



# THE PRINCIPLE OF UTILITY: Bentham

*[Here you will determine the net benefits for all affected by a proposed action.]*

1. You must thoroughly analyze the consequences for the central stakeholders.
  - ☐ look at the kinds of values life vs lesser values - certainty/extent/severity etc...
  - ☐ look at the numbers of people involved in each stakeholder category.
2. Then explain why utility is the moral principle that supports your resolution of choice. *[Why does using the principle of utility point to the best resolution?]*

# THE PRINCIPLE OF RIGHTS: Kant

*["Respecting a person" requires that their right to free and equal treatment be protected.]*

In order to ensure respect you must ask two questions of a proposed action.

- Can it be universalized? Is there a logical or practical problem with extending the underlying moral standard to all case of a similar type?
  - *[You can also reverse the moral principle to see if being treated that way would advance your freedom or equality.]*
- Does the action use people merely as means?
  - [Does it interfere with people's ability to achieve their goals?]



# John Rawls: Theory of Justice

- The basis of a society is a set of tacit agreements. [“social contract”]
- The agreed-upon principles must not be dependent on one’s place in society.

*Rawls believed that rational, self-interested people with roughly similar needs would choose the following two principles to guide their moral interactions*



# **John Rawls: Theory of Justice**

1. The Principle of Equal Liberty
2. a. The Difference Principle  
b. Principle of Fair Equality of Opportunity



# The Principle of Equal Liberty

Whether the action protects our rights from invasion and provides rights for us equal to the rights of others.

- This principle goes beyond protecting us from invasions of our privacy to prohibiting force, fraud and deception.
  - The latter would deprive us of rights equal to others.

This preserves the Kantian commitment –  
*no one wants to be treated as a “mere means”*



*The second principle has two parts*

## **PART 1: The Difference Principle**

There will be inequalities, but we are morally obligated to improve the worst off unless it would make everyone worse off.

- In business this guarantees an efficient use of resources and competitive markets free of price-fixing and monopolies.
- *Omelas?*

Preserves the Utilitarian belief in “net benefits”



## PART 2: Principle of Fair Equality of Opportunity

Requires that job qualifications be related to the job.

- There must be equal access to training for the most desirable jobs.

These principles combine Kant [*treating people as free & equal*] & Utilitarianism [*treating people equal*]



# Rawls' justification for this choice of principles

How are these principles to be chosen?

- From the “original position” behind the “veil of ignorance”
  - You know you would be IN the society, but none of the details with regard to sex, religion, economic class etc...
- He believes that these are the principles that a rational self-interested person would choose if they were in the “original position” behind the “veil of ignorance.”





**UTILITY:** focuses on all affected by a potential action

- Bentham -- Weighs the social costs and benefits, looking for the action that provides the “greatest net benefits”

**RIGHTS:** focuses on the freedom & equality of individuals

- Kant -- Decides on the basis of rights that a person has that are necessary to provide freedom and equality for that person.

**JUSTICE:** focuses on the distribution of goods

- Rawls -- Looks for a fair distribution of benefits and burdens. The question is which moral principles will ensure that.