

Introduction to Philosophy

Discussion on Utilitarianism

Classical Utilitarianism

(Jeremy Bentham)

1. **Teleology:** A moral theory that holds the foundation of morality is some final purpose or good; right actions are those that promote this final purpose or good.
2. **Welfarism:** The overall happiness for everyone involved matters.
3. **Quantitative Monism:** Happiness is measured numerically and, specifically, by *one* numerical quantity. This quantity is usually called **utility**.
4. **Sum Ranking:** The overall happiness of everyone is the aggregate utility. This involves two claims: (1) each individual involved has a utility value associated with his or her individual happiness, and (2) the aggregate utility for these people is calculated by summing up the individual utilities.
5. **Optimization:** More utility is always better than less utility.
6. **Hedonism:** Happiness is pleasure.

Eudaimonistic Utilitarianism

(John Stuart Mill)

1. Teleology.
2. Welfarism.
3. **Quantitative Pluralism:** Happiness is measured numerically and, specifically, by a *vector* of numerical quantities or by *plural utilities*. Some utilities in this vector have priority over others. That is, there are some utilities that have more value or priority than other, less valuable utilities.
4. **Vector Sum Ranking:** The overall happiness of everyone is vector of aggregate utilities. This involves two claims: (1) each individual involved has a utility vector associated with the various types of pleasure he or she may receive, and (2) the vector of aggregate utilities for these people is calculated by summing up their individual utility vectors.
5. **Lexical Priority:** No amount of a lower-level utility can overrule a higher-level one. Optimize according to higher-level utility. If there are ties in these higher-level utilities, then optimize on lower-level utilities to break those ties.
6. **Eudaimonism:** Happiness is pleasure, but with strict priority given to those pleasures produced by the exercise of the higher human faculties as opposed to those from the lower faculties.

The following examples are supposed to reveal flaws with utilitarianism:

1. The Joker's "social experiment" with the ferries (*The Dark Knight*).
2. Appealing to equality for distributing happiness (Edgar Frederick Carritt).
3. Appealing to past merit for distributing happiness (Edgar Frederick Carritt).
4. The promise between two Arctic explorers (Edgar Frederick Carritt).
5. Hanging an innocent person (Edgar Frederick Carritt).

What does each example try to show? Which part(s) of utilitarianism does each critique? Why? Does the critique apply more to Bentham, Mill, or both equally?