Utilitarianism
The Principle of Utility
Why Ethics?
Consequentialism?
Ethics at IMSA?

igniting and nurturing creative, ethical scientific minds that advance the human condition
So What is Ethics?

ETHICS...
...are an effort to formulate codes and principles of behavior.

ETHICS...
...is the systematic philosophical study of the moral domain.
Ethics at IMSA?

► Must be/can be taught.
► A necessary field of study.
  ■ “Moral Philosophy”
  ■ Professional Ethics
► General to specific
► Not just about cheating...
Ethics Program and Goal

Meetings

- Three times a semester:
  - Two major ethical writers of systems.
  - One “practical” application or speaker.
    - (bioethics/politics)

Moodle Page (Resources)

Facebook (visit?)

The Start of a Conversation...
The Utilitarians

The Revolutionaries

Jeremy Bentham
The Principles of Morals and Legislation (1789)

John Stuart Mill
Utilitarianism (1861)
The Principle of Utility
The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number

- A matter of “pain” v “pleasure” (or contentedness?)
- The **Ends** of an action are its *only* measure (v. intent)
- May NOT cause any intentional harm
Old Sources for Morality

- RELIGION
  - Received wisdom
  - Actions done to please the divine.
  - GONE

- Abstract Moral Rules
  - Platonic-Reason
  - Virtue
  - GONE
Classical Utilitarianism

1st: Actions judged solely on their consequences.

2nd: In assessing consequences only concern is happiness or unhappiness caused. Period (For all life?)

3rd: No one person’s happiness is more important than any others. Impartiality.
Other Schools

- Hedonistic/Hedonism (Act)
- Utilitarianism
- Preference Satisfaction U.
- Ideal Utilitarianism
- Rule Utilitarianism
- Welfare Utilitarianism
Preference Satisfaction U.

- Right, not good, actions are those that fulfill the interests of those involved
- Nothing can be in itself good or bad – only a preference (future)
- Issues:
  - Conflict of Interests between beings
  - Moral priority given to those capable of holding preferences
  - Do we always prefer that which is good?
Rule Utilitarianism

- Says an action is right insofar as it conforms to a rule that leads to the greatest good. LAW?

- Argue that:
  
  “The rule the following of which has the best overall consequences is the best rule.”
Ideal Utilitarianism

- Ideal utilitarianism states that the only fundamental requirement of morality is to promote a **plurality of intrinsic goods**.

- **Intrinsic goods** – Aesthetic enjoyment, friendship, knowledge, pleasure.

- All intrinsic goods valued, some more than others – Hierarchy between the intellectual and the sensual.

- Moral life not just a virtuous life but a life with pleasure, knowledge, and beauty – resulting in greater satisfaction for man.
Welfare Utilitarianism

Long-term interests of “general welfare” vs. Cost of short-term preference satisfaction

- The principle of Utility as justification for the modern welfare state
- Aim is economic equality and justice through a non-violent compromise with capitalism and existing power structure
Problems?

Examples:

1. Hedonism
   The “Friendship” problem.

2. NASCAR v art?

2. Only Consequences Matter?
   Giving over one innocent person to save many?
Some Defenses

First:
Evolution of “Rule” Utilitarianism v older “Action” based.

Second:
If Utilitarianism contradicts common notions of justice, “SO WHAT?"
Tradition = Correct/best?
Some Topics to run through an Utilitarian Ethic:

- Torture
- Animal Rights
- Taxation
- Better to look for a vaccine against AIDS or a cure?
- Space Program
Torture and Utility?
Where is the bomb?

Physical

Emotional