

Open Question Argument...

- Meaning of a word determines what the word refers to. The reference of a word is thus whatever satisfies the idea we have in our mind when we use the word.
 - P_1 : if two words that are used to talk about *different* properties have the same meaning, then the *different* properties are in fact one and the same property only
 - P_2 : A moral property such as the property of being good can be a natural property only if the word “good” means the same as some words which we use to talk about natural properties.
 - P_3 : The words “A” and “B” mean something different if and only if the question “X is A, but is it B?” is an open question. A question is open if you can begin to consider how to answer it and closed if you can’t.
 - P_4 : Questions of the form “X is N, but is X good?,” where N stands for a word used to talk about a natural property, are always open questions.
 - Conclusion: Moral properties (like the property of being good) are not natural properties.

Moral Naturalism's response to OQA

- These days, naturalists use the “water/H₂O” example in their defense.
- H₂O theory explains the underlying nature of water, even though it does not explain the meaning of the word “water”.
- People understood the word “water” long before modern chemistry arose. Before the late 18th century, people thought that water was an element. It's not the case that they didn't understand what “water” meant, though.
 - So it can't be that “water” means the same as “H₂O”.
- Similarly, the ethical naturalists would say, most people today understand the meaning of “good”, “right”, etc., even if they don't know the correct theory that explains the underlying nature of moral properties.
- Do you think contemporary naturalists can escape the OQA?

Moral Intuitionism

- Moral intuitionists hold three main views:
 - (i) There are objective moral truths,
 - (ii) (Some) moral truths are irreducible, and
 - (iii) we know (some of) these truths through Moral intuition.
- Intuitionists like to compare ethics to mathematics.
 - Goodness is not located anywhere, nor does it come from anywhere, any more than the number 2 is located or comes from somewhere.
- An intuition is a mental state that you have in which something just seems true to you, upon reflecting on it intellectually, in a way that does not depend upon your going through an argument for it.

Moral Intuitionism

- A moral intuition is just an intuition that's about morality.
 - E.g., when you think about $[3 > 1]$, you should have a (mathematical) intuition that it's true;
 - when you think about [It's wrong to cause harm for no reason], you should have an (moral) intuition that that's true.
- Why should we believe our intuitions?
 - It is rational to assume that things are the way they appear, unless and until one has specific reasons to doubt this.
 - That includes the beliefs that we get from perception, memory, introspection, and reasoning,
 - We believe what we believe because it seems correct to us and we lack sufficient reasons to doubt it.
- So, that's also why it makes sense to believe, for example, that it's wrong to cause harm for no reason: That seems true, and we have no good reason to doubt it.

Moral Intuitionism...

- They believe moral knowledge is foundational
 - These propositions are “self-evident”
 - They will not necessarily seem obviously true to everyone.
 - Understanding and attentively considering a self-evident proposition is sufficient for being justified to believe it
 - Nothing can be both red and green all over; The existence of grandchildren is impossible without at least three generations.
 - Pain and suffering is bad.
 - It is wrong to kill innocent people in ordinary situations.
 - Other things being equal, you should keep your promises.

Moral Intuitionism - Evaluations

- People sometimes find moral knowledge weird because it is not based on observation. But mathematics is not based on observation either. Mathematics starts from certain self-evident axioms, from which you can then infer further conclusions.
 - a “self-evident” proposition is one that is obvious when you think about it, in a way that doesn’t require an argument; you can directly see that it’s true. For instance, that 3 is greater than 1, that the shortest path between two points is a straight line, or that if $a=b$ and $b=c$, then $a=c$.
- Similarly, perhaps the field of ethics rests on self-evident moral axioms. For instance, maybe it’s self-evident that enjoyment is good in itself; that one should not cause harm for no reason; or that if $a > b$ and $b > c$, then $a > c$.
- How do we test intuitions?
- People’s intuitions might differ
- Seems out of sync with scientific world view

Do we have moral knowledge?

- Intuitive appeal
 - Objectivity; Possibility of mistake
- Moral knowledge ~Scientific knowledge?
 - Observed empirically; Causally effective
 - Problems with analysis [Good = Pleasure?]
 - One possible solution [Water is H₂O]
- Moral Knowledge ~ Mathematical knowledge?
 - Self-evident; Axiomatic
 - Problems with intuitions

A dark grey background featuring a collage of white, chalk-like sketches of various educational and scientific icons. These include a globe, a microscope, a book, a percentage sign, a ruler, and various geometric shapes like triangles and rectangles.

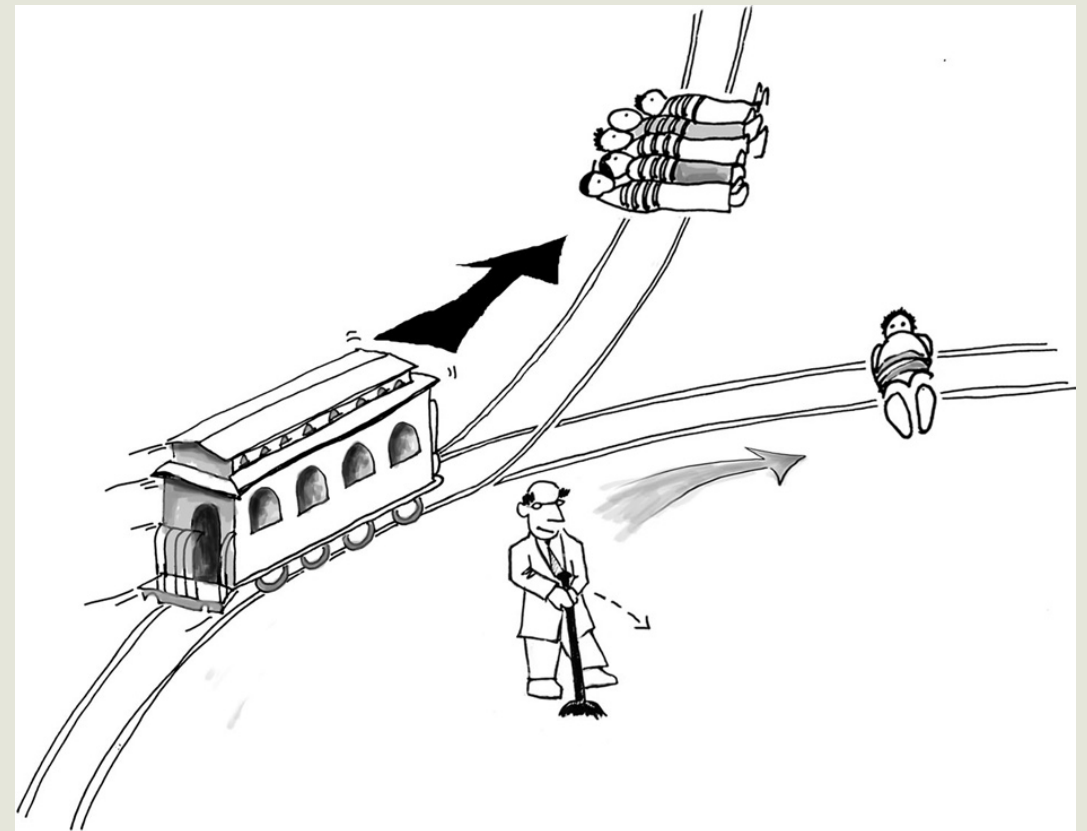
NORMATIVE ETHICS

Consequentialism

TROLLEY PROBLEM (CASE 1)

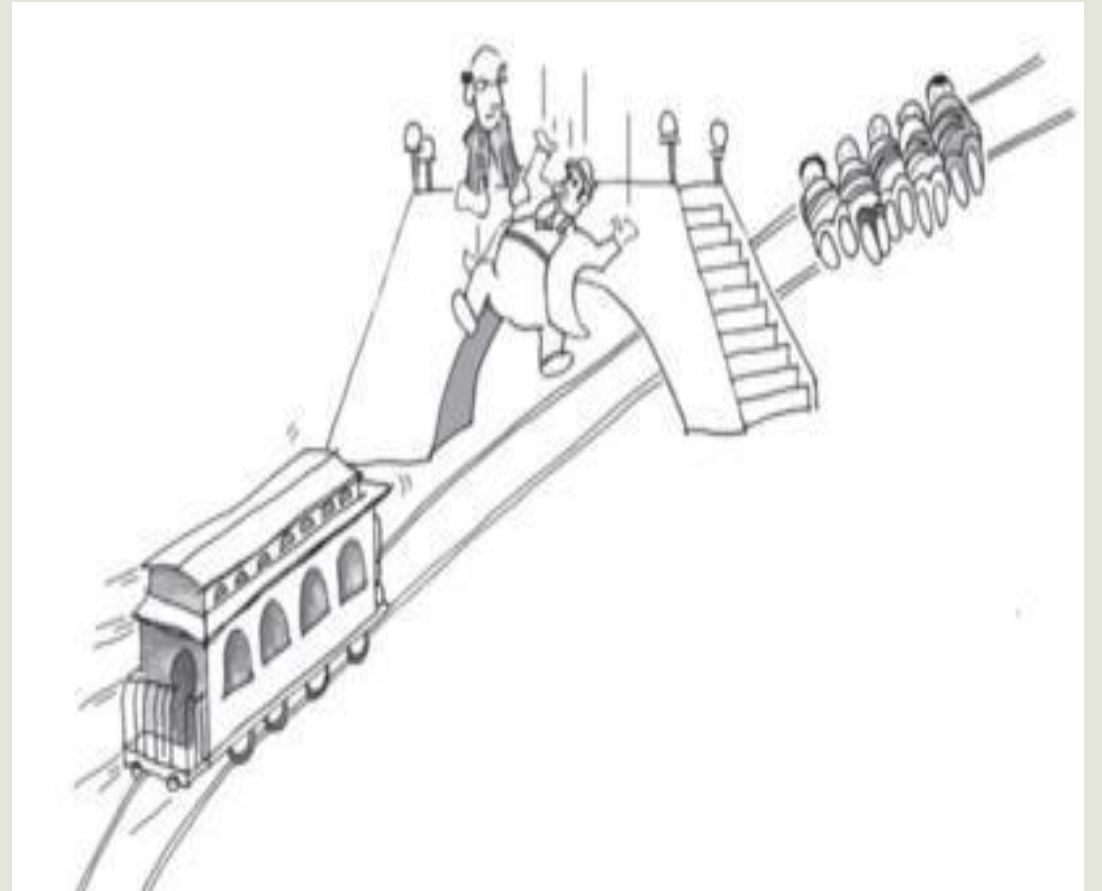
There is a trolley (consider it a lone engine compartment) whose breaks have failed and it is moving at a high speed down the railway tracks. Ahead, on the tracks, there are five people tied up and unable to move. The trolley is headed straight for them. You are standing some distance off in the train yard, next to a lever. If you pull this lever, the trolley will switch to a different set of tracks. However, you notice that there is one person on the side track. You have two options:

1. Do nothing and allow the trolley to kill the five people on the main track.
2. Pull the lever, diverting the trolley onto the side track where it will kill one person.

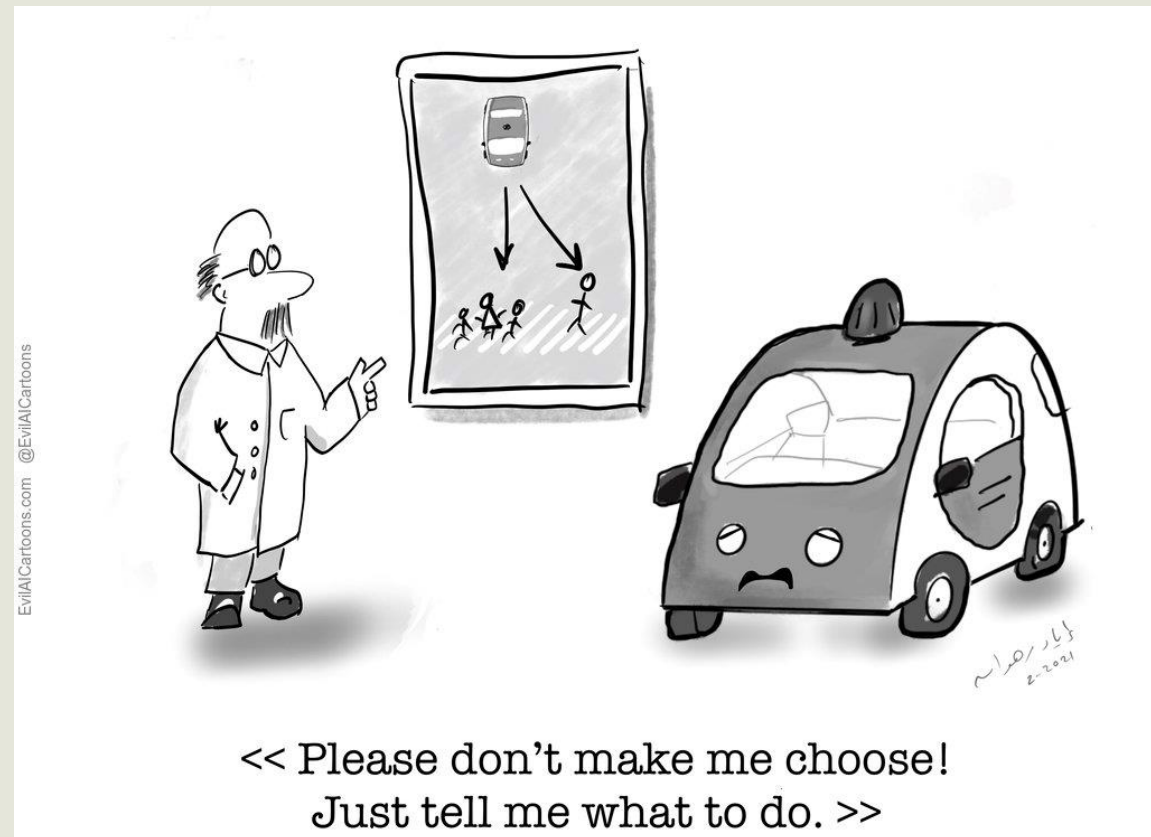


TROLLEY PROBLEM (CASE 2)

As before, a trolley is hurtling down a track towards five people. You are on a bridge under which it will pass, and you can stop it by putting something very heavy in front of it. As it happens, there is a large man next to you, say with a huge back pack. Your only way to stop the trolley is to push him over the bridge and onto the track, killing him, but saving the five. Should you push?



Self-driving Cars and the Trolley Problem!



CONSEQUENTIALISM

- There are two distinct families of moral qualities.
 - **Evaluative qualities:** “value,” “good,” “bad,” “desirable,” “worthwhile,” “utility”...
 - **deontic qualities:** “ought,” “must,” “should,” “right,” “permissible,” “wrong,” “reasons,” “duty,” “obligation”...
- **Consequentialism** claims that we can only make sense of the deontic qualities in terms of the evaluative ones.
 - This is to say that consequentialists think that truths about good and bad explain all the truths about right and wrong.
 - Right actions are the ones that produce the most good.
 - Consequentialist ethical theories separate right and wrong actions by focusing on the consequences of those actions.

Classical Utilitarianism

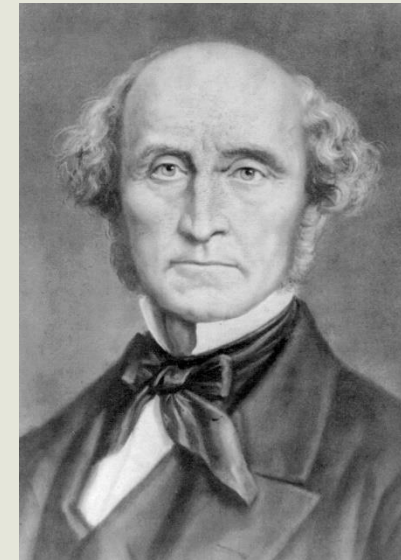
- Classical Utilitarianism can be summed up in three propositions:
 - (a) The morality of an action depends solely on the consequences of the action; nothing else matters.
 - (b) An action's consequences matter only insofar as they involve the greater or lesser happiness of individuals.
 - (c) In the assessment of consequences, each individual's happiness gets equal consideration.
- According to Classical Utilitarianism, an action is right
 - if it produces the greatest overall balance of happiness over unhappiness.

CLASSICAL UTILITARIANISM

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)



John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)



BENTHAM'S UTILITARIANISM

- Utilitarianism is so-called because it is concerned with 'utility'.
- Bentham explains what he means by 'utility', making the connection between utility and happiness:
 - By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered.
- So, something has 'utility' if it contributes to your happiness, which is the same as what is in your interest. And happiness is pleasure and the absence of pain.
- The claim that pleasure, as happiness, is the only good is known as hedonism.

BENTHAM'S UTILITARIANISM

- Bentham begins with what he feels like a universal truth about human actions
 - All human beings desire pleasure and avoid pain
 - Pleasure and Pain are two sovereign masters of human beings
 - Therefore Pleasure is GOOD and Pain is BAD
- If we want to think of a society and apply this principle, then we can argue that if an individual's pleasure is good for him/her, then general happiness is good for all.
 - But it cannot be each individual's pleasure and pain as one's pleasure could be another's pain.
- Bentham then decided that what we needed to strive towards was – “Greatest Good for the greatest number”

BENTHAM'S UTILITARIANISM...

- The motto for Bentham's Utilitarianism became that an action is GOOD if it causes
 - Maximum pleasure for the maximum number of people or minimum pain for minimum number of people
- To maximize pleasure or minimize pain, what is needed is a way to measure pleasure and pain.
- To measure any quantity, we need a unit. So, Bentham came up with a unit called 'hedons'.

BENTHAM'S UTILITARIANISM...

- While Bentham did not define what one Hedon is equivalent to, he relied on two aspects to understand this quantification
 - Relative gradation
 - An assumption of uniformity in human needs and wants
- Thus, Bentham's utilitarianism is also called as Quantitative utilitarianism

UTILITARIANISM IN REAL LIFE - 1

- Worried about the rising health care costs of smoking, the Czech government considered raising taxes on cigarettes. In hopes of fending off the tax increase, Philip Morris commissioned a cost-benefit analysis of the effects of smoking on the Czech national budget. The study found that the government actually gains more money than it loses from smoking!
- Reason: although smokers impose higher medical costs on the budget while they are alive, they die early, and so save the government considerable sums in health care, pensions, and housing for the elderly

THE BENEFITS OF LUNG CANCER!

Income and positive external effects	21,463 mil CZK
Savings on housing for elderly	28 mil CZK
Pension & soc. expenses savings due to early mortality	196 mil CZK
Health care costs savings due to early mortality	968 mil CZK
Customs duty	354 mil CZK
Corporate income tax	747 mil CZK
VAT	3,521 mil CZK
Excise tax	15,648 mil CZK
Smoking related public finance costs	15,647 mil CZK
Fire induced costs	49 mil CZK
Lost income tax due to higher mortality	1,367 mil CZK
Days out of work related public finance costs	1,667 mil CZK
ETS related health care costs	1,142 mil CZK
Smoking (first hand) related health care costs	11,422 mil CZK
NET BALANCE	+5,815 mil. CZK

UTILITARIANISM IN REAL LIFE - 2

- During the 1970s, the Ford Pinto was one of the best-selling subcompact cars in the United States. Unfortunately, its fuel tank was prone to explode when another car collided with it from the rear. More than five hundred people died when their Pintos burst into " flames, and many more suffered severe burn injuries.
- The engineers decided not to recall the vehicles because
 - Costs - $\$11/\text{part} \times 12.5 \text{ million cars} = \137 million
 - Benefits $180 \text{ deaths} \times \$200,000 + 180 \text{ injuries} \times \$67,000 + 2000 \text{ vehicles} \times \$700 = \$49 \text{ million}$

CRITICISMS OF BENTHAM'S UTILITARIANISM

- Deliberation procedure vs criterion of rightness
- Bentham seems to rely on Hedonism: The Thesis that pleasure is the one ultimate good
 - Nozick's Happiness Machine?
 - We value things other than pleasure. For ex - artistic creativity and friendship.
- Minority rights are not respected
 - Threat of Majoritarianism

CRITICISMS OF BENTHAM'S UTILITARIANISM...

- Utilitarianism believes that ends justify means
 - Emergency, Cheating in sports
- Excludes backward-looking reasons.
- Appears to be too demanding
- Contrary to normal human emotions, but loving relationships could not even exist apart from special responsibilities and obligations.

Non-Hedonistic Consequentialism

- Claim that well-being is good and then understand wellbeing in terms of desire satisfaction.
 - It is always right to maximize the general amount of desire satisfaction.
 - Accept a form of consequentialism according to which it is always right to maximize the realization of human capabilities
- Even more value pluralist forms of consequentialism could claim that:
 - Some basic acts like breaking of promises, killing, and lying are bad in themselves.
 - Some things like human interaction, knowledge, virtue, and aesthetic pleasures are good in themselves.
- These views would then go on to argue that it is always right for you to act in ways that minimize the number of bad acts done, and maximize the amount of intrinsically good things.
- Maximising v/s Satisficing

JS MILL'S UTILITARIANISM

- Two major differences with Bentham highlight how Mill supported Utilitarianism while responding to existing criticisms
- Firstly, he believed that pleasure had both quality and quantity
 - There could be higher and lower pleasures
 - Higher pleasures are those pleasures that only human beings are capable of enjoying
 - Music, Sculpture, Literature
 - Lower pleasures are those that even animals are capable of enjoying
 - Sleeping, eating
 - When in doubt we can ask a group of experts to adjudicate which is a higher or lower pleasure.
- This helped create a role for the government to intervene in cases of minority oppression

JS MILL'S UTILITARIANISM...

- Secondly, Mill believed in Rule utilitarianism than Bentham's Act utilitarianism
 - That action is good which causes happiness in the long run, if people were to practice it as a rule
 - Ex- one instance of corruption v/s corruption as a rule
- Another difference is the importance Mill gave to conscience as opposed to Bentham

CRITICISMS

- Elitism
 - Higher pleasures seem not to be shared among the common folks
- Intention and Situation are not taken into account
- Minority can still be suppressed

UTILITARIANISM - SUMMARY

- In its simplest form, utilitarianism is defined by its answer to three basic moral questions.
- What is right?
 - Actions are morally right or wrong depending on their consequences and nothing else. An act is right if it maximises what is good. This is indicative of consequentialism.
- What is good?
 - The only thing that is good is happiness, understood as pleasure and the absence of pain. This is indicative of hedonism.
- Who counts?
 - No one's happiness counts more than anyone else's. This is a commitment to equality.