

0001 Last
0002 time
0003 we argued about
0004 the case of the Queen verses Dudley and Stephens
0005 the lifeboat case, the case of cannibalism at sea
0006 and with the arguments about
0007 the lifeboat
0008 in mind the arguments for and against what Dudley and Stephens did in mind,
0009 let's turn back to the
0010 philosophy
0011 the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham
0012 Bentham was born in England in 1748, at the age of twelve
0013 he went to Oxford, at fifteen he went to law school
0014 he was admitted to the bar at age nineteen but he never practiced law,
0015 instead he devoted his life
0016 to jurisprudence and moral
0017 philosophy.
0018 last time we began to consider Bentham's version of utilitarianism
0019 the main idea
0020 is simply stated and it's this,
0021 the highest principle of morality
0022 whether personal or political morality
0023 is
0024 to maximize
0025 the general welfare
0026 or the collective happiness
0027 or the overall balance of pleasure over pain
0028 in a phrase
0029 maximize
0030 utility
0031 Bentham arrives at this principle by the following line of reasoning
0032 we're all governed by pain and pleasure
0033 they are our sovereign masters and so any moral system has to take account of them.
0034 How best to take account?
0035 By maximizing

0036 and this leads to the principle
0037 of the greatest good for the greatest number
0038 what exactly should we maximize?
0039 Bentham tells us
0040 happiness
0041 or more precisely
0042 utility.
0043 Maximizing utility is a principal not only for individuals but also for communities and
0044 for legislators
0045 what after all is a community
0046 Bentham asks,
0047 it's the sum of the individuals who comprise it
0048 and that's why
0049 in deciding the best policy, in deciding what the law should be, in deciding what's just,
0050 citizens and legislators should ask themselves the question if we add up,
0051 all of the benefits of this policy
0052 and subtract
0053 all of the costs,
0054 the right thing to do
0055 is the one
0056 that maximizes
0057 the balance
0058 of happiness
0059 over suffering.
0060 that's what it means to maximize utility
0061 now, today
0062 I want to see
0063 whether you agree or disagree with it,
0064 and it often goes, this utilitarian logic, under the name of cost-benefit analysis
0065 which is used by companies
0066 and by
0067 governments
0068 all the time
0069 and what it involves
0070 is placing a value usually a dollar value to stand for utility
0071 on the costs and the benefits
0072 of various proposals.

0073 recently in the Czech Republic

0074 there was a proposal to increases the excise tax on smoking

0075 Philip Morris,

0076 the tobacco company,

0077 does huge business

0078 in the Czech Republic. They commissioned

0079 a study of cost-benefit analysis

0080 of smoking

0081 in the Czech Republic

0082 and what their cost benefit

0083 analysis found

0084 was

0085 the government gains

0086 by

0087 having Czech citizens smoke.

0088 Now, how do they gain?

0089 It's true that there are negative effects

0090 to the public finance of the Czech government

0091 because there are increased health care costs for people who develop smoking-related

0092 diseases

0093 on the other hand there were positive effects

0094 and those were

0095 added up

0096 on the other side of the ledger

0097 the positive effects included, for the most part, various tax revenues that the government

0098 derives from the sale of cigarette products but it also included health care savings to

0099 the government when people die early

0100 pensions savings, you don't have to pay pensions for as long,

0101 and also savings

0102 in housing costs for the elderly

0103 and when all of the costs and benefits were added up

0104 the Philip Morris

0105 study found

0106 that there is a net public finance gain in the Czech Republic

0107 of a hundred and forty seven million dollars

0108 and given the savings

0109 in housing and health care and pension costs

0110 the government enjoys the saving of savings of over twelve hundred dollars
0111 for each person who dies prematurely due to smoking.
0112 cost-benefit analysis
0113 now, those among you who are defenders utilitarianism may think that this is a unfair
0114 test
0115 Philip Morris was pilloried in the press and they issued an apology for this heartless
0116 calculation
0117 you may say
0118 that what's missing here is something that the utilitarian can be easily incorporate
0119 mainly
0120 the value to the person and to the families of those who die
0121 from lung cancer.
0122 what about the value of life?
0123 Some cost-benefit analyses incorporate
0124 a measure
0125 for the value of life.
0126 One of the most famous of these involved the Ford Pinto case
0127 did any of you read about that? this was back in the 1970's, you remember that
0128 the Ford Pinto was, a kind of car?
0129 anybody?
0130 it was a small car, subcompact car, very popular
0131 but it had one
0132 problem which is the fuel tank was at the back of the car
0133 and in rear collisions the fuel tank exploded
0134 and some people were killed
0135 and some severely injured.
0136 victims of these injuries took Ford to court to sue
0137 and in the court case it turned out
0138 that Ford had long
0139 since known
0140 about the vulnerable fuel tank
0141 and had done a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether it would be worth it
0142 to put in a special shield
0143 that would protect the fuel tank and prevent it from exploding.
0144 They did a cost benefit analysis
0145 the cost per part
0146 to increase the safety

0147 of the Pinto,
0148 they calculated at eleven dollars per part
0149 and here's,
0150 this was the cost benefit analysis that emerged
0151 in the trial,
0152 eleven dollars per part
0153 at 12.5 million cars and trucks
0154 came to a total cost of
0155 137 million dollars to improve the safety
0156 but then they calculated
0157 the benefits
0158 of spending all this money on a safer car
0159 and they counted 180 deaths
0160 and they assigned a dollar value
0161 200 thousand dollars
0162 per death
0163 180 injuries
0164 67 thousand
0165 and then the cost to repair
0166 the replacement cost for two thousand vehicles that would be destroyed without the
0167 safety device
0168 700 dollars per vehicle,
0169 so the benefits
0170 turned out to be only 49.5 million,
0171 and so they
0172 didn't install
0173 the device
0174 needless to say
0175 when this memo
0176 of the Ford Motor Company's cost-benefit analysis came out in the trial
0177 it appalled the jurors
0178 who awarded a huge settlement
0179 is this a counter example to the utilitarian idea of calculating
0180 because Ford included a
0181 measure of the value life.
0182 Now who here wants to defend
0183 cost-benefit analysis from

0184 this apparent counter example

0185 who has a defense?

0186 or do you think it's completely destroys

0187 the whole utilitarian calculus?

0188 I think that

0189 once again they've made the same mistake the previous case did that they've assigned a dollar value

0190 to human life and once again they failed to take into account things like

0191 suffering and emotional losses of families, I mean families lost earnings

0192 but they also lost a loved one and that

0193 is more value than 200 thousand dollars.

0194 Good, and wait wait wait, what's your name?

0195 Julie Roto.

0196 so if two hundred thousand, Julie, is too

0197 too low a figure because it doesn't include the loss of a loved one,

0198 and the loss of those years of life,

0199 what would be, what do you think

0200 would be a more accurate number?

0201 I don't believe I could give a number I think that this sort of analysis shouldn't be applied to

0202 issues of human life.

0203 I think it can't be used monetarily

0204 so they didn't just put too low a number,

0205 Julie says, they were wrong to try to put any number at all.

0206 all right let's hear someone who

0207 you have to adjust for inflation

0208 all right

0209 fair enough

0210 so what would the number of being now?

0211 this is was thirty five years ago

0212 two million dollars

0213 you would put two million

0214 and what's your name

0215 Voicheck

0216 Voicheck says we have to allow for inflation

0217 we should be more generous

0218 then would you be satisfied that this is the right way of thinking about the question?

0219 I guess unfortunately

0220 it is for

0221 there's needs to be of number put somewhere

0222 I'm not sure what number would be but I do agree that there could possibly

0223 be a number put

0224 on a human life.

0225 all right so

0226 Voicheck says

0227 and here he disagrees with

0228 Julie

0229 Julie says we can't put a number of human life

0230 for the purpose of a cost-benefit analysis, Voicheck says we have to

0231 because we have to make decisions somehow

0232 what do other people think about this? Is there anyone prepared to defend cost-benefit

0233 analysis here

0234 as accurate, as desirable?

0235 I think that if ford and other car companies didn't use cost-benefit analysis they'd eventually go out

0236 of business because they wouldn't be able to be profitable

0237 and millions of people wouldn't be able to use their cars to get to jobs, to put food on the table

0238 to feed their children so I think that if cost-benefit analysis isn't employed

0239 the greater good

0240 is sacrificed

0241 in this case. Alright let me ask, what's your name?

0242 Raul. Raul.

0243 there was recently a study done about cell phone use by drivers, when people are driving

0244 a car,

0245 and there's a debate about whether that should be banned

0246 and

0247 the figure was that some

0248 two thousand people die

0249 as a result of accidents

0250 each year

0251 using cell phones

0252 and yet the cost benefit analysis which was done by the center for risk analysis at Harvard

0253 found that if you look at the benefits

0254 of the cell phone use

0255 and you put some

0256 value on the life, it comes out about the same

0257 because of the enormous economic benefit of enabling people to take advantage

0258 of their time, not waste time, be able to make deals and talk to friends and so on

0259 while they're driving

0260 doesn't that suggest that

0261 it's a mistake to try to put monetary figures on questions

0262 of human life?

0263 well I think that if

0264 the great majority of people

0265 tried to derive maximum utility out of a service like using cell phones and the convenience that cell phones

0266 provide

0267 that sacrifice is necessary

0268 for

0269 satisfaction to occur.

0270 You're an outright utilitarian. In, yes okay.

0271 all right then, one last question Raul

0272 and I put this to Voicheck,

0273 what dollar figure should be put

0274 on human life to decide whether to ban the use of cell phones

0275 well I don't want to

0276 arbitrarily

0277 calculate a figure, I mean right now

0278 I think that

0279 you want to take it under advisement.

0280 yeah I'll take it under advisement.

0281 but what roughly speaking would it be? you've got 23 hundred deaths

0282 you've got to assign a dollar value to know whether you want to prevent those deaths by

0283 banning the use of cell phones in cars

0284 so what would you're hunch be?

0285 how much?

0286 million

0287 two million

0288 two million was Voitech's figure

0289 is that about right? maybe a million.

0290 a million.?!

0291 Alright that's good, thank you

0292 So these are some of the controversies that arise these days from cost-benefit analysis especially

0293 those that involve

0294 placing a dollar value on everything to be added up.

0295 well now I want to turn
0296 to your objections, to your objections not necessarily to cost benefit analysis specifically,
0297 because that's just one version of the
0298 utilitarian logic in practice today,
0299 but to the theory as a whole, to the idea
0300 that the right thing to do,
0301 the just basis for policy and law,
0302 is to maximize
0303 utility.
0304 How many disagree
0305 with the utilitarian
0306 approach
0307 to law
0308 and to the common good?
0309 How many bring with it?
0310 so more agree than disagree.
0311 so let's hear from the critics
0312 my main issue with it is that I feel like
0313 you can't say that just because someone's in the minority
0314 what they want and need is less valuable than someone who's in the majority
0315 so I guess I have an issue with the idea that
0316 the greatest good for the greatest number
0317 is okay because
0318 there is still what about people who are in
0319 the lesser number, like it's not fair to them they didn't have a say in where they wanted
0320 to be.
0321 alright now that's an interesting objection, you're worried about
0322 the effect on minority. yes.
0323 what's your name by the way. Anna.
0324 alright who has an answer to Anna's worry about the effect on the minority
0325 What do you say to Anna?
0326 she said that
0327 the minorities value less, I don't think that's the case because individually the minorities
0328 value is just the same as the individual in the majority it's just that
0329 the numbers outweigh the
0330 minority
0331 and I mean at a certain point you have to make a decision

0332 and I'm sorry for the minority but
0333 sometimes
0334 it's for the general
0335 for the greater good. For the greater good, Anna what do you say? what's your name? Youngda.
0336 What do you say to Youngda?
0337 Youngda says you just have to add up people's preferences
0338 and those in the minority do have their preferences weighed.
0339 can you give an example of the kind of thing you're worried about when you say you're worried
0340 about utilitarianism violating
0341 the concern or respect due the minority?
0342 can you give an example.
0343 so well with any of the cases that we've talked about, like with the shipwreck one,
0344 I think that
0345 the boy who was eaten
0346 still had
0347 just as much of a right to live as the other people and
0348 just because
0349 he was the
0350 minority in that case the one who
0351 maybe had less of a chance to keep living
0352 that doesn't mean
0353 that the others automatically have a right to eat him
0354 just because
0355 it would give a greater amount of people
0356 the chance to live.
0357 so there may be a certain rights
0358 that the minority
0359 members have that the individual has that shouldn't be traded off
0360 for the sake of
0361 utility?
0362 yes Anna?
0363 Now this would be a test for you,
0364 back in ancient Rome
0365 they threw Christians to the lions in the coliseum for sport
0366 if you think how the utilitarian calculus would go
0367 yes, the Christian thrown to the lion suffers enormous excruciating pain,
0368 but look at the collective ecstasy of the Romans.

0369 Youngda. Well
0370 in that time
0371 I don't think
0372 in the modern-day of time to value the, um, to given a number to the happiness given to the people
watching
0373 I don't think
0374 any
0375 policy maker would say
0376 the pain of one person, the suffering of one person is much much,
0377 in comparison to the happiness gained
0378 no but you have to admit that if there were enough Romans delirious with happiness,
0379 it would outweigh even the most excruciating pain of a handful of
0380 Christians thrown to the lion.
0381 so we really have here two different objections to utilitarianism
0382 one has to do
0383 with whether utilitarianism
0384 adequately respects
0385 individual rights
0386 or minority rights
0387 and the other has to do
0388 with the whole idea
0389 of aggregating
0390 utility
0391 for preferences
0392 or values
0393 is it possible to aggregate all values
0394 to translate them
0395 into dollar terms?
0396 there was
0397 in the 1930's
0398 a psychologist
0399 who tried
0400 to address
0401 the second question. He tried to prove
0402 what utilitarianism assumes,
0403 that it is possible
0404 to translate

0405 all goods, all values, all human concerns
0406 into a single uniform measure
0407 and he did this
0408 by conducting a survey
0409 of the young recipients of relief, this was in the 1930's
0410 and he asked them, he gave them a list of unpleasant experiences
0411 and he asked them how much would you have to be paid to undergo
0412 the following experiences and he kept track
0413 for example
0414 how much would you have to be paid to have one upper front tooth pulled out
0415 or how much would you have to be paid to have one little one tow cut off?
0416 or eat a live earth worm, six inches long
0417 or to live the rest of your life on a farm in Kansas
0418 or to choke a stray cat to death with your bare hands
0419 now what do you suppose
0420 what do you suppose was the most expensive item on that list
0421 Kansas?
0422 You're right it was Kansas
0423 for a Kansas
0424 people said they'd have to pay them
0425 they have to be paid three hundred thousand dollars
0426 what do you think
0427 what do you think was the next most expensive?
0428 not the cat
0429 not the tooth
0430 not the toe
0431 the worm!
0432 people said you'd have to pay them a hundred thousand dollars
0433 to eat the worm
0434 what do you think was the least expensive item?
0435 not the cat
0436 the tooth
0437 during the depression people were willing to have their tooth pulled
0438 for only forty five hundred dollars
0439 now
0440 here's what Thorndike
0441 concluded from his study

0442 any want or satisfaction which exists, exists
0443 in some amount and is therefore measurable
0444 the life of a dog
0445 or a cat
0446 or a chicken consists
0447 of appetites
0448 cravings
0449 desires and their gratifications
0450 so does the life
0451 of human beings
0452 though the appetites and desires
0453 are more complicated
0454 but what about
0455 Thorndike's study?
0456 does it support
0457 Bentham's idea
0458 that all
0459 goods all values can be captured according to a single uniform measure of value
0460 or does the preposterous character of those different items on the list
0461 suggest the opposite conclusion
0462 that may be whether we're talking about life
0463 or Kansas
0464 or the worm
0465 maybe
0466 the things we value
0467 and cherish
0468 can't be captured
0469 according to a single uniform measure of value
0470 and if they can't
0471 what are the consequences
0472 for the utilitarian theory
0473 of morality
0474 that's a question we'll continue with next time
