

Pain and pleasure are the great springs of human action. When a man perceives or supposes pain to be the consequence of an act, he is acted upon in such manner as tends, with a certain force, to withdraw him, as it were, from the commission of that act. If the apparent magnitude, or rather value of that pain be greater than the apparent magnitude or value of the pleasure or good he expects to be the consequence of the act, he will be absolutely prevented from performing it. The mischief which would have ensued from the act, if performed, will also by the means be prevented. [...] General prevention is effected by the denunciation of punishment, and by its application, which, according to the common expression, *serves for an example*. The punishment suffered by the offender presents to everyone an example of what he himself will have to suffer if he is guilty of the same offence. General prevention ought to be the chief end of punishment, as it is its real justification. If we could consider an offence which has been committed as an isolated fact, the like of which would never recur, punishment would be useless. It would be only adding one evil to another. But when we consider that an unpunished crime leaves the path of crime open, not only to the same delinquent, but also to all those who may have the same motives and opportunities for entering upon it, we perceive that the punishment inflicted on the individual becomes a source of security to all. That punishment, which, considered in itself, appeared base and repugnant to all generous sentiment, is elevated to the first rank of benefits, when it is regarded, not as an act of wrath or vengeance against a guilty or an unfortunate individual who has given way to mischievous inclinations, but as an indispensable sacrifice to the common safety.

J. Bentham, *The Rationale of Punishment*, (1830), New York, Prometheus Books, 2009, chap. "Of the Ends of Punishment", p.61-62.