

NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS

GOALS OF THIS PART OF THE COURSE

What are the goals of public policy?

What do we mean by *good* public policy?

Three approaches

1. **Philosophical:** Normative political theory
2. **Procedural:** Social choice theory
3. A more modest set of goals and associated model

GOALS OF THIS LECTURE

Introduction to normative political theory

Reasonable people can disagree

Not all good things go together

Clarify concepts and debates

NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS ARE MODELS

Clarify and argue for normative principles

Describe trade-offs among goals and offer arguments about how to balance the trade-offs

We aren't looking for the **right** normative framework, we are looking for useful normative frameworks

Private vs. public morality

OUTLINE

WELFARISM

Utilitarianism

Some Problems for Utilitarianism

CONSEQUENTIALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

DEONTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

EGALITARIANISM

Equality of Wealth

Equality of Opportunity

TAKE AWAYS

WELFARISM FOCUSES ON CONSEQUENCES FOR WELFARE

A *consequentialist* normative framework

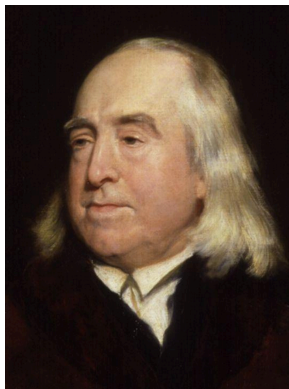
- ▶ Determines the rightness or wrongness of an action, policy, or social arrangement by its consequences

Here, the consequence is people's welfare

UTILITARIANISM: A SPECIAL CASE OF WELFARISM

“The greatest happiness of the greatest number is the foundation of morals and legislation.”

Underlying normative concept for almost all of policy analysis



Jeremy Bentham

WHY UTILITARIANISM?

Easy form of welfarism to think about and quantify

- ▶ Though informational requirement of interpersonally comparable utility is quite strong

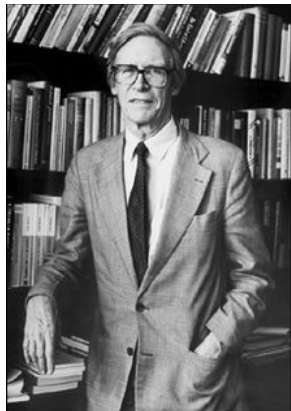
Provides a powerful way of thinking about trade-offs

- ▶ Always just add up the “plusses and minuses”

Treats individual welfares symmetrically

THINKING ABOUT PROBLEMATIC CASES

“Objections by way of counter-examples are to be made with care, since these may tell us only what we know already, namely that our theory is wrong somewhere. The important thing is to find out how often and how far it is wrong. All theories are presumably mistaken in places. The real question at any given time is which of the views already proposed is the best approximation overall.”



John Rawls

CHALLENGES FOR UTILITARIANISM

Trolleys, transplants, and beyond

- ▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-N_RZJUAQY4

Intergenerational Equity

Relationships



OUTLINE

WELFARISM

Utilitarianism

Some Problems for Utilitarianism

CONSEQUENTIALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

DEONTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

EGALITARIANISM

Equality of Wealth

Equality of Opportunity

TAKE AWAYS

COSMOPOLITANISM

To apply a consequentialist framework, you must first identify the relevant population

Within a country vs. across countries

Within a generation or across generations

OUTLINE

WELFARISM

Utilitarianism

Some Problems for Utilitarianism

CONSEQUENTIALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

DEONTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

EGALITARIANISM

Equality of Wealth

Equality of Opportunity

TAKE AWAYS

WHAT IS A DEONTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Judge a policy or social arrangement by conformity to a moral norm or duty, rather than by its consequences

Rights and duties

Kantian autonomy

2 VERSIONS OF KANT'S CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

1. An action is moral only if a rational person would be willing to make the maxim (principle) that motivates the action a universal law.
2. We must never treat another person's humanity as merely a means, but rather always as an end unto itself.

How CI helps with the trolley problem etc.

CHALLENGES FOR DEONTOLOGY

Trade-offs

Paradox of deontology

Identifying the maxim

OUTLINE

WELFARISM

Utilitarianism

Some Problems for Utilitarianism

CONSEQUENTIALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

DEONTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

EGALITARIANISM

Equality of Wealth

Equality of Opportunity

TAKE AWAYS

EGALITARIANISM

Equality of what?

- ▶ Wealth
- ▶ Opportunity

PROBLEMS FOR EQUALITY OF WEALTH

Prioritization and Efficiency

Incentives

Leveling Down

LEVELING DOWN

	Person <i>A</i>	Person <i>B</i>
Society 1	20	20
Society 2	30	40

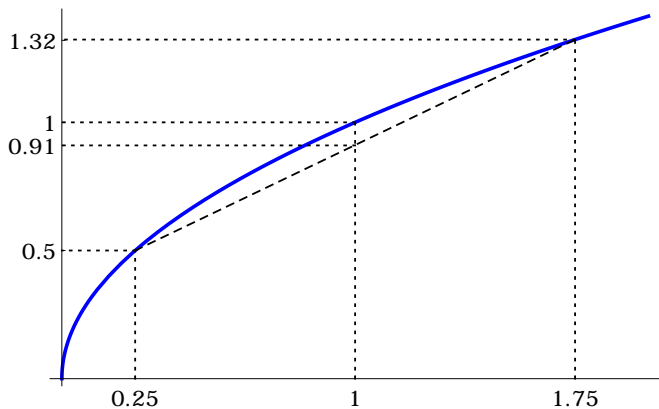
ARGUMENTS FOR EQUALITY OF WEALTH

Utilitarianism

Community

The veil of ignorance

UTILITARIANISM IMPLIES SOME
EGALITARIANISM IF MARGINAL UTILITY
OF MONEY IS DECREASING



COHEN'S COMMUNITARIAN ARGUMENT

Inequality breeds debasing competition and commodification

Human dignity is best served by a society organized around cooperation and community

This requires sharing and equality, rather than self-interest and inequality

THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE



RAWLS' DIFFERENCE PRINCIPLE

A society should have inequality only to the extent that such inequality tends to increase the welfare of the worst off member of that society.

Egalitarian in spirit

Acknowledges the incentives problem and addresses the leveling down problem

COHEN'S 3 EQUALITIES OF OPPORTUNITY

1. *Bourgeois Equality of Opportunity*: Irrelevant characteristics shouldn't affect access to opportunities, only relevant competencies
2. *Left-Liberal Equality of Opportunity*: Irrelevant characteristics shouldn't affect chance of acquiring relevant competencies
3. *Socialist Equality of Opportunity*: Access to opportunities shouldn't be affected by natural talents

DWORKIN'S LUCK ELIMINATION ARGUMENT

Matters of luck are only unjust if they are the result of “brute” circumstance, not a deliberate choice of an “option”

What constitutes luck?

- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Genetically determined characteristics
- ▶ Preferences
- ▶ Actions

How do you achieve equality of opportunity without equality of outcomes?

A UTILITARIAN ARGUMENT FOR EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Equality of opportunity avoids wasting social resources

Balance benefits of equality of opportunity and incentive effects of necessary levels of equality of outcomes

Equality of opportunity isn't the core value

- ▶ Fairness
- ▶ Basic rights

OUTLINE

WELFARISM

Utilitarianism

Some Problems for Utilitarianism

CONSEQUENTIALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

DEONTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

EGALITARIANISM

Equality of Wealth

Equality of Opportunity

TAKE AWAYS

TAKE AWAYS

Various normative goals are often in conflict with one another

Any plausible normative framework has good arguments in its favor and good arguments against it

Normative frameworks are models that help us think through trade-offs, they do not offer *the* answer to any question

You will (and need) not be able to justify all your normative commitments within a single framework

Reasonable people can disagree