

Ethical Theory

Rules & The Ingredients of Happiness

As you read the material for our 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 reading:

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 about these issues at our next class meeting.

Reading

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 2, paragraphs 19–25 & chapter 4, entire (pp. 195–202 & 210–215 in *Utilitarianism and On Liberty*).

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

Questions

1. At various points (especially in chapter 1, paragraph 3, and in chapter 2, paragraph 25), Mill considers the possibility of conflict between moral principles. According to him, what should happen if/when such a conflict occurs?
2. What evaluative focal point(s) does Mill appear to be using in formulating his version of utilitarianism? Based on this, does he endorse a form of factoral consequentialism? (See especially chapter 2, paragraphs 9, 19, 20, and 23–25.)
3. In chapter 4, Mill wants to prove that happiness is the only thing desirable as an end. How does he intend to provide a reasoned proof for this claim? What considerations and premises does Mill present in the course of supporting this claim?
4. How does Mill respond to the objection that other things are desirable, like virtue and music, besides happiness? What is Mill's view of the relationship between virtue and happiness?