

Utilitarianism and Business Ethics

What is Good?

All actions aim at something that is good.

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| A good party | A good university |
| A good beer | A good class |
| A good house | A good grade |
| A good roommate | A good job |

What makes all these things 'good'? What is 'goodness'? Is there anything that is good in itself (intrinsically) without qualification?

Why do I seek these things?

They make me happy!

Happiness is a natural end of human life.

The desire to be happy is basic and needs no further justification.

Who Should We Make Happy?

Egoism: Maximize your own happiness.

Altruism: Maximize happiness in others.

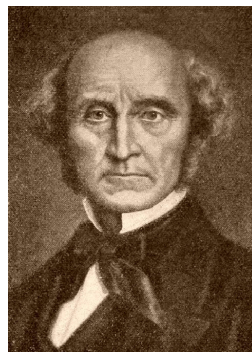
Utilitarianism: Maximize happiness in yourself and others.

Utilitarianism

Happiness or pleasure are the only things of intrinsic value.

We ought to bring about happiness and pleasure in all beings capable of feeling it (and do so impartially).

Reason: If happiness is valuable, there is no difference morally-speaking between my happiness and yours.



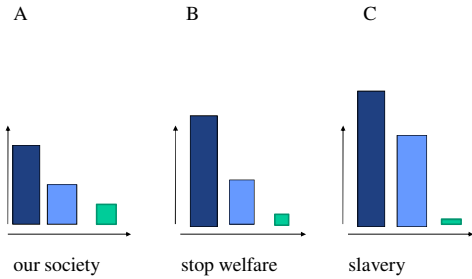
John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

Tax Evasion and Charitable Giving

	self	government	charity
tax evasion, don't donate \$	+10	-5	0
no tax evasion, don't donate \$	-10	+5	0
tax evasion, donate \$	+10/-10	-5/0	0/+15
no tax evasion, donate \$	-10/-10	+5/0	0/+15

Utilitarianism: An Objection

If it benefits more people than it harms, it is ok to have slaves.
(And even obligatory.)



Argument Against Utilitarianism

1. Happiness isn't the *only* thing of value!
2. If it were, then slavery and tax evasion in favor of charitable giving would be permissible (and good) but they aren't.
2. Justice, Fairness, Reliability and other things matter, too.
3. Therefore, Utilitarianism is wrong.

Upshot: There are other values. We need some ethical rules or constraints on the pursuit of happiness that take our other values into consideration.