

Critique of Utilitarianism

I. Utilitarianism's Three Main Principles:

(1) Actions are to be judged right or wrong solely in light of their consequences.

(2) In weighing the consequences of an action, all that matters is the balance of happiness over unhappiness. All else is irrelevant.

(3) In determining the balance of happiness over unhappiness, no one's happiness or unhappiness should weigh more heavily than anyone else's. As Bentham put it: "Everyone is to count for one and no one is to count for more than one." Or everyone's well-being (welfare) is equally important.

II. Questions:

1. Is Happiness All That Matters? Is It the Only Good?

2. How Are the Consequences To Be Calculated? And/or Measured?

3. Are Consequences All That Matter? Ends v. Means.

4. What About Justice?

5. What About Rights?

6. What About Backward-looking Reasons? Do Some Carry Moral Weight?

7. Is Utilitarianism Too Demanding?

8. Do (Can) Personal Relationships Carry Moral Weight?

III. Three Defenses

1. Benefit-type Arguments Work Better than Imagined.

2. Act v. Rule Utilitarianism: A brief Excursus, John Rawls *Two Concepts of Rules*

3. Modern v. Antiquated Beliefs