

UTILITARIANISM

Choice, Commerce, and Conflict

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UTILITARIANISM

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RAWLS & NOZICK

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Rawls

Two Principles of Justice:

(1) Equal Rights

(2) Fair Equality of Opportunity, Difference Principle

Original Position, Veil of Ignorance



Nozick

The Entitlement Theory of Justice (historical & non-patterned)

Wilt Chamberlain Argument (Liberty upsets patterns)

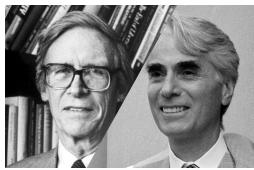
Redistributive Taxation wrongfully violates rights

RAWLS & NOZICK

Rawls

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- (1) Equal Rights
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- Original Position, Veil of Ignorance



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THE WILT CHAMBERLAIN ARGUMENT

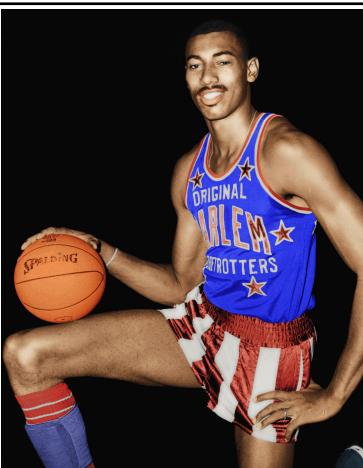
WILT CHAMBERLAIN ARGUMENT

Start with a just distribution, meeting the pattern.

Basketball fans agree to pay Wilt Chamberlain \$.25 to watch him play.

These transfers are wholly voluntary.

The resulting distribution no longer fits the pattern.



THE WILT CHAMBERLAIN ARGUMENT

- P1** If the The Patterned Principle Account of Justice is correct, then a distribution **D** is *just* if and only if **D** accords with patterned principle *P*.
- P2** If **X** is a just distribution and **Y** arises from **X** solely via *just steps*, then **Y** is also just.
- P3** A step from one distribution to another is *just* if it results from *fully voluntary transactions* on the part of all legitimately concerned persons.
- P4** The transactions between the basketball fans and Wilt Chamberlain are wholly voluntary on the part of all legitimately concerned persons.
- P5** By hypothesis, (1) **D1** is just; and (2) **D2** arises from **D1** via the transactions between the basketball fans and Wilt Chamberlain; and (3) **D2** needn't accord with patterned principle *P*.

C The Patterned Principle Account of Justice is incorrect.

WILT CHAMBERLAIN ARGUMENT

Is Nozick right?

THE WILT CHAMBERLAIN ARGUMENT

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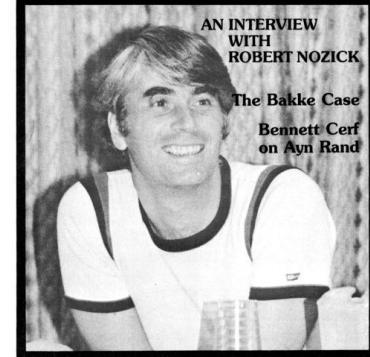


QUESTIONS?

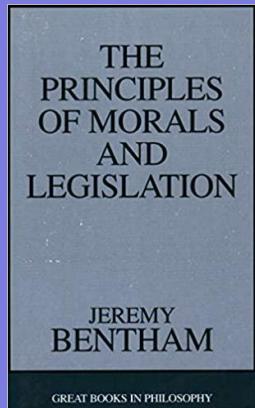
Libertarian Review

AN INTERVIEW
WITH
ROBERT NOZICK

The Bakke Case
Bennett Cerf on Ayn Rand



UTILITARIANISM



UTILITARIANISM: JEREMY BENTHAM (1748 - 1832)

Jeremy Bentham was an English philosopher and social reformer.

Founder of modern Utilitarianism.

Basic Idea:

"It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong"



UTILITARIANISM

THE GREATEST GOOD FOR THE GREATEST NUMBER

UTILITARIANISM: JEREMY BENTHAM (1748 - 1832)

Jeremy Bentham was an English philosopher and **social reformer**.

Social and economic liberties, separation of church and state, freedom of expression, equal rights for women, the right to divorce, decriminalization of homosexuality, abolition of slavery, capital punishment, animal rights,...



UTILITARIANISM: JEREMY BENTHAM (1748 - 1832)

Jeremy Bentham and James Mill (J.S. Mill's father) were Hedonistic Utilitarians.

Hedonism:

The only intrinsic good is pleasure; the only intrinsic bad is pain.



HEDONISTIC UTILITARIANISM

HEDONISTIC UTILITARIANISM

Pleasure is the one and only intrinsically good thing /
Suffering is the one and only intrinsically bad thing.

Actions are morally right when they promote the good and diminish the bad / morally wrong when they promote the bad and diminish the good.



UTILITARIANISM: DEEPER LOOK

Value Claim:

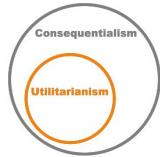
The value of a complete world-history is determined by the amount of pleasure and suffering it contains.
[Hedonism]

Aggregation:

Everyone's pleasure/suffering matters, and matters equally. [Impartiality & sum-maximization]

Action Claim:

An action is morally right when its outcome has greater value than the outcome of any of the alternative acts available; it's wrong otherwise.
[Consequentialism]



UTILITARIANISM: DEEPER LOOK

Value Claim:

The value of a complete world-history is determined by the amount of pleasure and suffering it contains.
[Hedonism]

Bentham's Hedonism:

the value of a pleasure or pain considered by itself, will be greater or less, according to the four following circumstances:

1. Its intensity
2. Its duration
3. Its certainty or uncertainty
4. Its propinquity or remoteness



EXAMPLE:

UTILITARIANISM & RAWLS

EXAMPLE: UTILITARIANISM VS RAWLS

Which is best?

	People			
	A	B	C	
Allocation 1	...	5	0	5
Allocation 2	...	1	1	5
Allocation 3	...	2	2	5

EXAMPLE: UTILITARIANISM VS RAWLS

Which is best?

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Rawls

	People			Total:
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EXAMPLE:

UTILITARIANISM IN ACTION

UTILITARIANISM: EXAMPLES



Suppose that you are a doctor on a remote island community. Nobody is monitoring you. No one will remember what you do.

Case 1:

You have a terminally ill patient who is in significant, untreatable pain. You can painlessly euthanize the patient.

What would the Utilitarian recommend that you do?

UTILITARIANISM: EXAMPLES



Suppose that you are a doctor on a remote island community. Nobody is monitoring you. No one will remember what you do.

Case 2:

Same as before, except that patient does not consent to being euthanized. She asks you to keep her alive as long as possible.

What would the Utilitarian recommend that you do?

UTILITARIANISM: EXAMPLES



Suppose that you are a doctor on a remote island community. Nobody is monitoring you. No one will remember what you do.

Case 3:

You have enough blood to save either Arden or Baldwin, but not both. Arden is younger, happier, and healthier than Baldwin. Arden has a large family and many friends. Baldwin doesn't.

What would the Utilitarian recommend that you do?

UTILITARIANISM: EXAMPLES



Suppose that you are a doctor on a remote island community. Nobody is monitoring you. No one will remember what you do.

Case 4:

Same as before, except that the blood originally belonged to Baldwin. They asked you to hold on to it for them, and made you promise that you wouldn't give it to someone else.

What would the Utilitarian recommend that you do?

UTILITARIANISM: EXAMPLES



Suppose that you are a doctor working at Miriam hospital.

Case 5 – 8:

Same as before, except that you work at a hospital. People are monitoring what you do.

What would the Utilitarian recommend that you do?

BENTHAM ON JUSTICE

'**Justice**, in the only sense in which it has a meaning, **is an imaginary personage**, feigned for the convenience of discourse, **whose dictates are the dictates of utility**, applied to certain particular cases'
(*The Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 125–6)

Rights are “nonsense upon stilts”

(*Rights, Representation, and Reform: Nonsense upon Stilts and Other Writings on the French Revolution*, 317–401)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

UTILITARIANISM: SOME QUESTIONS

1. Should you help a little old lady cross the street, even if it makes you late for class?
2. Is it okay to torture animals for fun? (What if it is *really* fun?)
3. Don't people have rights? (Consider the difference between *moral* rights and *legal* rights.)
4. Does this mean that we should constantly be drinking beer and taking morphine?



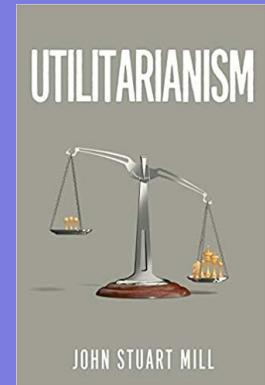
BENTHAM ON JUSTICE

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Problem:
The Majority’s Antipathy toward
Unpopular Private Conduct (& the
Importance of Civil Liberties)

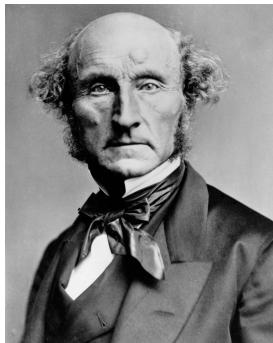


J.S. MILL'S UTILITARIANISM

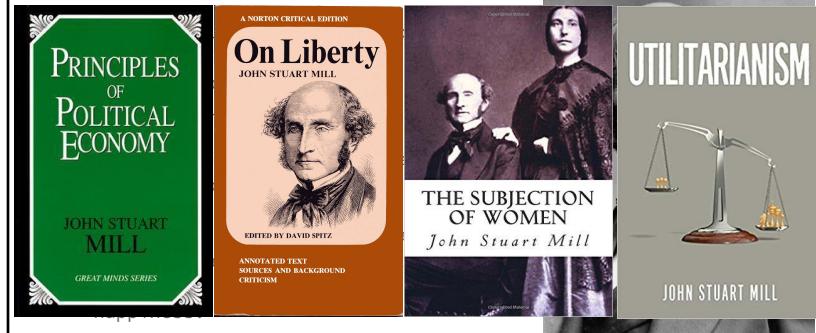


JOHN STUART MILL (1806 - 1873)

- Influential British philosopher from the nineteenth century.
- Important public figure who pushed for liberal reforms; served in Parliament.
- Child prodigy; raised in the tradition of *Philosophical Radicalism*.
- Suffered a profound emotional and intellectual crisis in 1826, which influenced his views about happiness.



JOHN STUART MILL (1806 - 1873)



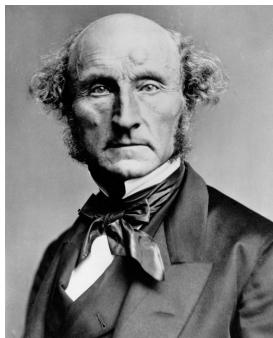
UTILITARIANISM: WHAT IS IT?

John Stuart Mill:

"Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness."

Slogan:

The greatest good for the greatest number.



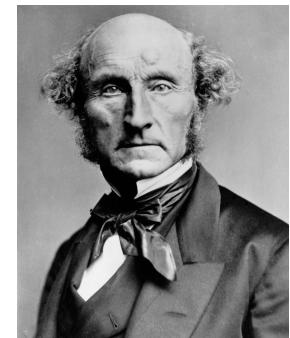
UTILITARIANISM: JOHN STUART MILL (1806 - 1873)

Objection: Hedonism is a theory of value only fit for swine.

Push-pin vs Poetry

Mill's Response:

There are **higher** and **lower** pleasures. And higher pleasures matter more than lower ones.



HIGHER AND LOWER PLEASURES

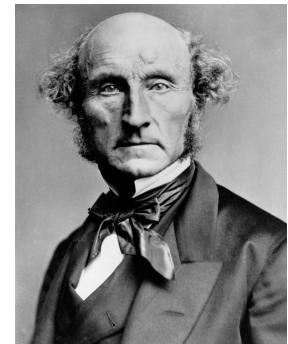
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN HIGHER AND LOWER
PLEASURES?
CAN YOU THINK OF EXAMPLES?

HIGHER AND LOWER PLEASURES

John Stuart Mill:

"It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides."

How Can We Tell? Ask competent judges who've experienced both.



BENTHAM ON JUSTICE

Rights are "nonsense upon stilts"

(*Rights, Representation, and Reform: Nonsense upon Stilts and Other Writings on the French Revolution*, 317-401)

Problem:

The Majority's Antipathy toward Unpopular Private Conduct (& the Importance of Civil Liberties)



CIVIL LIBERTIES ARE
REQUIRED TO MAXIMIZE
THE HIGHER PLEASURES

OBJECTION TO HEDONISM

UTILITARIANISM: DEEPER LOOK

Is Hedonism right?

The Experience Machine
(Robert Nozick).

If Hedonism is right, then it looks like you should hop into the experience machine.

Should you?



UTILITARIANISM: DEEPER LOOK

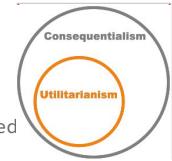
Value Claim:

The value of a complete world-history is determined by the amount of pleasure and suffering it contains. (*Hedonism*)

Both Bentham and Mill are *Hedonistic Utilitarians*.

But there are other versions of Utilitarianism as well, corresponding to different views about value.

Example: Preference-satisfaction



UTILITARIANISM AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

UTILITARIANISM AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

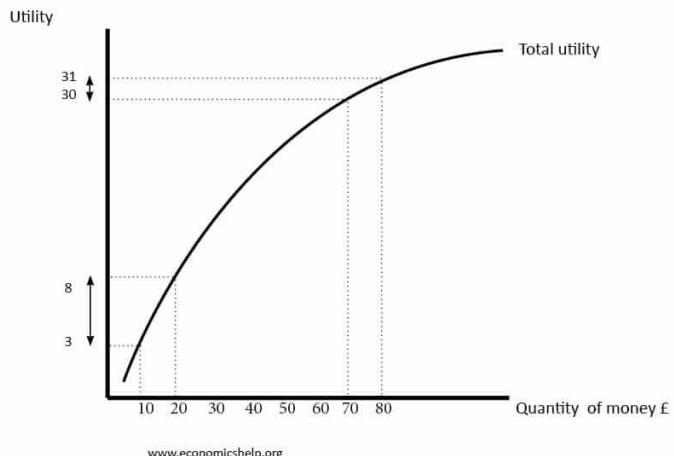
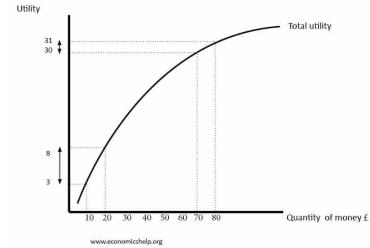
Empirical Assumption:

Money (and other material goods) have decreasing marginal utility.

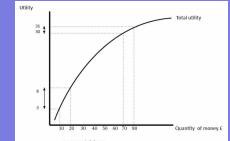
Utilitarianism:

Maximize total utility.

If money has decreasing marginal utility, how should we distribute it?



IN MANY CASES,
MAXIMIZING UTILITY WILL
INVOLVE REDISTRIBUTING
WEALTH FROM THE RICH TO
THE POOR.



UTILITARIANISM AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Two Objections:

1. *Inequality & Happiness.*
Is it unjust that some derive more pleasure from life than others?
2. *Utility Monster.*
There could be someone for whom money has increasing marginal utility. Should we give them much, much more?



QUESTIONS?



UTILITARIANISM: EXAMPLES

Trump:

"WE CANNOT LET THE CURE BE WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM ITSELF."

How would a Utilitarian think about this?



Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump
WE CANNOT LET THE CURE BE WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM ITSELF. AT THE END OF THE 15 DAY PERIOD, WE WILL MAKE A DECISION AS TO WHICH WAY WE WANT TO GO!

11:50 PM - Mar 22, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

34.6K Retweets 167.9K Likes