

Utilitarianism

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Utilitarianism Let me begin by defining Utilitarianism: utilitarianism is the belief of doing what is right for the greater number of people. It is a theory used to determine the usefulness of the happiest outcome and how it will affect everyone else. Now, this sounds like a amazing theory, what would be better than making yourself and others happy? I found myself at first agreeing with this theory up until I really looked into it. At first I found myself thinking that not everything is about being happy; some may have to suffer for the happiness of others. For example, there were two boats one contains three criminals on death row being transported to prison and the other boat contains ten happy, loving families simply enjoying a vacation. Both ships have bombs that will go off in a matter of seconds, blowing up both ships and killing everyone. However, there is a solution. I for some odd reason have a device that sets off a bomb on ONE SHIP and deactivates the other. Now the morally right thing to do would be what? What is moral and right? Taking lives? Or saving them? I do not believe in ' playing God' or taking lives. I would simply ignore the Utilitarianism way of thinking and walk away. I would let nature take its course. If God has arranged this to happen, then it is meant to happen. Who am I to walk in and ' play God' ? I have to say I agree with Hospers when he says " A hundred men might gain great pleasure from beating up or killing just one Insignificant human being; but other men's lives are not theirs to dispose of. " (Hospers) A Utilitarian would approach this situation by asking himself/herself, what will bring happiness? What will do good for greater numbers of people? Why should the prisoners get to live? There are only three prisoners, and have done nothing good but cause harm to society. What have these families done? The Utilitarian will

start to analyze each detail of the situation. They first see that there are only three prisoners as opposed to ten large families. Hence, there are less people on the prisoners boat. Then he/she will see that the prisoners have already been sentenced to death, all being on death row. However, the main point will be that these are three bad men. Doing bad things, and causing pain and sorrow to others. Why should ten happy families be punished for their wrong doings? The Utilitarian would settle for simply deactivating the bomb on the prisoners boat. Believing that killing them will bring greater good and happiness to all. My argument to this is a human life is a human life; what if one of those men are actually innocent and were convicted for a crime he didn't commit? What if the other criminal was to be released in the morning and go home to a family of eight children and a loving wife? Truth is we don't know. Utilitarianism fails to acknowledge that a life is a life- we are not suppose to be playing God. We don't decide who lives and who dies, even if it is for the greater good. We should just let nature run its course. Utilitarianism is a theory of always choosing pleasure over pain for the greater good of all. I believe that I have kept a closed mind towards Utilitarianism. The prisoners are already on death row, which means they are going to die for the evil they have set loose on our world. Why should I sacrifice the lives of innocent families, for a couple of men that have caused unhappiness to all? I want to reach happiness, as does everyone else in the world. I mean does the world function over what the greater good for all is? Is that why we have soldiers in Iraq sacrificing their lives for the greater good of America? Maybe I have just overlooked all the positive outcomes of Utilitarianism. I find myself agreeing with a lot of what it has to say. I want

happiness, I want innocent lives to be saved, and I want to strive for the greater good of all. I find it interesting how easy it is to fall into the comfort of Utilitarianism. It goes along with my morals and values and yet I still feel a sort of guilt. If I were to deactivate the bomb on the ship with the families and let the prisoners die, I would still be taking a human life. In my religion (Catholicism), a life is a life. We must forgive sinners and those who have sinned against us. But if these prisoners are on death row...were they already destined to die? Would that already be in God's plan? Was it God who sacrificed his only son for all of us sinners? I feel in a way that makes God himself a follower of utilitarianism. He set the example of offering his only son for our sins, to open the gates of heaven for everyone. Yet one of the Ten Commandments is "Thou shall not kill." Is that not hypocritical? As I keep analyzing this situation I realize that God is God. He decides who lives and who dies, not us. I feel that it's hard to stick to my morals when hearing the theory of Utilitarianism. Allowing someone to die at my hand for the greater good, for happiness of others. That just sounds selfish to me, kind of like the holocaust. Did all those innocent Jews endure experimentation and torture for the greater good of all? I mean, if it weren't for these grotesque experiments we wouldn't know the maximum altitude that crews in damaged planes can parachute safely to the ground or find the cure/treatment for hypothermia. The Jews were used as guinea pigs for the greater good of everyone else. Is that not Utilitarianism? So many people could have died of hypothermia if that experiment was never conducted. But how many innocent lives were lost to reach this conclusion? Is there a limit to how much sacrifice should be made for the greater good? There should be. This is

where I cannot connect with Utilitarianism, the fact that some sort of evil has to be done to help others. I see hypocrisy in this theory; it wants happiness but wants to rule out evil. People are evil, mean and rude. No one can be happy all the time; no one can bring eternal happiness. This takes me back to my original example, who would I save? The prisoners on death row or the innocent families? The Utilitarian's seem to have a more interesting argument. Its funny how by writing this paper, my views changed. I look at the situation differently now. I do not feel as biased and conservative as before. My ideas have changed to a more liberal understanding sense. Why release these evil me back into the world? We have enough chaos and evil. These are just three men who chose their paths and now have to pay for it. They were sentenced to death for a reason, I will not be held responsible for the innocence of happy families, children, parents, aunts and uncles. They are not in prison because they have not done anything wrong. They simply stepped onto a ship, whose fate I now hold in my hands. I have made my choice; I will deactivate the bomb on the families boat and let the prisoners face death.