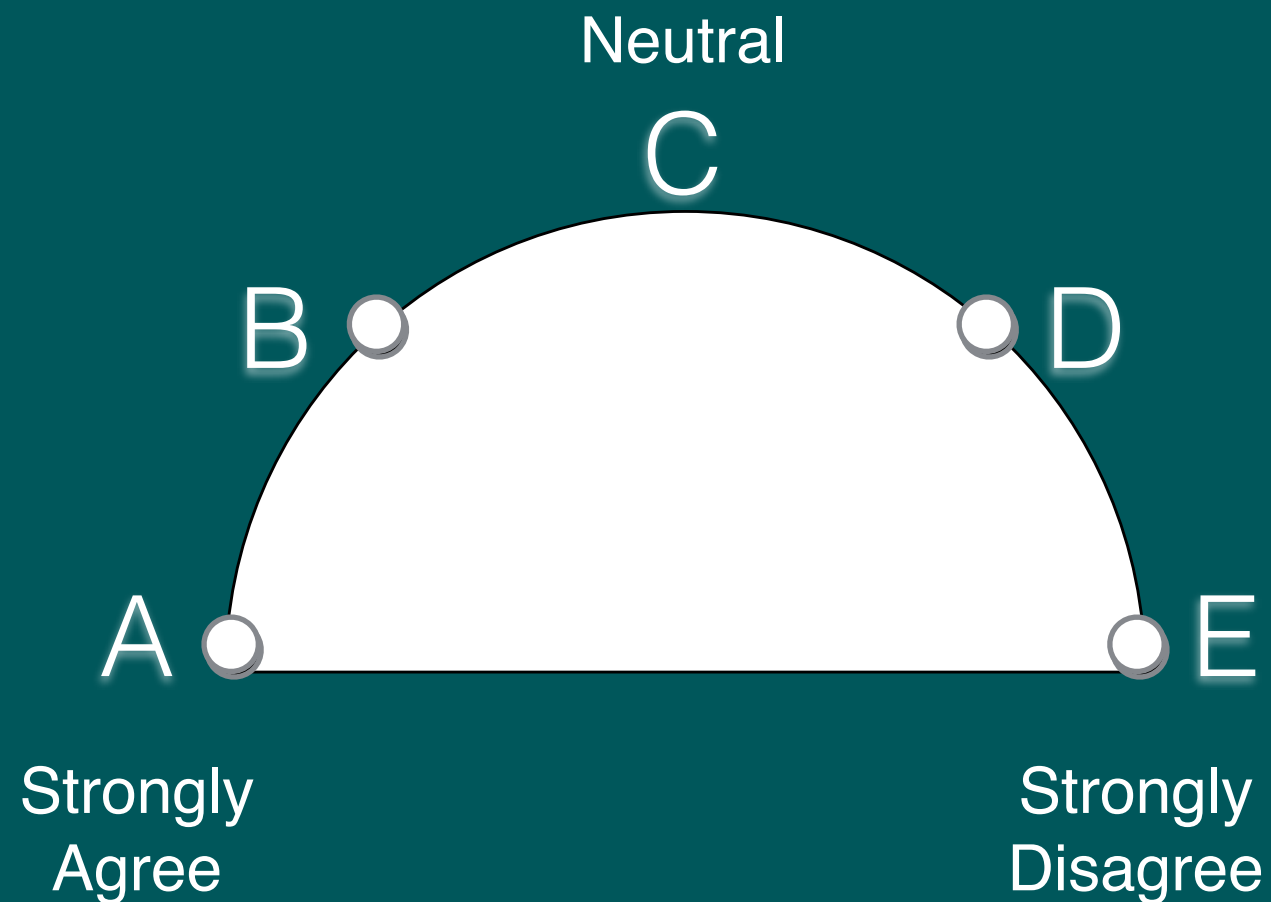
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Poll

Question

Do you agree with J.S. Mill about the swine?



15 Value

But what has intrinsic value?

What makes us better off?
Think of people in your life
that have truly good lives.
What makes their lives so
good?



Person 1	Person 2	Person 3
descriptor 1	descriptor 1	descriptor 1
descriptor 2	descriptor 2	descriptor 2
descriptor 3	descriptor 3	descriptor 3
descriptor 4	descriptor 4	descriptor 4



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

The desire satisfaction theory... tells us that your life goes well for you to the extent that you get what you want. Something is good for you *if* it satisfies your desires, *only if* it satisfies your desires, and *because* it satisfies your desires.

- Text, p. 44

”



Chris Heathwood

“

Subjectivists hold that something we get in life benefits us when and only when we have an interest in it, or want it, or have some other positive attitude towards it.

- Heathwood, “Fairing Well and Getting what you want”

”



Chris Heathwood

“

Objectivists about welfare... maintain that at least some of the intrinsically beneficial things in our lives are good for us even if we don't want them, don't like them, don't care about them... They are good for us “whether we like it or not.”

- Heathwood, “Fairing Well and Getting what you want”

”



Poll

Question

Are you and objectivist or subjectivist?

- A Objectivist
- B Subjectivist
- C Unsure

Charlie wants to improve his quality of life. He has heard that it is philosophers who claim to be experts on this topic, so he looks through some philosophy journals at his library. He finds an article claiming to have discovered the correct account of welfare. It is an objective theory that includes the items on our list above. The paper is in a pretty good journal, so Charlie decides to go about trying to increase his share of some of the items on the list. For example, to increase his freedom, he moves to a state with higher speed limits. Charlie is careful to make sure that the move won't have any detrimental side effects—that it won't cause him to fail to get less of any of the other goods on the list.

After succeeding in increasing his freedom, Charlie finds that he doesn't care about it, that he is completely indifferent to it. Although he is free to drive faster, he never does (he never wants to). Nor does the freedom to drive faster get him anything else that he is interested in. Charlie considers whether he is any better off as a result of the increase in his freedom. He concludes that he is no better off.

Which argument do you find more compelling? Why?