A crucial feature of this argument is contained in the idea that pleasure can be assessed quantitatively and that this is a quantity that should be promoted (i.e., maximized). These two claims may be expressed in the following:

Quantitative Monism: Happiness is measured numerically and, specifically, by *one* numerical quantity. This quantity is usually called **utility**.

Optimization: More utility is always better than less utility.

These naturally lead to another key component of Bentham's theory, the claim that the overall good is simply the mathematical sum of the happiness of every individual involved. This captures the idea of equality insofar as no one's pleasure counts for more than another person's.

Sum Ranking: The overall happiness of everyone is the aggregate utility. This involves two claims: (1) each individual involved has a utility value associated with his or her individual happiness, and (2) the aggregate utility for these people is calculated by summing up the individual utilities.

For example, suppose you are deciding whether or not to donate ten riyals to Qatar Charity. Suppose that donating the riyals will make you slightly less happy than you are right now (because you'll have to pospone seeing a movie with your friends), but whereas that same ten riyals will make a huge difference to the happiness of a charity recipient. We might arrange this situation into what is known as a **utilitarian decision matrix**:

	People Involved	
	You	Charity Recipient
Donate ten riyals	-20	+100
Do not donate	0	0

(Your Possible Actions)

The idea here is that I lose twenty "utiles" of utility when I donate the money because I cannot see the movie with my friends, whereas the charity recipient gets an additional one-hundred utiles when they receive the ten riyals. Not donating, however, leads to no change in the happiness of either person involved. Sum ranking says that donating the money has a total utility of eighty (one hundred minus twenty), which is higher than doing nothing, whose total utility is zero (zero plus zero). Therefore, sum ranking says that I ought to donate the ten riyals. Being uncharitable in these circumstances would simply be contrary to the greater good of all.

As we have described it, then, Bentham's version of utilitarianism has six components, which makes up what is commonly called classical utilitarianism.

Classical (Hedonistic) Utilitarianism: A moral theory accepting the following positions:

1. Teleology,
2. Welfarism,
3. Quantitative monism,
4. Sum ranking,
5. Optimization, and
6. Hedonism.

John Stuart Mill's version of utilitarianism will diverge from these in some extremely crucial ways. When you read him, try to figure the differences out.

Introduction to Philosophy

Hedonistic Utilitarianism

Ayn Rand answers the practical question by claiming that you ought to promote your own happiness, where happiness is understood as the satisfaction of one's own values, interests, and preferences. This form of ethical egoism maintains that the interests of others do not matter morally, unless satisfying these other interests somehow leads to the satisfaction of *your* values and preferences. If you get no satisfaction from selfless actions, however, the happiness of others need not concern you.

Ethical egoism is diametrically opposed to another theory of morality, known as utilitarianism. Today we look at the form of utilitarianism advocated by the English philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832 CE), who explicitly rejects egoism as well as Rand's notion of happiness in favor of what he thought was a more humane understanding of moral theory as laid out by his principle of utility.

> *By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question.*
>
> - Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.

Before delving into Bentham's theory, it is worth explaining the theoretical landscape within which ethicists like Bentham and Rand position themselves. This will help us to identify the various shapes that moral theories may assume. To begin with, both theorists advance what is now known as a teleological conception of morality.

Teleological Moral Theory: A moral theory that holds the foundation of morality is some final purpose or good; right actions are those that promote this final purpose or good.

Of course, both Rand and Bentham agree that this final purpose or good is happiness. However, they quickly disagree when they answer some basic questions concerning the nature of happiness and how it ought to be promoted. Two important questions and some representative answers include:

1. What is happiness?

    Preference Satisfaction: Happiness is the satisfaction of a person's values and preferences.

    Hedonism: Happiness is pleasure.

2. Whose happiness matters?

    Egoism: Only the acting agent's own happiness matters.

    Welfarism: The overall happiness for everyone involved matters.

Given this, it should be easy to complete the following table to see where Rand and Bentham stand with respect to each other concerning their respective teleological moral theories:
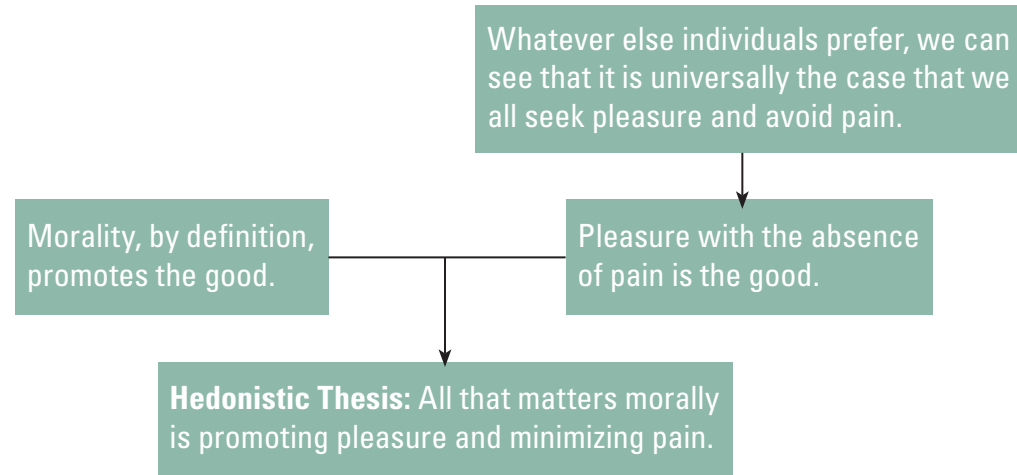
	Whose happiness matters?	
	Egoism	Welfarism
Preference Satisfaction		
Hedonism		

(What is happiness?)

This means there are two aspects of Bentham's theory to focus upon: hedonism and welfarism. Starting with the first of these, we can see Bentham's reason for assuming that the proper focus of morality is promoting pleasure.

> *Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters,* pain *and* pleasure. *It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to de-termine what we shall do. . . They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we take to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. . . . The* principle of utility *recognizes this subjection.*
>
> - Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.

This argument may be diagrammed as follows:

Whatever else individuals prefer, we can see that it is universally the case that we all seek pleasure and avoid pain.

Morality, by definition, promotes the good.

Pleasure with the absence of pain is the good.

Hedonistic Thesis: All that matters morally is promoting pleasure and minimizing pain.

One concern with this argument's validity might be with its apparent shift from a descriptive claim about people to a normative one about morality. Where have we seen this shift before in the course and why is an invalid move?

Meanwhile, the American political philosopher Robert Nozick (1938–2002 CE) attempts to provide a counter-example to one of Bentham's premises. That is, Nozick argues that no one should really want to plug themselves into a so-called "experience machine" for three reasons of increasing import:

1. We want to **actually *do*** the things we do and not just experience them being done:

2. We want to **actually *be*** a certain sort of person, not just experience being that person:

3. We want to have **actual *interactions*** with reality:

If Nozick is correct about this, then what premise in Bentham's argument must be wrong?

A similar problem can be seen in the following example. Imagine the two following possible situations:

Fool's Paradise: I believe my spouse is loyal to me, but he or she is actually having an affair (and he or she is really clever about hiding it).

True Paradise: I believe my spouse is loyal to me, and he or she is actually loyal.

According to a hedonist, which one of these situations is better than the other? What would a preference satisfaction advocate (like Rand) say?

We might even go further with another example. Imagine these two situations:

Fool's Paradise: Same as above.

Fool's Hell: I believe my spouse is having an affair, but he or she is actually loyal to me.

Once again, which one of these is better than the other according to a hedonist? According to an advocate of prefer-ence satisfaction?

Moving along to the second part of Bentham's conception of morality, Bentham believes that the extent of happi-ness is important. This makes him a welfarist. Furthermore, he believes that the happiness of every single person (more precisely: every single sentient being, including all non-human animals) should count equally. Here is a dia-gram of one possible interpretation of Bentham's argument for this position:

Hedonistic Thesis.

Pleasure and pain can only be measured quantitatively.

The individual person experiencing pleasure or pain is morally irrelevant; the only relevant difference between persons is the amount of pleasure or pain they each may receive.

Welfaristic Thesis: All people are morally equal; no one's pleasure counts more than another's.