

Chapter 1 : Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do? (Audiobook) by Michael J. Sandel | blog.quintoapp.com

Each of us has a fundamental right to do whatever we want with the things we own, provided we respect other's rights to do the same. The libertarian rejects three types of policies and laws that modern states commonly enact.

Share via Email Michael Sandel asks whether a volunteer army is morally different from an army built by conscription. But he does not go with the flow of fashion or common opinion. As a self-styled "communitarian", he sets himself at odds with one of the reigning assumptions of modern public life – that moral and religious notions are private matters that should be kept out of public political debate. His communitarianism is too collectivist for kneejerk conservatives and too paternalistic for kneejerk radicals, but he matches his sharp and combative mind with a gentle and likable manner. If you heard his Reith Lectures earlier this year, you may have bridled at his appeals for "a new citizenship" founded on a "politics of the common good", but you can hardly have failed to be charmed by his patience, openness and intellectual generosity. Life is, you might say, one damned dilemma after another. We are constantly trying to work out what to do for the best: If we have to have an army, most of us would want it to be professional rather than conscripted. So we will probably sympathise with the citizens of New York, who took to the streets in to protest at the draft for the Union army. But how much distance separates this system from the modern volunteer army of which we approve? Free-market conservatives are so dazzled by the contrast between conscripts and soldiers who join by choice that they fail to see the social effect can be much the same. And utilitarian progressives – less interested in subjective intentions than objective results – prefer the voluntary system because it promises to deliver the best outcomes for the least overall pain. The trouble with these answers, as Sandel says, is that they ignore the question of why a country should have a military wing at all. They treat the army as if it were a service industry; but perhaps it should be treated as a noble political institution, rather like jury service, to which all eligible citizens are obliged to contribute. If we are honest with ourselves, he says, we will see that our political judgments cannot be divorced from ideas of communal well-being. Affirmative action is another of his hard cases. Poor, white Americans are understandably indignant if they are refused a university place when black applicants with worse grades are admitted. But it all depends, Sandel says, on what the purpose of higher education is. If it is about offering prizes for merit, then favouring members of disadvantaged groups is unacceptable. But universities are also social devices that funnel new workers into the professions and it may be irresponsible for them to turn a blind eye to the impact of their policies on the future profile of professional employment. Again, the attempt to discuss the options in terms of abstract principles rather than concrete conceptions of public good begins to look ambivalent. The past few months have seen a revival of moralism in political debate and there has been good sport in calling for bankers to have their bonuses cut off, or politicians and BBC executives to come clean about their claims for expenses. He is not asking us to give politics an infusion of saintly moral rectitude; he just wants us to recognise that it has had morality in its bloodstream all along. Justice is a timely plea for us to desist from political bickering and see if we can have a sensible discussion about what sort of society we really want to live in.

Background. The work was written to accompany Sandel's famous "Justice" course at Harvard University which he has taught for more than thirty years and which has been offered online and in various TV summary versions.

Of the Connection between Justice and Utility Part 1 Summary Mill says that throughout history, one of the biggest barriers to the acceptance of utility has been that it does not allow for a theory of justice. In this chapter, then, Mill will determine whether the justice or injustice of an action is something intrinsic and distinct from questions of utility. In examining this it is necessary to determine whether a sense of justice exists in itself, or is derivative and formed by a combination of other feelings; is this sense explicable by our emotional make-up, or is it a "special provision of nature"? To answer this, we must ascertain what the distinguishing quality of justice is, if there is such a quality. Mill begins by trying to pin down the meaning of justice, by coming up with a list of those things that are commonly classified as just or unjust. First, it is considered unjust to deprive someone of his legal rights. However, this concept has exceptions. For example, a person may have legal rights he should not have--his rights may be the provision of a bad law. While people vary on whether bad laws can be justly disobeyed, all people agree that laws can be unjust. Therefore, law cannot be the ultimate standard of justice. A second form of injustice comes from depriving someone of something he has a moral right to possess. A fourth form of injustice is to violate an agreement with someone or disappoint expectations that one knowingly nurtured. Fifth, it is considered unjust to show favoritism and preference in inappropriate circumstances. The claim is rather that a person should only be influenced by those considerations that should apply in a given circumstance. Finally, the idea of equality is seen by many to be a component of justice; some people may make an exception for the sake of expediency, however. Given so many different applications of the concept of justice, it is hard to find what links them all together, and on what concept the sentiment of justice is based. Nevertheless, people do see justice as a unified concept, and do feel a sentiment of justice regardless of whether they understand its foundation. Mill says that some help may come from looking at the history of the word. Thus, the most primitive element of justice is the idea of conformity to law. The Greeks and Romans realized that there could be bad laws, and thus justice came to be associated only to those laws that ought to exist, including those that should exist but do not. Mill also recognizes, however, that the idea of justice is often applied to areas about which we would not want legislation: At this point, Mill observes that while this discussion has given a true account of the origin and development of justice, it does not show a distinction from other forms of morality. Thus, moral obligation in general comes from the idea of duty, the idea that a person may rightly be compelled to do something. He argues that this concept of deserving or not deserving punishment is the essence of moral thinking in general. Mill argues that justice can be distinguished from other forms of morality by looking at the difference between perfect and imperfect obligations. Imperfect obligations are those that no one person has the right to require of another. Perfect obligations are those that a person may demand of another. Justice corresponds with the idea of perfect obligation: In cases of justice, the person who has been wronged has had his or her moral right impinged upon; it is thus his or her moral right to seek restitution. Commentary Here Mill responds to the claim that utilitarianism is opposed to justice. This section is mostly descriptive, as Mill writes about the definition of justice and its historical origins. It is significant that Mill does not present his own theory about what justice requires. Thus, in defining justice Mill looks to what other people mean by the term. It exists because people believe it exists, and it means what they believe it to mean. Starting from the popular conception of justice, Mill theorizes about what links a diverse set of ideas about justice. Ultimately, he argues that they are united by the concept of rights, a notion he introduces in his claims about perfect and imperfect obligations. This section is the first time that Mill spends any time writing about rights. In the next section, he will go into the idea in greater detail. For Mill, a right means that a person has a valid claim that society to protect him against any violation. Many utilitarians dismiss the idea of rights as nonsense, and many debates about utilitarianism center around whether rights exist. Mill has a different perspective on this issue, however. In the next section Mill will defend rights, and do so under a utilitarian framework.

Chapter 3 : Harvard Justice

First I should say right at the beginning that the title is a bit misleading: I don't think there is a single issue in which Sandel tells us explicitly the right thing to do. But he does give what seems to me a very clear description of various ways of thinking about justice.

It is arguably the best online course on philosophy you could attend. In a nutshell, Michael Sandel discusses: In order to do so, he constantly starts with a controversial real or theoretical case study to juxtapose different theories of justice and morality. For example Michael Sandel starts with the classic example of a train headed towards 5 people on the track. If the train continues it will kill the 5 people. Then he introduces the option of pulling a lever to switch to another track whereby only 1 person is standing. What do you do? Through such examples he explains different schools around morality and justice. This school advocates maximizing "pleasure" to the largest "number" of people. By doing so, the individual and the society are acting morally and justly. As such, the moral and just decision for the utilitarians is: The challenge happens when Sandel introduces a twist to the example: Now, imagine there was a very large person standing next to you. If that large person falls on the tracks and hits the train, the train will stop and as a result, not kill the 5 people. If you had the opportunity would you push that person off the bridge? From a utilitarian perspective, how can you argue against doing this? As both options maximize the good. This school advocates maximizing individual freedom freedom to do what a person pleases with their lives, time and possessions e. So any action that results in maximizing individual freedoms without resulting in material harm on other individuals or liberties is moral. As you can imagine, the libertarian school of thought would advocate against switching the tracks as that results in involving the additional person to the equation without their consent. The challenge with this line of thinking is: What if two people consent to horrific actions to be done on one another e. Eventually, another person Y volunteered and they both X and Y executed the act. What do you do then? If yes, what If I come up with a religion and register it and say that consuming cocaine is part of my religion? As a result, all judgement of acts are skewed towards the one measure freedom. This has been originally argued by Aristotle. The idea here is that one needs to understand the underlying meaning of something e. The example here is about a golfer who has a bad leg and wanted the PGA to provide him with a cart. The PGA refused, and the case went up to the supreme court. The main debate was: Also if someone suggested to give everyone a cart then it changes the nature of the game itself. The challenge in this school is a very deep and philosophical one. Who decides on virtue and purpose? Is it God and religion? Overall a very thought provoking book and lectures that I recommend you start asap

Chapter 4 : Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do? – Harvard Justice

Chapter 5: Of the Connection between Justice and Utility (Part 1) Summary. Mill says that throughout history, one of the biggest barriers to the acceptance of utility has been that it does not allow for a theory of justice.

Sandel looks at major approaches to defining or describing justice, looks at challenges to several of them, and suggests what he sees as the best approach to achieving justice. Objections to this approach include 1 this can run roughshod over individuals. Throwing Christians to lions, if leading to great happiness for many Romans, could be justified by utilitarianism, as could torturing the daughter of a terrorist to force him to tell where he hid a bomb that will soon detonate, and keeping an unhappy child prisoner and miserable if that kept a large town quite happy. Human lives probably cannot be reduced to a dollar value, for instance. Libertarians argue the basis of justice is individual freedom. Each person should be free to do whatever they want so long as that does not harm others. Governments should be limited to enforcing contracts, protecting individual property, and preserving peace. No laws should exist to protect people from themselves, to affect morality, or to redistribute income. Laws regarding prostitution or abortion should not exist, nor should minimum wage laws nor social security, all these violate individual liberty. This view grew as a reaction to the welfare state, but was previewed by John Stuart Mill in his attempt to defend utilitarianism. Mill also previewed later views of the value of individual life and the notion of virtues higher than utility or individual liberty. The core of libertarianism is the notion that we own ourselves, our bodies, and our earnings, and thus the government has no right to take or limit any of these. Even voluntarily letting another kill you and eat you would be justifiable to libertarians. Sandel introduces the notion of civic virtue and the common good by discussing whether it is more moral to draft people into the military or to hire people into it via market principles. He cites others who point out that it is nearly completely those from lower income families who volunteer. Immanuel Kant proposed an alternative approach to justice. He argued that individual human beings are worthy of our respect because they are reasoning beings. But for him freedom was a bit complicated. Those laws needed to meet two criteria: And 2 they must always treat persons with dignity, that is as ends and not as means. Example of the first: Can you lie to protect a friend from someone at the door who will murder them if possible? No, because lying creates an outcome when universalized where nobody could trust others to be telling the truth. But you can say a true thing that misleads: Is casual sex, if mutually satisfactory, ever moral? No, because it involves using the other as a means to satisfaction, not as an end. In marriage, the long-term commitment to one-another makes this acceptable given all the other ways each affirms the dignity of the other. Universal human rights follow from this reasoning. Kant argued then that we live under an imagined social contract, one that holds each individual as equally important, with equal dignity. But he did not spell out what that contract would include. In the latter half of the 20th century John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* moved in that direction. He asked what principles we would agree to in a condition of initial equality. Most, he believed, would adopt principles which protect the weak and minority groups. He believed the contract that would emerge would 1 guarantee basic freedoms for all, like freedom of speech and religion, and would also 2 permit only those social and economic inequalities that work for the good of the least well-off members of the society. The rich, the very intelligent, the athletically gifted and so forth would be permitted to exercise their abilities but would receive for their efforts only enough to keep them motivated and working, with the rest going to the rest of society. But this view would leave no duties for us as members of our family, or citizens of this country. Alasdair MacIntyre in his book *After Virtue* argued that we do have such duties or responsibilities, by virtue of what family, what place, and what country we are born in and are part of. He suggested we are story-telling beings, and the contexts we find ourselves in do in fact give us such responsibilities. Sandel describes family obligations parent to child, child to parent, obligations to the town we are from, the same to others of our religion Israel rescued Ethiopian Jews, and obligations to help those from our own country over those from other places. Feelings of solidarity explain why some argued the Vietnam war was unworthy of America and the kind of country we strive to be. Lee sided with his state Virginia in spite of his great love for our country. Brothers sometimes will not aid in criminal investigations of one or the other. This latest view is at odds with

those that stress our being free individuals with only those responsibilities we freely accept. But if we feel pride or responsibilities to our families or our country, we seem to be exhibiting connection based on who we are and what stories we are part of. Aristotle had argued we should distribute resources in ways that promote virtue. Thus Sandel argues we should in fact let religious or moral considerations be involved in our disagreements. We may come to better agreement or we may not, but we will not know unless we try. He continues the detour by looking at the issue of homosexual marriage. Here he suggests we must, as Aristotle had argued, look at the purpose of marriage. Those who argue it is to procreate are wrong; no effort to determine if heterosexuals plan to have children or are able to do so is made by the state or others. Sandel argues the purpose of marriage is to honor the long-term commitment a couple is making, and this honor should be available to all. By now he has endorsed using resources and sanctions to encourage virtues we desire. Late in the book he summarizes then rejects the utilitarian and the libertarian views, even those acknowledging human rights. To achieve a just society we have to reason together about the meaning of the good life, and to create a public culture hospitable to the disagreements that will inevitably arise. [Link is here](#)

Advertisements Like Loading Related This entry was posted on January 4, at 5: You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2](#). You can leave a response , or [trackback](#) from your own site. It would be so much simpler if we could just stick with all or none, rather than taking reality into account. It seems there is so much discipline required to figure out what justice is, and to find ways to make room for exceptional cases, since rarely do we have the luxury of one size fits all. Phyllis Skonicki January 5, at 5: I think this is one of the great struggles of Christianity.

Chapter 5 : Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do? by Michael J. Sandel

ExecutiveBookSummarybyMatthewDow Chapter 1: Doing the Right Thing Michael J. Sandel opens his book "Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?".

This course aims to help viewers become more critically minded thinkers about the moral decisions we all face in our everyday lives. PBS International opens the door to this classroom that has captivated more than 14, students. In this part series, Sandel challenges us with difficult moral dilemmas and asks our opinion about the right thing to do. He then asks us to examine our answers in the light of new scenarios. The result is often surprising, revealing that important moral questions are never black and white. Sorting out these contradictions sharpens our own moral convictions and gives us the moral clarity to better understand the opposing views we confront in a democracy. If you had to choose between killing one person or five, what would you do? Professor Michael Sandel launches into his lecture series by presenting students with a hypothetical scenario that has the majority of students voting for killing one person in order to save the lives of five others. But then Sandel presents three similar moral conundrums—each one artfully designed to make the decision increasingly complex. The assumptions behind our moral reasoning are often contradictory, and the question of what is right and what is wrong is not always black and white. Sandel introduces the principles of Utilitarian philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, with a famous 19th century law case involving a shipwrecked crew of four. After 19 days lost at sea, the captain decides to kill the cabin boy, the weakest amongst them, so they can feed on his blood and body to survive. This leads to a discussion about the objections to Utilitarianism: Mill, another Utilitarian philosopher, who argues that all human experience can be quantifiable, and that some kinds of pleasures are more desirable and more valuable than others. Mill argues that if society values the higher pleasures, and values justice, then society as a whole will be better off in the long run. Libertarians believe the ideal state is a society with minimal governmental interference. Sandel introduces Robert Nozick, a libertarian philosopher, who argues that individuals have the fundamental right to choose how they want to live their own lives. Libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick makes the case that taxing the wealthy—to pay for housing, health care, and education for the poor—is a form of coercion. Students first discuss the arguments in favor of redistributive taxation. John Locke is both a supporter and detractor from the theory of Libertarianism. However, once we agree to enter into society, we are consenting to being governed by a system of laws. John Locke on the issue of taxation and consent. How does John Locke square away the conflict between 1 his belief that individuals have an unalienable right to life, liberty, and property and 2 that government—through majority rule—can tax individuals without their consent? During the Civil War, men were conscripted to fight in the war—but draftees were allowed to pay hired substitutes to fight in their place. Professor Sandel asks students—was this policy an example of free-market exchange? Or was it a form of coercion, because the lower class surely had more of a financial incentive to serve? This leads to a classroom debate about the contemporary questions surrounding war and conscription. What role does patriotism play? And what are the obligations of citizenship? Professor Sandel applies the issue of free-market exchange to a contemporary and controversial new area: Mary Beth Whitehead signed a contract with a New Jersey couple in the mid-eighties, agreeing to be their surrogate mother, in exchange for a large fee. But 24 hours after giving birth, Whitehead decided she wanted to keep the child and the case went to court. Students discuss the morality of selling human life, the legal issues surrounding consent and contracts, and the power of maternal rights. Professor Sandel introduces Immanuel Kant—one of the most challenging and difficult thinkers in his course. Kant believes we, as individuals, are sacred and the bearer of rights, but not because we own ourselves. Rather, it is our capacity to reason and choose freely that makes us unique, that sets us apart from mere animals. And when we act out of duty doing something because it is right only then do our actions have moral worth. Sandel uses the example of a shopkeeper who passes up the chance to shortchange a customer only because he worries it would hurt his business. Immanuel Kant says that in so far as our actions have moral worth, what confers moral worth is precisely our capacity to rise above self-interest and inclination and to act out of duty. Sandel tells the true story of a year old boy who won a spelling bee contest, but then

admitted to the judges that he had, in fact, misspelled the final word. Would that principle, as a universal law, benefit everyone? His theory is put to the test with a hypothetical case. If your friend was hiding inside your home, and a killer knocked on your door asking where he was, what could you say to himâ€”without lyingâ€”that would also save the life of your friend? Rawls argues that the only way to achieve the most just and fair principles of governance is if all legislators came to the bargaining table in a position of equality. Then and only then, Rawls argues, could a governing body agree upon truly fair principles of justice. Professor Sandel recaps the three different theories raised so far, concerning how income, wealth, and opportunities in life should be distributed. He summarizes libertarianism, the meritocratic system, and the egalitarian theory. Sandel asks, is this fair? And if not, why not? Students discuss the issue of affirmative action and college admissions. Does it violate individual rights? Or is it as equal, and as arbitrary, as favoring a star athlete? Is the argument in favor of promoting diversity a valid one? Aristotle argues that when considering issues of distribution, one must consider the goal, the end, the purpose of what is being distributed. Students debate whether the PGA was wrong in not allowing a disabled golfer, Casey Martin, to use a golf cart during professional tournaments. This leads to an introduction to the communitarian view. As individuals, how do we weigh our obligations to family against our obligations to community and to our country? Professor Sandel leads a discussion about the arguments for and against our obligations of solidarity and membership in the smaller community of family and the larger community of the society at large. Using various scenarios, students debate whether and when loyalty outweighs duty. If principles of justice depend on the moral or intrinsic worth of the ends that rights serve, how does society deal with the fact that people hold different ideas and conceptions of what is good? Using the example of same-sex marriage, students debate whether it is possible to detach moral permissibility of sexuality from the end or purpose of marriage. Professor Sandel raises two questions. Is it necessary to reason about the good life in order to decide what is just and what rights people have? Michael Sandel concludes his lecture series by making the point that we, as individuals, may never agree on many moral philosophical issues. However, he argues, on the one hand the debate about these issues is unavoidable. And on the other hand, it is a worthwhile opportunity for all of us to better appreciate the values of others. Download Fact Sheet Keywords.

Chapter 6 : SparkNotes: Utilitarianism: Chapter 5: Of the Connection between Justice and Utility (Part 1)

What matters is doing the right thing because it's right, not for some ulterior motive. the motive that confers moral worth on an action is the motive of duty, by which Kant means doing the right thing for the right reason" ().

Given all this, it is with some trepidation that this reviewer has to declare himself in significant disagreement with him. Justice is primarily about the values that should underpin the state, politics and the law, with particular reference to Western pluralistic societies. Sandel presents us with a three-cornered debate between utilitarian, liberal and communitarian perspectives, in which the latter, heavily reinforced by a dose of neo-ristotelianism, emerges the victor. Along the way we are treated to a wonderful exposition of the subtleties of these positions, as well as a forensic analysis of their limitations. Justice, Prof Sandel argues, has to have something to do with desert, that is, what people deserve. That thought is at the heart of his next move, his discussion of liberalism. Liberal Justice Sandel starts this section by looking at libertarian philosophies, and particularly the work of the late Robert Nozick, best known for *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. Firstly, Nozick argues that we can demand virtually nothing from our fellow citizens beyond that they leave us alone. For Sandel this is problematic, in that some services we render to the community serving on juries, for example are things often taken to trump our claims to self-ownership. However, we also recognise a kind of ultimate self-ownership in respect of these issues. The notion, for example, of conscientious objection is established in respect of military service, and we can imagine it being invoked in relation to other issues. For Rawls, wealth was no guarantee of desert; nor was being male, or white, or heterosexual. Indeed, even talent is not an indicator of desert, because such talent is the product of chance and its value is reliant on the caprice of society, ie, on whether the talent is for something society currently values. Kant and Rawls both think in terms of a kind of moral abstraction. For both of them, from the point of view of justice we have no particular identity but only a generalised humanity, such that conclusions about what is just pertain to all of us. In other words, justice implies neutrality. Filling the guidance hole in virtue ethics, are culturally-specific stories about virtue which tell us what and who to value. There is no warm glow of belonging to be found in this model of justice, no sense of shared obligation or merit. There is an intriguing discussion of conflicts between group loyalty and abstract principle here. There is psychological value to be gained from seeing ourselves as part of a meaningful story, but that seems rather short of a philosophical endorsement. Other races, women, homosexuals, and even non-humans are now, for some, included in the circle of justice. It is plausible to say that a huge amount of good has followed from the willingness to step back from the particular in order to assert the universal. I, for example, got quite misty-eyed last year listening to accounts of the Battle of Britain on its seventieth anniversary. I got very upset when I saw an election broadcast in which a member of the BNP [an extreme right-wing party] posed in front of a Spitfire. However, precisely because stories have this seductive quality, we should be hugely suspicious of them; especially so when they are enlisted for illiberal causes. I asked the group how the law might be altered to bring about equality. The liberal option "the notion of abolishing the law of blasphemy altogether" did not even occur to them: Instead, what is absolutely important, is that your life is yours to live uncoerced in respect of what I referred to as your large-scale concept of the good. Defending this principle is as close as I get to such a concept of the good myself. All of this should I hope inspire the reader to read *Justice* for themselves. I suspect that would please him, even if my conclusions do not. Michael Sandel Michael Sandel is a professor of political philosophy at Harvard. It has been made into a twelve episode TV series, and is available to view online.

Chapter 7 : Justice: What's The Right Thing to Do?

Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?, pp. , by permission of the publisher. 22 JUSTICE bridge, onto the track, into the path of the oncoming trolley. He would.

General Remarks Summary Mill begins his essay by observing that very little progress has been made toward developing a set of standards by which to judge moral right and wrong. For more than two thousand years, people have been attempting to determine the basis of morality, but have not come any closer to consensus. Mill acknowledges that in the sciences, it is common to have disagreement about such bases or foundations. However, he argues that in science particular truths can still have meaning even if we do not understand the principles underlying them; in contrast, in areas such as law or ethics, a statement unfounded upon a generally accepted theoretical basis has very little validity at all. In these areas unlike in science , all action exists to forward a particular end; thus it would seem that rules of action would depend on what ends are being pursued. Mill therefore argues that in order to know what morality dictates, it is necessary to know by what standard human actions should be judged. Mill then addresses the issue of moral instinct, and whether the existence of such an instinct would eliminate the need for determining the foundation of morality. He argues it does not. First, the existence of such a moral sense is disputable. Secondly, even if this sense does exist, it does not tell us whether something is right or wrong in a particular case. Rather, this instinct supplies only general principles. Thus, although general laws are a necessary part of moral thinking, it is the application of these laws to specific cases that constitutes morality itself. However, people do not often try to make a list of these general laws, or a priori principles, that are the foundation of morality; nor do they attempt to reduce these to a single first principle. Rather, they either assume that commonly accepted moral rules should be seen as having a priori legitimacy, or they arbitrarily posit some implausible first principle that does not then gain popular acceptance. Mill argues that the moral claims made by many previous thinkers are therefore unfounded. Yet our moral beliefs have undergone little alteration over the course of history; their durability implies that there exists some standard that serves as a solid, if unrecognized, foundation. Mill argues that this unrecognized standard is the principle of utility, or the "greatest happiness principle. Mill writes that his essay will reflect his attempt to add to the understanding and appreciation of utilitarianism, and to present some kind of proof of it as a moral theory. Utilitarianism cannot be "proven" in the ordinary sense of the word, Mill asserts, since it is not possible to prove questions regarding ultimate ends. Rather, the only statements that can be proven to be valid are those statements that lead to other statements that we accept to be valid. However, this does not mean that we must judge first principles arbitrarily; we can still evaluate them rationally. This essay, then, will present and consider various arguments in support of utilitarianism. Also, since much of the opposition to utilitarianism issues from misunderstandings of the theory, Mill says he will also focus on what utilitarianism actually posits. Commentary In these introductory remarks, Mill sets the stage for his essay. It is helpful to observe his strategy of argument here. He begins by observing something of a crisis in moral thinking: Mill argues that having such a foundation is necessary in order for morality to have any legitimacy or significance. If actions are to be judged by whether they further "good" ends, it is necessary to know which ends are good. Moreover, the stakes of this question are high: Having presented this problem, Mill introduces utilitarianism as a potential solution. He argues that it is already implicitly used as a standard, and that it fulfils the requirements of being a first principle. This is one framework through which to understand morality, and Mill defines it as the essential one. It is important to think about whether this consequences-based understanding of morality is convincing. For example, consider something regarded as immoral, such as lying. Consider then a situation in which the telling of a lie could prevent five other people from having to lie. Is the first lie morally justified? For example, one could argue that morality bears most strongly upon the conduct of a single person as an individual: There are many variations of this argument, as well as completely different ways to potentially ground morality:

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