

History of ethics, major viewpoints assignment

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Utilitarianism is commonly found in two forms: act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism. Act utilitarianism essentially states that everyone should perform that act which will bring about the greatest good for everyone affected by the act. Fundamentally, this theory requires that each individual assess the situation and determine which act would bring about the greatest amount of good consequences for the maximum number of persons involved. While act utilitarianism sounds nearly ideal, there are several criticisms to this theory.

For one, it very difficult to ascertain what uniqueness are good for others, given that all individuals hold different sets of morals, values, and beliefs. Furthermore, there is a certain impracticality in having to begin anew because not all acts and situations are entirely different. It would also be difficult to educate others given there is no distinct set of rules or guidelines. And finally, one must consider the rights of those “ few” whom do not benefit from that action which will bring about the greatest good.

To provide answers to many of the above mentioned criticisms, rule utilitarianism was established. In this form, utilitarian’s believe that everyone should establish and follow those rules that bring about the greatest good for all concerned. In other words rule utilitarian’s, from experience and careful reasoning, try and establish a series of rules that when followed, will yield the greatest good for humanity (I. E. “ never kill except in self defense”). Associated with rule utilitarianism are some of the same criticisms encountered with act utilitarianism.

Again, it becomes difficult to determine consequences of others.

Furthermore, non-rule moralists argue tryingly that there is no rule in which one could not find at least one exception. In contrast, one major inconsequentially theory is Kantian. This theory, often called "Duty Ethics," was formulated by Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant believed that nothing was good in itself, except the attribute good will, which acts in accordance with rules regardless of consequences. Another human attribute Kant proposed was equally of importance, was eons ability to reason.

He therefore believed it was possible to establish a valid set Of absolute moral rules on the basis Of reason alone thou reference to God. Cant's TTY. Or requirements for an absolute moral truth include both logical consistency (cannot be self-contradictory as a statement) and unpredictability (stated so as to apply to everything without exception). At the center of Cant's moral philosophy is the categorical imperative from which all our moral duties originate. Such principles of morality are described as an imperative because they command a certain course of action.

In other words, it is a categorical imperative because it commands, independently, particular ends and desires of the moral agent. According to Kant, these imperatives must be obeyed in their entirety, by all, and in all circumstances. For example, someone who is only inclined to be generous, rather than generous out of duty, is not fully moral. Like many other moral theories, there are several criticisms of Kantian. In some circumstances duties, which Kant describes as universal, conflict. For example, should one break a promise (which is immoral by Cant's standards) to keep another from being harmed?

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