

Mill's view of lower higher pleasures

[Experience](#), [Happiness](#)



Mill is a utilitarian philosopher who lives by the Greatest Happiness Principle, in which there is a clear distinction between both lower and higher pleasures. Though thoroughly explained, one must also question the justification of these pleasures. Many of these beliefs leave the reader hanging on the edge, with further questions that need to be answered. What is the exact distinction between the lower and higher pleasures? And how are higher pleasures measured as most valuable? How clearly is Mill's view of lower and higher pleasures justified?

Mill, unlike some utilitarians (Epicureans), believes that there is an immense distinction between higher and lower pleasures. Lower pleasures, according to Mill, are those based off of sensations. "Few human creatures would consent to be changed into an of the lower animals for a promise of the fullest allowance of a beast's pleasures..." (Mill, Self-Love 506) Both humans and animals are capable of experiencing these pleasures, but what Mill believes is that only Humans are capable of the higher pleasures, and therefore no intelligent human being would chose to become an animal incapable of these more valuable pleasures.

The lower pleasures are based off of sensations in which include things such as our five senses: taste, hearing, touch, sight and the sense of smell. One will experience these pleasures multiple times daily, thus reducing the amount of satisfaction one feels when experiencing a lower pleasure. Mill believes that animals and human beings both share similar experiences when it comes to the lower pleasures, but that only human beings are capable of the higher pleasures. How one measures the justification of the

distinction between the lower pleasures and the higher pleasures is based mostly on opinion.

It does make sense that since human beings are most definitely superior in the intellectual field that in order to achieve a greater value of happiness one must experience the higher pleasures, but who says that animals are not capable of any of the higher pleasures? "...to the love of power, or the love of excitement, both of which really do enter into and contribute to it..." (Mill, Self-Love 507) Now, I know for a fact that my dog is very capable of being excited. All he does is run around the entire house multiple times after showing him five seconds of love.

So if the love of excitement contributes greatly to a higher pleasure with a greater value of happiness, then at least some inferior species must be capable of experiencing these higher pleasures. "It is better to be a human being satisfied than a pig satisfied." (Mill, Self-Love 507). Mill has never experienced the life of one of the "lower animals", and therefore cannot be one hundred percent sure of his opinion. The only way to justify Mill's answer would be to conduct an experiment in which involves observing the animals' actions and reactions.

Did you know dogs have around 100 facial expressions? Now if a dog is capable of having more facial expressions than a human being, how can one come to the conclusion that dogs are incapable of any of the higher pleasures? "If I am asked what I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure.... Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who

have experience of both give a dedicated preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure. (Mill, Self-Love 506) What he is trying to explain is that if one of the pleasures takes precedence for the majority of the people who experienced both pleasures, without being chosen because of certain natural feelings and/or based off of the person's morals, then that is the pleasure in which holds the greatest value. One question a critic might ask would be why not trust your moral obligations or your feelings? And what instinct are we to base our decision off of if we are not to trust our own feelings or morals?

Mill's view on the greatest valued pleasure is clear, but he does not explain what one should base his or her decision on. "...the pleasures of intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation. " (Mill, Self-Love 506).

Basically, only human beings have the overall brainpower to experience these " higher pleasures". These higher pleasures do not occur as often, which then indicates that higher pleasures are more valuable, as their occurrence are significantly more rare than the lower pleasures.

Most utilitarian writers, including Mill, place supremacy in mental pleasures over bodily pleasures because of their circumstantial advantages, and in regards to safety are much less risky when it comes to injury and whatnot.

But one must consider the following: What about athletes? Models?

Stuntmen or professional weight lifters? An individual who is perusing a career in which is physically dominated might consider physical pleasures and achievements to be of a greater value of happiness than mental

pleasures. One would only assume that Mill and other utilitarian writers consider pleasures of intellect to be of greater value, they are philosophers. What they enjoy doing is exploiting their thoughts into words to share with the rest of the world; that is what keeps their motor running strong each and every day. "A being of higher faculties requires more to make him happy..." (Mill, Self-Love 507). Mill in his eyes is justified by this due to the fact that he believes that humans are the only living beings capable of higher pleasures on Earth, so therefore a human being must have these higher pleasures because of their need for a greater value of happiness.

But on the contrary, if a being of a lower faculty requires less to be happy, then the lower pleasures should be just as valuable to the inferior species as the higher pleasures are to the more capable beings. Who says that the other animals on this planet are inferior beings to humans anyways? How does one measure superiority? It all depends on the individual's opinion. Someone like Mill might believe that mental capability and capacity are the most accurate units of measurement when it comes to who is the top dog.

But just because human beings are more capable than animals mentally, it does not mean that we are the superior beings. If one were to measure superiority in the aspect of happiness, then one would have to believe that the lower species are most superior. Every living being on planet Earth is on the pursuit of happiness, and if lower species receive more satisfaction from the lower pleasures, then the beings we think to be inferior are much better off than we are.

Since human beings are so much more capable mentally, then they are also more prone to be unhappy, as the lower pleasures are taken for granted since they do not provide enough happiness for one to be as satisfied as the other animal species. Mill believes in a clear distinction between the “ lower and higher pleasures”, and that only humans are capable of the higher pleasures. One must question just how justified Mill is in his beliefs, as he has never experienced life as a “ lower animal”. Who says that the higher pleasures only include those associated with the mental world?