

Reading Questions for January 30

These questions cover excerpts from Bentham and Mill. The answers do not have to be turned in and you only have to read enough of the texts to answer the questions. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

*Background:*

This week we are going to briefly survey some key theories in normative ethics. Today we are looking at a theory called “Utilitarianism”. The readings for this week are by the people who originally came up with the theories. They wrote a long time ago and understanding them will at times be somewhat difficult.

*Questions:*

1. In the first excerpt, Bentham talks about the “principle of utility.” What is this principle and what is the point of it?
2. In the second excerpt, Bentham discusses the relative value of various kinds of pleasure when it comes to morality. What does he think about the relative values of various kinds of pleasure – are some pleasures more valuable than others?
3. In the third excerpt, John Stuart Mill defends a different view about the value of the various kinds of pleasure. What is his view and how does he defend it? Which view, Bentham’s or Mill’s, do you find more plausible?