

uttyy

by Ww Ee

Submission date: 23-Feb-2020 04:49PM (UTC-0600)

Submission ID: 1262500214

File name: utilitarianism.docx (19.04K)

Word count: 1631

Character count: 7736

Name

Instructor

Subject

24/2/2020

Killing and Letting Die

1. What would be the advice of Mill in both scenarios?

4 The theory of utilitarianism states that an action is only right or wrong based on its outcome resulting from that action or policy. The theory categorically states that the outcome of an action is not only based on the outcome of action on a single individual but also on the result of that particular action on others. Therefore, this theory takes action to be right if it creates maximum happiness to the people affected by it and wrong if it does not please most of the people (Quiggin, 2012). The theory considers the interests of others in judging an action right or wrong compared to justifying a person's selfish interest. Any action that tends to result in pleasure and happiness of an individual is regarded, and right and any which promotes pain or unhappiness are wrong. The extent of how good an action is regarded based on the number of people who receive happiness from it. Classical utility theory does not regard an action as good if it only makes the doer happy; this is in line with egoism. Utility theory defines the right action as one which tends to multiply or spread happiness to most people in a specific group, while bad actors are ones that tend to spread pain in a group of people (Ryan, 2016). According to this theory, some people must sacrifice their happiness by doing actions that bring them pain for the majority to experience happiness. Such is the case when public and private interest conflict. In the scenario provided, the six people who are trapped gets counted. This is primarily because

they are the ones affected by the action of the rescuer if he decides to save the five who are together on the isolated one.

John Stuart Mill was of the idea that the quality of pleasure mattered more than the quantity, quality of happiness cannot be quantified but can be categorized as higher or lower pleasures, and the theory of utility was based on the principle of the greatest happiness. Therefore, a good action is one which seeks to promote higher pleasures for most people in a given group. In the scenarios created by rescue I and rescue II, John Mill would apply his interpretation of the utilitarianism theory. In rescue I, Mill would advise the rescuer to forsake the single who has been struck by the disaster and hurry towards saving the five people threatened by an ocean tide. According to Mill, the right action is one that provides the highest quality of happiness as compared to quantity. Rescuing five people produces more happiness than rescuing one and leaving five to perish. Mill defined utilitarianism as doing the action which provides the highest level of happiness for most people, which rescuing five people does to the rescuer. In rescue II, Mill would tell the rescuer to focus on saving the five individuals as saving the one who is trapped means death to the other five. Thus, they would have to run over a trapped person to rescue the five who are trapped. This action will not make the rescuer happy, but overall, the five people will be happier, thus justifying killing one to save the rest. According to Mill, the best action should give the most happiness to most people.

2. What would Kant tell the rescuer?

The deontological theory states that people are expected to act according to a series of predetermined principles and rules regardless of the outcome morally. According to Kant, an action is right or wrong based on the human will. Thus a good action is determined by exercising or moral duty, which is a set of categorical maxims that bind people to act according to

categorical imperatives (Dierksmeier, 2013). The theory is based on the rational nature of humans, which guides people to act according to moral principles. Human emotions and values should be part of taking action. Therefore, morality does provide humans with a framework for taking actions which are independent of a person's interest and intentions.

The first imperatives state that an individual should only act ¹ according to the maxim, whereby they can, at the same time, want it to become a universal law without contradiction (Louden, 2011). In the scenario created, the maxim is that a person should be helping anyone in need. The duty resulting from this maxim is that a person will always seek to help people who came across as needing help or saving. In this imperative, ² a true moral proposition is not tied to any particular condition and certainly not the identity of the person making the decision or the recipient of the action.

The second version of the categorical imperatives states that humanity shall be treated ¹ whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end but always at the same time as an end (Crisp, 2015). Thus, all rational actions must be considered not only as a principle but also as an end. In this case, the end should not be subjective in nature but objective. This imperative creates a demand for a reason before doing any action, which will give the desired outcome. Objectively, all people must maintain the action which seeks to maintain their moral duty in seeking an equal end for everyone by failing ¹ to use themselves and others as a mere means to an end. This would apply in this situation by considering the objectives of the rescuer in providing help to the afflicted. The rescuer should not use his position to determine whom to save or not; rather, he should choose an action that is good for everyone and himself by following his moral laws.

In the first case, Kant would advise the rescuer to follow his moral duty in deciding whom to save. The rescuer is not fully aware of the situation in which the person is trapped but is fully aware of the conditions facing the five who would drown. According to Kant, the decision based on rationality would be to save the individual who is trapped somewhere. This is because rationality demands that a person thinks before taking any action, and in this case, the rescuer might make it in time to save the five but might not have enough time to get to safety; thus, they all drown. On the other hand, if he saves the trapped person, they won't risk drowning and will have provided help to a person. Rationality is against fighting a losing battle.

In the rescue II, Kant would advise the rescuer to provide help to the person on the road or to wait until they move out of the way for them to continue with the journey. Morally, it is impossible for a person to disregard the life of a person by running them over, claiming to serve a more significant interest in saving more lives elsewhere. The first category of imperatives states that all humans must take action, which can be universally accepted without contradictions. Refusing help or running over a person is not an action that would be universally accepted without criticism. Kant believes that a person should not disregard some moral principles with the aim of upholding others.

3. Criticism of Mill and Kant

Mill is of the idea that a good action is one that leads to the highest level of higher pleasure or good. That principle is applied to the scenario in rescue I and II to choose to save of the five people who might drown and even killing the person trapped on the road. The reasoning created using Mill's rule gives leeway for justifying immoral acts. In rescue II, the rescuer kills a person and justifies himself that they had to do that in order to save five more lives. Therefore, sorrow created from the loss of a single person's life is not compared with the joy of saving five

lives. Mill regards the higher happiness of others above that of a person. The five people will be happy that they are safe at the same level as the single person who would have been saved. In that sense, the five were saved because of their numbers but not the quality of pleasure.

Kant's recommendation to the rescuer will lead to the death of many people while preserving a few. At times, moral laws have to be bent or forsaken when making decisions in order to make the right decision. Actions that are made based on moral laws are not always right and acceptable because they can be subjected to the bias of a person's moral laws.

Mill's ethical approach is far superior to Kant's, in my opinion. Following Mill's approach, it is possible to achieve more pleasure even when the doer of an action has to sacrifice their pleasure. What matters is the ultimate higher pleasure achieved by most people. In the two scenarios, five people would be saved compared to saving one and letting five die. This is especially right considering that the two scenarios required sacrificing one for the other and logically, a less should be spent to save more. Thus the collective good should always be considered, and in this case, it is achieved by rescuing five people.

Reference

- Quiggin, J. (2012). *Generalized expected utility theory: The rank-dependent model*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Ryan, A. (2016). *JS Mill (Routledge Revivals)*. Routledge.
- Dierksmeier, C. (2013). Kant on virtue. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 113(4), 597-609.
- Louden, R. B. (2011). *Kant's human being: Essays on his theory of human nature*. OUP USA.
- Crisp, R. (2015). A Third Method of Ethics?. *Philosophy and phenomenological research*, 90(2), 257-273.

ORIGINALITY REPORT

6%

SIMILARITY INDEX

2%

INTERNET SOURCES

0%

PUBLICATIONS

6%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

Submitted to Columbia College of Missouri

Student Paper

3%

2

Submitted to Grand Canyon University

Student Paper

1%

3

www.usmevents.com.au

Internet Source

1%

4

Submitted to Roehampton University

Student Paper

1%

Exclude quotes On

Exclude bibliography On

Exclude matches Off