

In Defense of the Happy Pig: Why Physical Pleasure is the Fundament for Our World

In his famous book Utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill said, 'It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.'ⁱ

But why should we struggle for knowledge, education, and a "better life", at the expense of being a satisfied pig and fulfilling our instincts? Does this "better life" come from intellectual pleasure, or does it come from something else? Does intellectual pleasure really provide more long-lasting pleasure than physical pleasure, or is it merely just culturally and societally privileged?

In this essay, I would first delve into the science behind pleasure, demonstrating how physical pleasure and intellectual pleasure are intrinsically the same; then, I would refute Mill, explaining how his notion of the happy pig is not entirely valid; I would also present my own opinion, explaining why physical pleasure is the fundament for our world from both individual well-being and societal cohesion; and last I would explain the connection between importance and level.

Beginning with definitions, what is physical, and what is intellectual? How do they differ, and what is pleasure?

When something is physical, it relates to a person's body rather than their mindⁱⁱ. In contrast, intellectuals relate more to the ability to think and understand things, especially complicated ideas.ⁱⁱⁱ Pleasure refers to the feeling of enjoyment or satisfaction.^{iv}

Science of pleasure: "Pleasure is nothing but a chemical reaction."

Four crucial chemicals affect our perception of pleasure. Dopamine is involved in the anticipation of an event or feeling. Oxytocin is the "chemical of love", responsible for the feeling of empathy. Serotonin is responsible for the control and maintenance of homeostasis within the guts and regulates mood. Endorphins are the "natural painkillers", responsible for the masking of pain or discomfort.^v

Together, these four chemicals, or DOSE, show that pleasure is nothing more than a combination of chemical reactions.

To summarize the complicated science behind pleasure, it is suggested that brain mechanisms involved in fundamental pleasures, or physical pleasure in this case, overlap with those for higher-order-pleasure, or intellectual pleasure,^{vi} which is troubling for two reasons.

First, if both types of pleasures stem from the same hedonic structure, why should they differ in value? Making an analogy to a pair of siblings, if they come from the same family, even if they differ in appearance and personality, one can never be put above or before the other. The same applies here. Even though physical and intellectual pleasure may seem different, they should never differ in quality only because they "seem different", and even if they do, then physical pleasure undoubtedly shall be more important as it is the fundament for our world.

Second, as mentioned at the start of the essay, physical pleasure relates to the body, whereas intellectual relates to complicated thoughts. However, thoughts and pleasure, both stem from the brain, like any other type of thinking. The brain is included in the neuronal system, the neuronal system in the body; thus, if intellectual pleasure stems from the body, it can also be clarified as physical pleasure. Making an analogy to twins again, if

both belong to the same family, even though they might look different, they will always belong to the same family.

Refuting Mill: A Suffering Human, or a Satisfied Pig?

As mentioned before, Mill and many others noted that we tend to want to be a suffering human, not a satisfied pig, which is why intellectual pleasure shall be put before physical pleasure.

But two things need to be pointed out here.

First, pigs are highly intelligent species. With the ability to have abstract thoughts, use tools, recognize their dreams, and follow commands, pigs can have the intellectual pleasure that stems from complicated thoughts.^{vii}

Second, the fact that humans don't want to be pigs isn't necessarily because intellectual pleasure is more important. Humans often put themselves on top of other animals, believing that we, as humans, are the most intellectual species on Earth. This belief is true, but this belief is not about intellectual pleasure, but about how humans care about the "reputation of being smart". Being humans, we tend to have the instinct of enjoying a good reputation, like being seemingly more intelligent, more mature, or younger. This, although being pleasure, is not intellectual pleasure because it doesn't stem from complicated thinking but stems from the basic human mentality of pride. Because pigs are intelligent species, they can have intellectual pleasure, but without the reputation of being thoughtful, humans would rather have the reputation of being smart.

On Individuality: How Fulfilling Our Instincts Ensure Individual Survival and Personal Development

But still, how can physical pleasure, something as simple as the sweetness of candy, become the fundament for our complex civilization? And why should it matter more than intellectual pleasure?

Before everything else happens, humans must survive, and physical pleasure, together with the desire to satisfy it, is crucial for ensuring basic survival. Actions like eating, which is vital for nutrients; sex, which is essential to reproduction; defecation, which is critical for the excretion of waste; and respiration, which is crucial for the intake of oxygen and blood flow, all trigger physical pleasure, and this pleasure motivates us to do these actions, ensuring our basic survival.^{viii}

Take an easy example of consuming nutrients or eating. When I lack crucial nutrients for survival, I feel hungry, which makes me feel upset, because 90% of the serotonin in my body, is found in my guts ^{ix}. I remember the satisfaction that stems from feeling full and having nutrients, which is physical pleasure, and I want to feel full again, which is the want of physical pleasure caused by dopamine, which is responsible for the anticipation of an event. Motivated by pleasure, I go out to seek food and eat it, which makes me feel happy. With this physical pleasure, I will be encouraged to do the same thing again.

Apart from that, physical pleasure is crucial for personal development as well. When taught about making goals, we are often told that having both long-term and short-term goals is essential. Short-term goals are crucial because they provide us with short-term and instant satisfaction, motivating us to achieve long-term goals and bringing long-term satisfaction.

Physical pleasure gives us short-term pleasure and instant satisfaction. Take the example of eating candy. Long ago, our ancestors have developed a love of sugar ^x, gaining physical pleasure whenever they eat something

sweet. This is still true today, even though it is now much more convenient for us to buy candy. When I eat candy, my brain releases chemicals, and I feel pleasure and motivated. This helps set short-term goals, as eating a candy gives me a burst of excitement and instant satisfaction, and with short-term goals, I can also develop long-term development goals.

On Society: How Oxytocin Strengthens Social Cohesion

On human societal structures, simple actions like hugging, which provides physical pleasure, are crucial for strong and stable relationships. It strengthens the emotional connection between people, reduces stress and anxiety, and helps maintain intimacy or the sense of closeness between people.^{xi}

Yuval Noah Harari once mentioned in his book *Sapiens* that, "Homo sapiens conquered the world thanks above all to its unique language." To interpret this in another way, cooperation and firm relationships are crucial for humankind. Apart from our unique language, physical pleasure gained from actions like hugging strengthens our relationships even without us noticing.^{xii}

Specifically, oxytocin, or the chemical of love, is responsible for our relationships, including the feeling of empathy, which might be the exact reason we hug someone in the first place. Oxytocin levels are increased with positive feedback loops, which means when the brain senses stimuli like the feeling of empathy, they tend to increase the level of empathy by increasing oxytocin levels.

A lot has been mentioned about how things like hugging strengthen social cohesion, but how does pleasure motivate us to do these things? This is where the pleasure cycle comes in. This cycle, crucial for motivation, can be summarized into three main stages: wanting, liking, and learning.

Take the example of eating a pizza. The cycle starts before you eat the pizza. In the liking stage, the pizza's smell, sight, and taste reach your brain; this is when you finally get up from the sofa, go to the kitchen, and make the pizza. In the learning stage, your brain constantly updates the information it has. Just like a student taking notes in class, the brain learns new things about the pizza, and if the pleasure cycle goes well, and your pizza tastes okay, the pleasure intensifies next time with the latest information in your brain.

Thus, pleasure ensures strong relationships, strong relationships ensure cooperation, and cooperation helps our society thrive.

Level vs Importance: How Mill's Belief Reflect His Social Status

As mentioned at the start, John Stuart Mill believed that people would rather be unsatisfied humans than satisfied beasts. As a civil servant and a Member of Parliament for the City of Westminster, his social status was high^{xiii}, and his belief in prioritizing intellectual pleasure reflects his high social status. Similar to Mill, intellectual pleasure is also culturally privileged, but whether it provides us with more pleasure is questionable since these two types of pleasures stem from the same body system and similar areas of the brain.

Many might question whether "importance" has a direct correlation with "level". In old societies, those at a higher level were indeed kings, queens, and rich people, but it was never neglected that the workers who worked in factories and mines were not important, despite the agreement that they were at a lower level than the rich.

However, to begin with, "high level" doesn't necessarily mean the "high level" in the context of the rich being at a higher level than the poor despite both being important. According to Cambridge Dictionary, high level has the definition of "very important"; thus, if it is proved that physical pleasure is important, they are at a higher level compared to intellectual pleasure.^{xiv}

Second, the example given was never relevant to begin with. In old societies, most countries universally agreed that the rich were more important than the workers. Thus, they were at a lower level because they were considered "less important" then. In modern society, however, low-level workers begin to gain more status, people start to recognize the importance of even the poorest workers; and thus, in most affluent developed states, it was rarely stated that "the poor are in a lower level."

Therefore, it is unfair to put intellectual pleasure at a high level if it is not the most important. Instead, by proving that physical pleasure is the foundation for human society, it should undoubtedly be put at a higher level than intellectual pleasure.

Conclusion: Learning to Pursue and Create Pleasure

In conclusion, while at first glance, many may choose to be the unsatisfied human being, I stand firmly in defense of the happy pig and against Mill's belief. Physical pleasure, even things as simple as a hug or a candy, holds a strong influence on individuals and societies, and if we delve deeper into the science behind pleasure, physical pleasure and intellectual pleasure should never be separated in the first place. May us learn to pursue pleasure, be motivated by the pleasure cycle, and become a pleasure for others as it not only develops us as individuals, must also strengthen societal cooperation, which is the reason that we, homo sapiens, among all human species, were the ones still thriving today.

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