

## **Mill's Sanction Utilitarianism**

In *Utilitarianism*, Mill defends a formulation of utilitarianism that is often taken to be equivalent to standard act utilitarianism (AU): an act is morally right if and only if it maximizes utility. However, in Chapter V, he presents the following analysis of wrong actions:

“We do not call anything wrong, unless we mean to imply that a person ought to be punished in some way or other for doing it; if not by law, by the opinion of his fellow-creatures; if not by opinion, by the reproaches of his own conscience.” [V 14]

David O. Brink calls the resultant theory “sanction utilitarianism,” (SU) and claims that it is not consistent with AU, nor with standard rule utilitarianism (RU). In this paper, I formulate several versions of SU and show that on at least some versions it does indeed conflict with AU and RU. I then evaluate SU as a criterion of right action and compare it to AU and RU. My final claim is that SU, while intriguing, lacks the plausibility of AU.

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