

## Classical Utilitarianism

### 1 Utilitarianism

“By the principle of utility is meant 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: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness.” (Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, (1789, rev. 1823) ch. 1, §II.)

“The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals “utility” or the “greatest happiness principle” holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure.” (John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, (1859) ch. 2, par. 2.)

“By Utilitarianism is here meant the ethical theory, that the conduct which, under any given circumstances, is objectively right, is that which will produce the greatest amount of happiness on the whole; that is, taking into account all whose happiness is affected by the conduct.” (Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed., (1907), Bk. 4 Ch. 1 §1 ¶2.)

### 2 Basic elements

1. Hedonistic theory of good and bad.
2. Consequentialist theory of right and wrong.

### 3 Relationship with common sense morality

1. Common sense morality is implicitly utilitarian for the most part.
2. When it isn't, it's indefensible.

