EDUCATION IS REHABILITATION
SHOULD COLLEGE COURSES FOR PRISONERS BE PUBLICLY FUNDED?
AWARD FOR RESEARCH IN ETHICS — PATRICK GALLIMORE

Problem Statement
How do you balance society’s preference for punishment and prisoners’ need for educational rehabilitation?

A 1994 amendment to the federal Higher Education Act terminated Pell grants for prisoners, mandating that prisoners should not take college classes while in prison.

Method of analysis
Preference utilitarianism and the equal consideration of interests: Should society include all affected interests when calculating the rightness of an action, and weigh those interests equally?

Argument / Considerations
For punishment to be just, it should correspond to the offense and not exceed what is necessary to reform the offender and to protect society.

Reform is central to punishment
Before there can be a change in behavior, there must be a change in thinking— for both prisoners and society.

Imprisonment can only have the desired impact if the person being punished has something at stake in the general society.

Unfortunately, most punishments have no significant preventative effects and are not intended to have any.

Findings and Conclusions
The degree of public opposition to rehabilitation and preference for punishment has been greatly exaggerated.

Nearly two-thirds of all Americans (66%) agree that the best method of reducing crime is to rehabilitate prisoners by requiring education and job training.

Imprisonment satisfies the preference of individuals who support punishment of criminals. While incarcerated, prisoners need full secondary educational programs to prepare them for re-entry to society. Funding college-level courses makes it more likely that prisoners will have post-release opportunities they would not have foreseen.

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