# Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Mill's theory is a a species of a type of ethical theory called CONSEQUENTIALISM.

**Consequentialism:** **The view that the moral status of an act is determined solely by its consequences.**

# Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Question:        What kinds of consequences matter?

What do we want to *bring about* when we "do the right thing"?

Mill's Answer:  We should promote pleasure, and avoid pain, wherever possible.

# Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Question: What kind of pleasure, and *whose* pleasure, are we supposed to promote?

P. 8: We don't want it to be strictly physical pleasure.

"It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied."

P. 11: I don't want to be strictly concerned with *my own* pleasure.

The standard we strive for is "not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether."

# Mill, *Utilitarianism*

**The Utilitarian Theory of the Right:**

An act is right it if produces the greatest possible amount of happiness in the world.

The aim of moral action is to bring about a world with the maximum possible amount of happiness.

# Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Objection: Isn't it misguided to suppose that *everyone* can be happy?

Response: We can work to *at least* minimize pain in most cases.

# Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Some key features of utilitarian ethics:

- Mill thinks our intentions have nothing to do with the value of an act.  They reflect on the value of the *person*, but not on the *act itself*.

- We don't need anything like any external authority or rulebook to figure out what we should do.  To find out what I should do, I just need to find out what will bring about the most happiness.