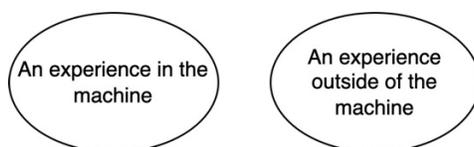


Incommensurability of Quality of Pleasure

- The Fine-grained Experience of Pleasure and its value

1. **Thesis:** In order to compare the quality of pleasure; Higher and Lower pleasures, the experience of pleasure seems to be defined as the coarse-grained one. However, all experiences of pleasure are, in fact, fine-grained. So, it is impossible to compare the quality of pleasure as a Utilitarian (J. S. Mill) has done.
2. **Mill's Quality of Pleasure**
 - a. Mill insists that the great value of intellectual pleasures can and should be put on a more secure footing (II 4). He explains these higher pleasures and links them with *the preferences of a competent judge*.
 - b. **The preferences of a competent judge:**
 "If I am asked what I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except its being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. If one of the two is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other than they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account." (II 5)
 - c. **The ambiguity of Mill's "Pleasure"**
 - i. Objective pleasure: Non-mental items, such as actions, activities, and pursuits that do or can cause pleasurable mental states.
 - ii. Subjective pleasure: A certain kind of mental state or sensation
 <Mill's Dilemma?>
 → If Mill's pleasure is **objective** pleasure, it may contradict with suggesting the preferences of a competent judge. We should interpret higher pleasures as subjective pleasures since the competent judge will decide the higher pleasure based on his/her preferences.
 → If Mill's pleasure is **subjective** pleasure, it seems difficult to suggest a common scale of units of value; pleasure. We need to ask Mill the following conditions: who can become the competent judge (the qualification of the judge or the meaning of "competent"), whether the majority of competent can guarantee the specific pleasure as a higher pleasure, to what extent competent judges' subjectivity (internal states) can affect happiness, etc.
 → If Mill's pleasure is **sometimes objective and sometimes subjective**, Mill might need to suggest when the pleasure is objective or subjective.
 - d. **Question:** Tentatively, suppose that Mill's pleasure has subjective aspects and admit the preference of competent judges. Then, how can we compare the quality of pleasure based on different experiences? In order to compare pleasures, the experiences of pleasure seem to be defined as coarse-grained experiences.
3. **The Fine-grained Experience of Pleasure and its value**
 - a. **What are "coarse-grained" and "fine-grained" experiences?**
 : Let's look into Nozick's thought experience machine example. In order for the competent judges to have a preference, they should define each of the experiences before preferring experiences (experiences, or at least, something that bring about pleasure).
 - i. **Nozick's experience machine:** "Suppose there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life's experiences? If you are worried about missing out on desirable experiences, we can suppose that business enterprises have researched thoroughly the lives of many others. You can pick and choose from their large library or smorgasbord of such experiences for, say, the next two years. ... While in the tank, you won't know that you're there;"
 - ii. **How can the competent judges have a preference?** : Those competent judges will distinguish an experience of 'not-plugging from the machine' and the other experience of 'plugging in the machine.' If one of the two (competent judges) is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other than they prefer it, ...we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality as far outweighing quantity as to render it, of small account.

An example of coarse-grained experiences



→ **Coarse-grained experiences:** Distinction between experiences of “an experience in the machine” and “an experience outside of the machine; normal life in the real world.”

iii. **Problem:** However, (1) all the experiences of pleasures will be different from person by person. (2) Also, the behavior of ‘unplugging’ itself will affect the competent judges’ experience.

b. **(1) all the experiences of pleasures will be different from a person by person**

- i. The order of experiences (history or the ordered pair of experiences)
- ii. Individuals’ memories
- iii. Qualia

ex. **Mere Chess:** Eunhong’s experience of playing a chess game before watching *Queens Gambit* in Netflix.

→ At this moment, playing a chess game is a mundane experience. (= Lower pleasure)

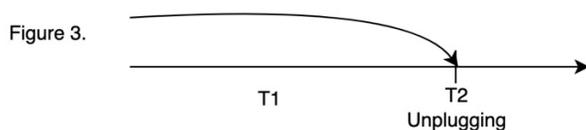
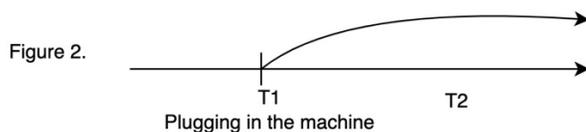
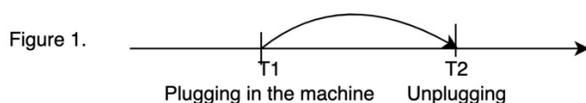
ex. **Interesting Chess:** Eunhong’s experience of playing a chess game after watching *Queens Gambit*.

→ After being inspired by Queens Gambit, Eunhong’s playing a chess game becomes an interesting experience. (=Higher Pleasure)

: If experiences of playing ‘mere chess’ and playing ‘interesting chess’ are coarse-grained, both will be just called an experience of ‘playing chess.’

c. **(2) The behavior of ‘unplugging’ itself can affect the competent judges’ experience.**

- i. The fine-grained experiences of pleasure in Nozick’s thought experience machine



- According to the distinction of coarse-grained experiences, it will be possible to distinguish experiences of “an experience in the machine” and “an experience outside of the machine; normal life in the real world”

- However, the three different figures above themselves are all, in fact, different experiences to the individual when those experiences are fine-grained. For example, one of the reasons why lots of people are afraid of plugging in the machine would be ‘what if everyone (including my friends, family, and acquaintance) has been done self-development or self-improvement while I am in the machine.’ It does not always have to be self-

development. People can be afraid of being forgotten from the world since the person in the machine cannot make any real connection to the world.

d. **Incommensurability of Quality of Pleasure**

- i. **Conclusion:** If experiences of pleasure are fine-grained based on every individuals' former experiences, memories, the order of experiences, and qualia, it seems impossible to compare the quality of pleasure based on Mill's preference of competent judges. It is because the preference of an experience, especially the experience of pleasure, cannot be objectified. Even if the competent judge can compare the quality of pleasure based on his/her experience, it seems impossible to be competently acquainted with both fine-grained experiences. For some people, playing chess (or pushpin game) can become a higher pleasure compared to reading poetry. The value of an experience of pleasure seems to be internalistically defined and determined by the individual.