

Jeremy Bentham (Book notes)

• Chapter 1

- Principle of utility approves/disproves every action → pain + pleasure indicate what we ought to do + determines what we shall do
- Interests of the community (a fictitious body composed of individual members) sum of the interests of its members → an action is right if it conforms to that principle

• Chapter 2

- Opposition to utilitarianism is either complete or partial
 - 1) Constant opposition: asceticism → approving actions when they diminish happiness
 - Moralists (hope for pleasure drives them), religionists (fear drives them) → fear is stronger than hope
 - 2) partial opposition: principle of sympathy → people who formulate arguments w/out need of external evidence
 - Theological principle: obtaining divine guidance → but humans can't know the will of god b/c interpretations vary so much

• Chapter IV

- pleasures are the ends that legislators have in mind → understands their value
- value of pleasure/pain considered by itself: intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity/remoteness
 - ↳ when considering for an act by which its produced: fecundity (chance of repetition), purity, extent

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Jeremy Bentham:

- Quantitative Utilitarianism
 - ↳ Central Claims
 - Accepts psychological hedonism: pain + pleasure govern all actions and decisions
 - Extends to ethical hedonism

- what is good for us as an end: pleasure
- bad for us as an end: pain
- good for us as a means: what brings other good things
- Form of consequentialism: morality requires us to do whatever would produce the best outcome
- Homogeneity and aggregation of what is valuable: all values are equal and can be added together: the more pleasure there is in the world, the more value there is

↳ The Principle of Utility

1) Defines utility as the good

- concerns the community's interest (utility) not the individual's (egoism)

↳ the community: a fictitious body composed of the individual persons (members)

↳ Its interests: the sum of the interests of the members who compose it

2) Specifies utility as a standard for all types of action

- every group and individual should assess their actions in terms of utility
- social, legal, religious institutions should constrain individual (self-interested) behavior to promote utility

3) Generates normative requirements

↳ There would be no meaning to the words

correct/incorrect without the principle of utility

- The morally correct/right action is whatever will best promote utility

- In order to say something is right/wrong, there has to be some standard that makes it right/wrong in relation to

4) The Fundamental principle of morality

- no need for / possibility of a proof

↳ other competing principles either collapse into the principle of utility or are indefensible

- The principle of Asceticism: to maximize pain

↳ implausible: no one would believe it

- The principle of Sympathy and antipathy:

↳ any opinion is correct based on an individual's feelings → Faux principle: doesn't settle any disputes

• The Value of a Pleasure

↳ Claim: "The value of a pleasure or a pain... will be greater or less according to circumstance"

- 1) intensity → how strong it is
- 2) duration → how long it lasts
- 3) certainty → how likely it will occur
- 4) propinquity → how soon it will occur
- 5) fecundity → how much further produced
- 6) purity → how much pain is involved
- 7) extent → how many people are affected

- Moral correctness of an action is a measure

of the aggregation of the balance of the
resultant utility

- ° There is no hierarchy of pleasure