

MORALITY AS UNIVERSAL PREFERENCE, OR DEMOCRATIC POSITIVISM

The doctrine that may be called 'democratic positivism' equates morality with general preference. According to it, it is morally right, or even obligatory, for me to do A rather than B iff (a) I prefer A to B and (b) I make sure that anyone else would, if affected by the act and under similar circumstances, prefer A to B. Something of the sort has been advocated by Hare (1976) under the dubious name of 'utilitarianism'. The troubles with this view are that (a) it equates morals with custom, (b) and consequently makes no room for rationality and moral criticism. (See further criticisms in Brandt 1979 pp. 230 ff.)

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