

This reveals why Mill rejects both hedonism and preference satisfaction. Instead, Mill offers this alternative:

**Eudaimonism:** Happiness is pleasure, but with strict priority given to those pleasures produced by the exercise of the higher human faculties as opposed to those from the lower faculties..

This is what Mill means by “happiness”. Mill therefore agrees with the claim assumption that poetry is better than television because of their respective “natures”, just as Carritt would indicate. Poetry involves the use of higher faculties; watching television does not. As a result, Mill would reject criticisms like Carritt’s.

*The accusation supposes human beings to be capable of no pleasures except those of which swine are capable.*

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*.

The concern does remain, however, that people may disagree over what counts as a higher versus a lower pleasure. How does Mill’s **test of the cognoscenti** propose to resolve this issue?

Putting all this together, we can see the version of utilitarianism offered by Mill:

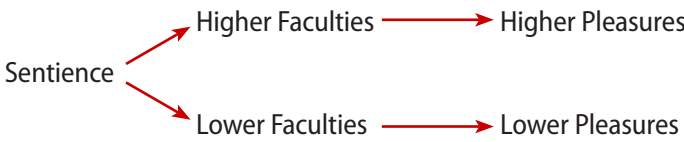
**Eudaimonistic (Millian) Utilitarianism:** A moral theory accepting the following positions:

1. Teleology,
2. Welfarism,
3. Qualitative Pluralism,
4. Vector Sum Ranking,
5. Lexical Priority, and
6. Eudaimonism.

We saw last time that Bentham’s conception of Hedonism meant that all of sentient life mattered morally. So the pleasures of animals were no way inferior to the pleasures of human beings.

Sentience → Pleasures

Mill’s picture is different.



So what does this mean about animals? Are the pleasures of animals and humans equal, are the pleasures of animals irrelevant, or something else?

# Introduction to Philosophy

## Eudaimonistic Utilitarianism

Jeremy Bentham advocates a theory of morality grounded on the ideal of promoting the happiness of every person. His response to the practical question is that I ought to do whatever gives the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. In more detail, Bentham argues for what is now known as classical utilitarianism.

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

1. **Teleology:** 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.
2. **Welfarism:** The overall happiness for everyone involved matters.
3. **Quantitative Monism:** Happiness is measured numerically and, specifically, by *one* numerical quantity. This quantity is usually called **utility**.
4. **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.
5. **Optimization:** More utility is always better than less utility.
6. **Hedonism:** Happiness is pleasure.

This is called “classical” utilitarianism because it contains the positions that most philosophers commonly presume when they discuss utilitarianism. However, the British philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill (1806–1873 CE) argues for a form utilitarianism that diverges from this classical formulation in some important ways. (On an interesting historical note, Jeremy Bentham was good friends with Mill’s father.) Today we want to determine the extent of the difference between these different forms of utilitarianism.

To begin with, Mill sounds a lot like Benthem when he speaks of the “greatest happiness principle”, “principle of utility”, and the equating of happiness with pleasure and unhappiness with displeasure.

*The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure.*

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*.

Does this mean that Mill is a hedonist just like Bentham?

In Mill’s discussion of happiness and pleasure, some radical departures from Bentham’s theory become apparent. First of all, Bentham is a quantitative monist. So all that matters to him is the *quantity* of pleasure; he only distinguishes between *more* versus *less* amounts of pleasure. Mill, on the other hand, is concerned with the *quality* of pleasure, making a distinction between *higher* versus *lower* pleasures.

*It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize the fact, that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.*  
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*.

Hence Mill replaces quantitative monism with the following:

**Quantitative Pluralism:** Happiness is measured numerically and, specifically, by a *vector* of numerical quantities or by *plural utilities*. Some utilities in this vector have priority over others. That is, there are some utilities that have more value or priority than other, less valuable utilities.

Suppose, for instance that you are deciding whether to read the poetry of Percy Shelley or watch the latest television episode of *Glee*. Mill would say that you make this choice by first determining the higher- and lower-level pleasures involved in each of your choices. Suppose that poetry provides the high-level pleasures of the mind, but little low level pleasure since you find Shelley’s poetry boring. Meanwhile, watching television provides little high-level pleasure, but a lot of lower-level pleasure of excitement. This can be put into the following decision matrix:

		Pleasures Involved	
		High-Level	Low-Level
Your Possible Actions	Read poetry	+18	+5
	Watch television	+2	+45

Since he is now dealing with pleasures (or utilities) of different varieties, Mill cannot use sum ranking to compute overall happiness, but he must use a slightly different mathematical process:

**Vector Sum Ranking:** The overall happiness of everyone is vector of aggregate utilities. This involves two claims: (1) each individual involved has a utility vector associated with the various types of pleasure he or she may receive, and (2) the vector of aggregate utilities for these people is calculated by summing up their individual utility vectors. For instance, suppose that you and I can choose to either read the poetry of Percy Shelley together, or we can watch television together. Your pleasures are those listed above, and mine are given below:

		Pleasures Involved	
		High-Level	Low-Level
Professor's Actions	Read poetry	+25	+10
	Watch television	+1	+20

Vector summing says that we create a vector of pleasure totals for each action. So, for instance, to calculate this vector for reading poetry, we first compute the total amount of high-level by adding your high-level pleasure for poetry with my high-level pleasure for that activity, which is forty-three (eighteen plus twenty five). Fill in the rest of the vectors for the following decision matrix:

		Pleasures Involved	
		High-Level	Low-Level
Our Possible Actions	Read poetry	+43	
	Watch television		

Of course, we still need to decide what to do. When it comes to formulating a decision rule to use for comparing these vectors of pleasure totals, Mill makes an even more radical departure from Bentham. That is, Mill argues that the quality of a pleasure is absolutely more important than its quantity.

*Of two pleasures. . . if one of the two is . . . placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure . . . we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account.*  
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*.

Recall that according to Bentham all that matters is the quantity of pleasure. This means that quality is irrelevant, so the pleasures from reading poetry are just as good as the pleasures from watching television. Mill’s claim is that no amount of a lower pleasure can outweigh or overrule a smaller amount of a higher one. This principle can be more formally stated:

**Lexical Priority:** No amount of a lower-level utility can overrule a higher-level one. Optimize according to higher-level utility. If there are ties in these higher-level utilities, then optimize on lower-level utilities to break those ties. If this is true, then which action should we choose? Watch television or read poetry?

In his article, the British philosopher Edgar Frederick Carritt (1876–1964 CE) accuses Mill of being inconsistent by making this distinction between higher and lower pleasures.

*The recognition of a stronger obligation to promote “higher” or “better” pleasures implies that we think something good, say musical or poetic experience, not merely in proportion to its general pleasantness but by its own nature. The attempt to unite this “qualification of pleasures” with hedonistic utilitarianism is like saying ‘I care about nothing but money, but I would not come by it dishonestly’. The fundamental fact is that we do not think some pleasures, such as that of cruelty, good at all.*  
- Edgar Frederick Carritt, *Ethical and Political Thinking*.

That is, Carritt wants to know how Mill can meaningfully distinguish between different types of pleasure if all that matters is pleasure; pleasure alone cannot tell us which pleasures are better. Even so, Mill certainly has a response to this. According to Mill what makes certain pleasures like those from poetry (the “high” ones) more valuable than others like those from television (the “low” ones)?

How does this justify Mill’s claim that is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied? Is it because Socrates exercise of reason always brings him more feelings of pleasure (as in hedonism) or because the exercise of reason satisfied more of Socrates’ values and preferences (as in preference satisfaction)?