

**Mill, Utilitarianism**  
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238-249, 277-9, 287-291.

**Chapter 2: What Utilitarianism Is**

**Utilitarianism:** Actions are right as they tend to promote the greatest amount of happiness (pleasure), wrong as they tend to promote unhappiness (pain). Only these things are desires as ends; we desire them either in themselves or as means to further pleasures. (239-40 and 244).

**Objection:** This presents people in a pathetic light, seeking only pleasure.

**Response:** A distinction – between *higher and lower pleasures*. A difference in quality, not quantity.

But how do we know which pleasure is high and which is low?

- Answer: Experienced judges

Proof that you actually agree: you would not consent to become a lower animal even if you knew all your (beastly) desires would be satisfied. (241).

But why do we agree?

- Pride, love of liberty, love of power, excitement, and moreover, a sense of dignity.

Further proof: a distinction – between happiness and contentment.

- The animal is content, but we can be happy. “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a food satisfied” (242).

What happiness requires:

- a. Higher pleasures (a subjective element)
  - People are born with the capacity for higher pleasures but society does not providing the means of satisfaction, including time, opportunity and encouragement (243).
- b. A cultivated mind: any mind to which the fountains of knowledge have been opened (an objective element).
  - Learning out of a sense of appreciation vs. out of curiosity.
- c. Tranquility and/or excitement
  - Tranquility allows a person to be content with little pleasure, excitement allows one to reconcile oneself to a considerable quantity of pain (246).
- d. A lack of selfishness; we must have affection for others.

We have all the natural capacities requisite for happiness, but we need the cooperation of the world (247).

## **Chapter 5: On the Connexion Between Justice and Utility**

*Thesis: The Sense of Justice is not (solely) innate, but the result of developing innate capacities with the intellect.*

### **Stages of Development of the Sentiment of Justice**

**STAGE 1:** The possession of certain natural sentiments:

- a. Desire to punish (to retaliate/avenge) = Impulse of self-defense
- b. Feeling of sympathy for those who have been harmed.

**STAGE 2:** The widening of sympathy to include all people (or all sentient creatures).

- Widening of sympathy → widening of the “self” in the impulse of *self*-defense

At this stage we only have *non-moral feelings*. Non-moral feelings are untutored natural feelings.

- In the case of the sentiment of justice, it is indiscriminate, attaching to anyone that causes some pain no matter what their motive or intent.

**STAGE 3:** The attaching of the sentiment to a rule of conduct.

Now we have a *moral feeling*:

What makes it a moral feeling: in the feeling is an implicit endorsement of a rule, which is for the benefit of others and oneself.

- The sentiment of justice must be made conformable to the social feelings, *viz.* those feelings directed at the common good.
- To what rule of conduct should this sentiment be attached?
  - “I can give him [the person asking the question] no other reason than general utility” (290).