Jeremy bentham and his influence on business ethics

Business, Business Ethics

Jeremy Bentham was a Utilitarian philosopher whose influence spread into many fields, including that of business ethics. Although his father was an attorney and Bentham studied law himself, he did not practice law. Instead, Bentham put his knowledge and reasoning skills to theories regardingphilosophy, business, and law.

His primary contribution to business was that of his personal theory of Utilitarianism, a philosophy that had its roots in the late eighteenth century (Budinger and Budinger 17). The foundation for Utilitarianism is that the moral nature of a deed is judged by the amount ofhappinessthat it provides to other people. Bentham's theory of utilitarianism was based on hedonism; that is, it focused on the ideal of pleasure.

Bentham suggested that morality was based on two opposing forces, pain and pleasure. The moral act was to bring as much pleasure as possible to the largest number of people. Although Bentham embraced hedonism, other utilitarian theorists suggested that happiness could also be based on intellectual pleasure. This concept is called " ideal utilitarianism" (Budinger and Budinger 17).

The authors explain that " Utilitarianism originally was a movement away from outmoded Christian ethics and the injustices of English aristocracy that favored the few, toward changes that favored the majority (Budinger and Budinger 17). The impact of Bentham, and of Utilitarianism, was such that many changes were made to an unjust business system, creating sweeping reforms of various different aspects of commerce. These reforms included

those made to the slave trade, industrialenvironment, and child labor laws, among other abuses (Budinger and Budinger 17).

Bentham's skill as a philosopher, hiseducationpertaining to laws, and his persuasive and copious writing allowed his drive to make these changes become a reality. Without his influence, the business world would have been a very different place. The utilitarian principles that Bentham and those who followed him proposed still have validity in today's world.

Work Cited

Budinger, Thomas F. and Miriam D. Budinger. Ethics of Emerging

Technologies: Scientific Facts and Moral Challenges . Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, 2006.