

How should Wealth, punishment, honor, and all other goods be distributed for the Good of the Community?

Jeremy Bentham and Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism

- Intro review

What is the right way for humans to treat each other....

who are we as human beings?

How rational are we really?

Individual vs. collective rationality

- Today's agenda: Three things

What is Utilitarianism?

How it can conflict with basic individual human rights

Bentham's response" Utilitarian rights

How big mistakes can be made in measuring outcomes

I. Utilitarianism: A science to calculate collective rationality in the community

A. The principle of utility maximization

Applying individual rationality to community decisions (public choice)—NOT collective rationality

B. Community as a fictitious body

C. Science of happiness: adding all benefits and subtracting all costs

D. three examples

E. The Utilitarian calculus:

II. Natural Rights

A. Are certain human rights so fundamental that they rise above such calculations?

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1. Bentham's argument "Nonsense on Stilts"
 2. .What are rights and where do they come from? How do we know what rights we have?
 3. Law creates rights

B. Bentham's Theory of Utilitarian rights

1. A long-term rather than short term calculus
2. Laws that protect rights might guarantee general happiness.
3. This gets close to Rousseau's idea of the General Will.....but not close enough to be the same.
4. But it's not: it's an aggregate of preferences—everyone's preference counts equally

III. Finding a common denominator to weigh our preferences

A. Can all values can be translated into monetary terms?

B. The Philip Morris example

C. The Pinto Example

- D.** Is it possible or desirable to measure and compare all values and goods on a single scale?
- E.** Money as the single scale to measure our preferences