

Ethical Theory

Justifying a Concern for the Well-Being of Others

As you read the material for the next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently to these issues in the next class meeting.

Readings

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 2, paragraphs 9–22, and chapter 3, entire (pp. 189–198, 203–209 in *Utilitarianism and On Liberty*).

This reading assignment does have some overlap with the previous one. However, you are now being asked to focus on different aspects of it, so please do reread the relevant sections.

Questions

1. What reasons does Mill give for rejecting foundational egoism? More generally, what exactly is the scope of Mill's theory? Do animals have moral status? (See especially, chapter 2, paragraphs 9, 10, 13, 14, and 18, and the argument from chapter 3.)
2. In chapter 3, Mill tries to show how people could be motivated to follow utilitarian principles. How does his argument work? What role does sympathy play in it? What are its key premises? It is convincing?