Prelims: Mill – Comprehensive Reading List

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Reading


• Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams, eds. *Utilitarianism and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, introduction.


Essay

Evaluate Mill’s view about the connection between pleasure, happiness, and the satisfaction of desires, concentrating on the following: (i) relationships between pleasure, desire and happiness; (ii) Mill’s distinction between higher and lower pleasures; and (iii) whether there are advantages to a utilitarian theory which maintains that we ought to aim at fulfilling people’s desires rather than increasing the experience of pleasure.
Reading

- Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chs. 2 and 5.
- Smart and Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Williams’s § 6.
- Smart and Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Smart’s § 7.

Essay

Explain the difference between act and rule utilitarianism. Which is the more acceptable version of utilitarianism? Which version did Mill propose?

Integrity

Reading

- Smart and Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Williams’s §§ 2-5.
• Glover, *Utilitarianism and Its Critics*, introduction to part 5.


• Scheffler, *Consequentialism and Its Critics*, introduction.


**Essay**

What is the integrity objection to utilitarianism? Is it a good objection?

**The ‘Sanctions’ of Morality**


• Quinton, *Utilitarian Ethics*, pp. 54-8.


Essay

Explain and evaluate Mill’s account of the ‘sanctions’ of morality? Is his account consistent with his thesis that each person desires only his own happiness?

Could one convince, by argument, someone to act morally who doesn’t have some moral feelings?

The Proof of Utilitarianism and The Naturalistic Fallacy

Reading

• Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 4.


• Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, chs. 2–3.


Essay

Explain and evaluate Mill’s ‘proof’ of utilitarianism. (Be sure to distinguish the premises and the conclusion.) Is Mill really trying to prove the principle of utility? Is there a ‘naturalistic fallacy’? If so, does Mill’s proof commit it?
Liberty

Reading

- Skorupski, John Stuart Mill, ch. 10.

Essay

Are Mill’s views in Utilitarianism consistent with those in On Liberty? If not, how should he revise his views to obtain consistency?

Justice

Reading

- Mill, Utilitarianism, ch. 5.
- Smart and Williams, Utilitarianism: For and Against, Smart’s § 10.
• Sen and Williams, *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, introduction.


**Essay**

Does Mill succeed in giving a satisfactory account of justice? Can any utilitarian do so?