

Reading Guide #2: Utilitarianism

These reading guides are provided to assist you in your reading. I encourage you to read the material through, first, then go back to answer the questions. You are not expected to hand in written answers. You are expected to have responses ready for class discussion. Only the boldfaced questions will appear on exams. Page numbers refer to Arthur, *Morality and Moral Controversies*, 6th ed.

John Stuart Mill, 'Utilitarianism', pp 26-34

1. Why can't Utilitarian or Happiness theory be proved? What will Mill provide instead of proof?
 - 2. What is the Greatest Happiness Principle?**
 - 3. Why do some critics consider utilitarianism "a doctrine worthy only of swine"? How does Mill respond to this objection?**
 4. How does Mill propose to determine which of two pleasures is more desirable? Why is this important to do?
 - 5. What are the "higher faculties"? How does Mill argue that they are better than the baser pleasures?**
 6. Does utilitarianism see self-sacrifice as good in itself? What good is it?
 - 7. Does Mill think that one's own happiness is more important than the happiness of others? Does he think it is less important?**
 8. How does Mill deal with the objection that utilitarianism is godless?
 - 9. Some critics of utilitarianism charge that it takes too much time. Why would it take a lot of time? How does Mill defend against this objection?**
 10. How does Mill say that you can prove that some thing is desirable? How does this relate to utilitarianism? What more needs to be shown in order to establish utilitarianism as the sole standard of morality?
 11. How does Mill respond to the allegation that people desire ends other than happiness?
 - 12. Describe the five different types of injustice Mill discusses.**
 13. "The idea of justice supposes two things: a rule of conduct and a sentiment which sanctions the rule." (32) Explain.
 - 14. What is a right? What does it mean to have a right? Why, according to Mill, should we respect people's rights?**
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William Godwin, 'Comparing Human Lives: The Archbishop and the Chambermaid', pp 243-244

1. Why, according to Godwin, is a man worth more than a beast?
- 2. "In the same manner the illustrious archbishop of Cambrai [Fenelon] was of more worth than his chambermaid." (243) Explain.**
3. How should considerations of the general good apply to one's evaluations of the worths of various lives?
4. Does Godwin's argument change if the chambermaid is your mother? Explain.
5. "Gratitude therefore, a principle which has so often been the theme of the moralist and the poet, is no part either of justice or virtue." (244) Explain.
- 6. Which moral theory would Godwin prefer?**