

Jeremy bentham versus john stuart mill

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Utilitarianism speaks of pleasures, pain, quality, quantity, etcetera. This paper intends to reintroduce the definition, concepts, as well as, ideas provided by the greatest thinkers namely: Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. It also aims to state the differences between their concepts. Finally, its objective is to mention whose definition/concept/idea with regards to utilitarianism is more plausible. Utilitarianism According to Jeremy Bentham.

Jeremy Bentham technically defines “ utility” as “ that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness or to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered”. Jeremy Bentham developed the aforementioned idea on utilitarianism through the following premises: First of all, that “ pleasure, happiness, goodness, benefit, advantage, etcetera” are terms that equate to one another. Second is that the aforementioned terms in the first are actually measurable, thus, quantifiable as well. Third, an act of people, as well as, the government should be based upon the rule that takes full advantage of pleasure and decreases pain. Last but not least, “ it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong” of human action in every situation, and in particular when governmental action is called for. Utilitarianism According to John Stuart Mill John Stuart Mill, on the other hand, sees “ utilitarianism” as the “ foundation of morals” because it holds that, “ actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness”. What does John Stuart Mill mean when he mentions happiness and unhappiness, you may ask? Well, the happiness he says is similar to pleasure and the non-existence

of terrible pain or any kind of pain for that matter. Unhappiness for John Stuart Mill, on the other hand, is akin to pain, as well as, the deprivation of enjoyment/pleasure.

Differences

This is where we see the first difference of his thoughts from that of Jeremy Bentham's since at this point, he already rejects the first premise, that all those terms aforementioned are all similar to each other or that the quality of pleasure is actually equivalent to each other. Deducing from that idea, if pleasures vary in superiority, as well as, in amount, and if only those men who have experienced the entire assortment of pleasures are capable of reflecting upon and comprehensibly articulating their experience are proficient of judging excellence, then the lawmaker/member of parliament can no longer establish/agree on governmental policy on the basis of " the greatest happiness of the greatest number". Another difference is that, actually, John Stuart Mill is not focused on " the greatest happiness of the greatest number" but on the " greatest happiness" alone.

" Utility" is still equivalent to pleasure but now there is already an acknowledgment that there are various kinds because of excellence and greatness. Third, John Stuart Mill rejects the thought of Jeremy Bentham, which states that the motivations for humans to act can all be reduced to one's own interest and to his own exploration for the utmost satisfaction. John Stuart Mill negates this by saying that a human being may also get pleasure/satisfaction by joining or participating in someone else's happiness. Simply put, pleasure does not only result from one's own interest but also

from what humankind and harmony are experiencing. Last but not least, John Stuart Mill declines the idea of Jeremy Bentham, which reiterates that the individual is the only one capable of judging his or her own interest. John Stuart Mill negates this by saying that there are several instances wherein a person needs the intervention/meddling of the government for his own good. For example, the government should intervene if the issue is with regards to education, employment, social issues like poverty etcetera since a person is not automatically the best judge of his or her interests as proven by the examples aforementioned.

The More Plausible Utilitarianism

Now that we have seen how Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill define utilitarianism, it is now time to scrutinize what is more plausible, utilitarianism according to Jeremy Bentham or utilitarianism according to John Stuart Mill? If we alter their definition slightly, say, what is functional is high-quality and accordingly, the principled value of conduct is “determined by the utility of its results” and that the utilitarian tradition sees that the ultimate purpose of honorable action is to reach the “greatest happiness for the greatest number”. If the aforementioned is to become a general rule for our laws then the “greatest happiness for the greatest number” will certainly be reached. At this point, we cannot still pinpoint what is more plausible since both Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill uphold that concept. I believe that John Stuart Mill’s utilitarianism is more plausible than that of Jeremy Bentham’s because of the following reasons: First of all, the premise of Jeremy Bentham that “pleasure, happiness, goodness, benefit,

advantage, etcetera” are terms that equate to one another is a little too vague.

It is a little confusing to utilize every term he has given interchangeably; it is as if all these terms have the same weight in terms of magnitude and excellence/superiority. Second, Jeremy Bentham’s argument “ it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong” of human action in every situation, and in particular, when governmental action is called for may lead to unnecessary abuse on the part of the government. For me, this has flaws since it may be used to make it appear that there is always a need for the government; these parts of his idea should have certain restrictions, for instance, it should be added that the government may intervene, however, the consent of the populace also should be taken into consideration. Finally, Jeremy Bentham’s thinking with regards to an individual’s motivations for humans to act can all be reduced to one’s own interest and to his own exploration for the utmost satisfaction. To me, it is a little bizarre since he is like undermining the capabilities of individuals to think of ways on how to make himself attain pleasure.

Reference

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