

## Lecture 4 Reading Questions

### “Revisionist Utilitarianism”

Reading:

“What Utilitarianism Is.” Chapter 2 in “Utilitarianism” by John Stuart Mill.

(1) According to Mill, “pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends.” Is that right? Would you permanently plug into Nozick’s experience machine, if you could? What does your answer say about what is valuable in life?

(2) How does Mill respond to the objection that it is “mean and grovelling” to “suppose that life has ... no higher end than pleasure—no better and nobler object of desire and pursuit”?

(3) According to Mill, what makes one pleasure of higher quality than another pleasure?

(4) According to Mill, how do we know that intellectual pleasures are of higher quality than sensory pleasures?

(5) Is Mill right that intellectual pleasures are of higher quality? Is it “better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied”? Why or why not?

(6) “As between [your] own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires [you] to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator.”

How does Mill respond to the objection that utilitarianism is too demanding?

- (i) What should laws and governments do to help us approach the ideal?
- (ii) Must we always act from a desire to promote the general interest, or can we do the right thing by (mostly) acting out of self-interest?

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