Corporal & Capital Punishment

Definitions

**Corporal punishment** – punishment of the body, e.g., whipping, caning, chopping off hands, the stocks

**Capital punishment** – death penalty

**Sanctity of life** – a religious idea that life is holy/life should not be taken

**Stocks** – a wooden frame with holes for arms and legs. People were kept in these for days.

**The principle of utility** – the idea that people *should do* whatever brings the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest number of people *or* *avoid* whatever brings the greatest amount of suffering to the greatest number of people

Corporal punishment

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Capital punishment

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Some people would apply **the principle of utility** to the death sentence. They would argue that if executing a criminal would prevent more suffering than letting him live it would be a good thing. For example, the criminal would suffer death but the families of the victims would suffer less because he has paid for his crime and the prison officers don’t have to keep working with the murderer every day. On the other hand, someone might argue that the death sentence causes more suffering because the prisoner suffers, the executioner suffers psychologically as do witnesses to the execution but it might make only a little difference to the victims’ families.

