

Teleological – goal or consequence based; from the Greek word “telos” meaning end or purpose.

Deontological – duty based; from the Greek word “deon” meaning duty or obligation.

Bentham’s Utilitarianism

Jeremy Bentham – (1748-1832) Born in London, the son of an attorney, Bentham was a child prodigy who began studying history and Latin at the age of three. At twelve he entered Queen’s College in Oxford and earned his B.A. in three years, his M.A. in two – at the age of seventeen. His primary philosophical influences were Locke and Hume, and he published several books on political and legal theory, but it was his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789) that made him a powerful and influential international figure. In his *Principles* he lays the groundwork for utilitarianism; as developed by Mill, it is still today one of the leading moral theories in the world.

Principle of Utility – “that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question”

“Calculus of Felicity/Hedonistic Calculus”

- 1) Intensity: How strong is the sensation (of pain or pleasure)?
- 2) Duration: How long does the sensation last?
- 3) Certainty: How clear and distinct is the sensation?
- 4) Propinquity: How soon will it be experienced?
- 5) Fecundity: What other sensations of pleasure/pain will follow?
- 6) Purity: How free from pain is the pleasure, and vice versa?
- 7) Extent: How many persons will be affected by it, one way or the other?

Mill’s Utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill – (1806-1873) Born and educated in London by his father, a prominent philosopher, historian, and economist, Mill began studying Greek at the age of three. He read all the works of Plato in the original Greek by age eight. By twelve he had learned Latin, Euclidean geometry, algebra, and studied Aristotle’s logical treatises. At fourteen he had a college-level understanding of logic, mathematics, and world history. His father raised him on Bentham’s utilitarian doctrines and those of other so-called philosophical radicals. But whereas both Bentham and Mill define their utility principles in terms of avoiding pain and securing pleasure, Mill argues that such straight-forward self-interest is an inadequate criterion of moral goodness. What is missing in Bentham’s moral calculus is a qualitative distinction between pleasures.

Mill revolutionized utilitarian ideas in his most widely influential book, *Utilitarianism* (1863). His major modification of Bentham’s ethical theory is this: The main problem with Bentham’s hedonistic calculus was that it lacks any qualitative distinction between

types of pleasure and pain. Mill therefore adds quality to Bentham's list above saying "Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied." The problem is that this addition makes Bentham's hedonistic calculus no longer a straightforward objective question, since qualitative judgments are subjective. Mill tried to solve the problem by basing his moral theory on his political theory, stating that such moral judgments having to do with qualities would have to be decided democratically, through majority rule, since unlike quantitative judgments they are not objective, but subjective. Competent judges, however, would have to be those who are familiar with the various kinds of pleasures, and so Mill's is a sort of enlightened, rather than purely relativistic, democratic system.