

Utilitarianism

the best for the most



George Matthews, Pennsylvania College of Technology

2020

Traditional society

Traditional society



Traditional society



- Who you are matters, and some matter more than others for the sake of distribution of benefits, burdens and roles.

Traditional society



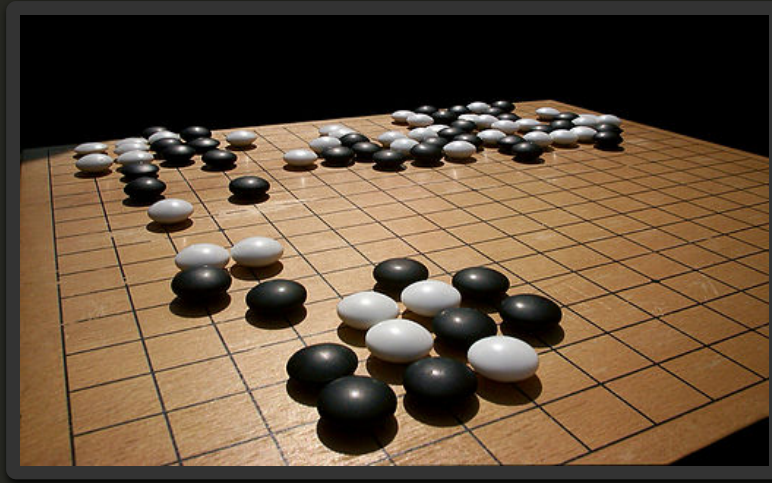
- Who you are matters, and some matter more than others for the sake of distribution of benefits, burdens and roles.
- **Assumption:** *the good of all* requires that we play the roles we are all assigned by nature and inherited social status.

Modern society

Modern society

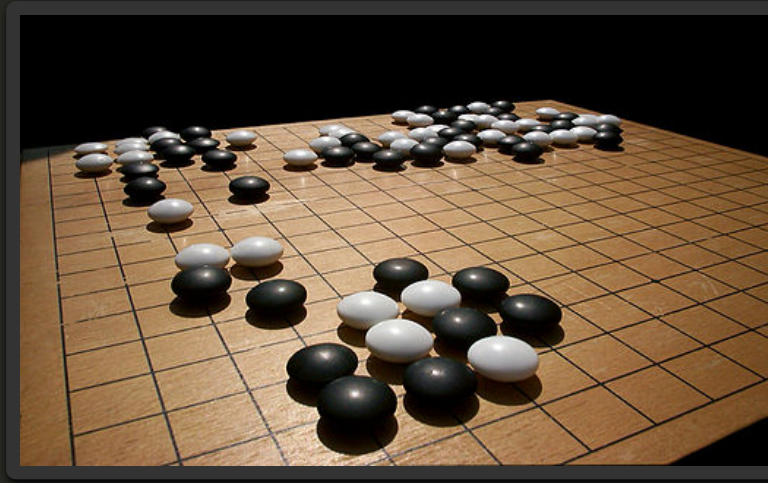


Modern society



- We all matter equally -- benefits and burdens are distributed according to a set of neutral decision procedures.

Modern society



- We all matter equally -- benefits and burdens are distributed according to a set of neutral decision procedures.
- **Assumption:** *the good of all* is best served by allowing individuals to pursue their own conceptions of what is good for them.

Bentham's hedonistic utilitarianism



Jeremy Bentham
1748-1832

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"We are ruled by two sovereign masters, pleasure and pain."



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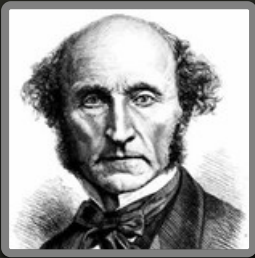
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- He attempted to quantify pleasures and pains and developed a method of moral calculation based on this.

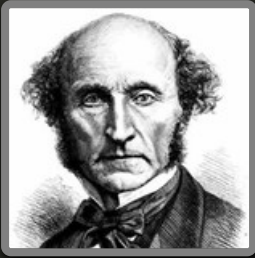
Mill's preference utilitarianism



John Stuart Mill
1806-1873

Mill's preference utilitarianism

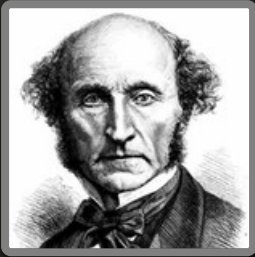
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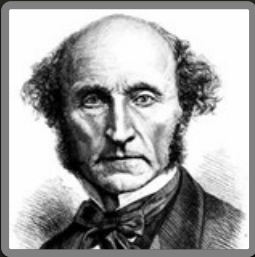


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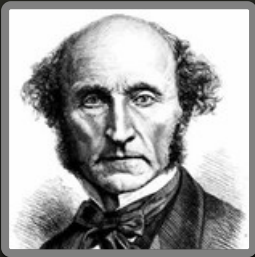


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- He tried to show how all moral rules could be explained as the attempt to help as many individuals satisfy as many of their preferences as possible.

Find out more

Utilitarianism, Frank Aragbonfoh Abumere, *Introduction to Philosophy: Ethics*.

Utilitarianism: Act and Rule: The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy has a comprehensive account including lots of discussion of contemporary versions of the theory.

Poverty and Our Response to it: in this Crash Course video, Hank Green discusses the morality of our responses to poverty and the work of a contemporary Utilitarian philosopher, Peter Singer.



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