

Utilitarianism

PHIL 102

Ethics, Politics, and Law

Spring Quarter 2007

Lecture Six

Matthew Donnelly, Again

- ***The greatest good for the greatest number***
- ***The least bad for the greatest number***
- ***Mathew asks Harold***
- ***So do it!***

Do it		Don't do it	
+	-	+	-
Very little	Lots. but less	Very little	Lots. but more

Matthew Donnelly, Again

- ***The greatest good for the greatest number***
- ***The least bad for the greatest number***
- ***Harold asks Mathew – and he says yes***
- ***So do it!***

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Matthew Donnelly, Again

- ***The greatest good for the greatest number***
- ***The least bad for the greatest number***
- ***Harold asks Mathew – and he says no***
- ***So do it!***

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Problems for Utilitarianism

- ***Is happiness the only thing that matters?***
- ***Are consequences the only thing that matter?***
 - ***Justice***
 - ***Rights***
 - ***Backward-Looking reasons***
 - ***Too demanding***
 - ***Personal relationships***

Can Utilitarianism be Salvaged?

- ***There still are contemporary utilitarians***
- ***Unrealistic counter-examples?***
- ***Move to "rule utilitarianism"***
- ***J.J.C. Smart's response***
- ***Consequences matter, even if they're not the only thing that do***

The Categorical Imperative

- **I. Kant [1724-1804]**
- **Deontology – Moral duty**
- **Irrelevance of consequences**
- **Imperatives**
 - Hypothetical
 - Categorical
- **One single categorical imperative**
- **Three different versions**



The Categorical Imperative

Act only according to the maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become universal law.

The Categorical Imperative

- **The Golden Rule**
- **Inconsistency in attitude**
- **Impossibility of universalization**
- **Lying**
 - **Depends on general truth telling**
 - **What would happened if everyone lied?**
 - **Could no longer tell lies**
 - **But also could no longer tell the truth**
 - **Universalization is impossible – lying is wrong**

The Inquiring Murderer

- **The story**
- **What you believe if you tell the truth**
- **What you believe if you say nothing**
- **So, should you lie?**
 - The categorical imperative, again
 - Kant's other [weak] argument
- **Seems wrong**
- **Problem of specifying the maxim**
 - Too general – doesn't admit exceptions
 - Too specific – admits too many exceptions