

Free essay on philosophy

[Experience](#), [Happiness](#)



Essay, MLA

Philosophy – Three Essays

1. Identify ONE of the following philosophers' ideological orientations as either Apollonian or Dionysian: Rene Descartes or John Locke. Provide a brief argument justifying your identification. (700 words, Works Cited, Double Spacing, 12 points)

2. Does John Stuart Mill's Utilitarian Ethics have as its epistemological basis Rationalism or Empiricism? Why? (700 words, Works Cited, Double Spacing, 12 points)

John Stuart Mill's (1806-1873) Utilitarian Ethics has as its epistemological basis the radical, interpretative empiricism where all knowledge comes from experience. He argued that mathematical statements, for instance, express mere probabilities on account of their extensive reconfirmation. He further assumed that even logical analysis and knowledge, despite their limitations, are empirical truths and that they have no place in ethics. Inferably, Mill claimed dropping by the wayside any absolute truth about mathematics and its relation to his ethics.

Mill likewise asserted that man's ultimate good (final goal or end) is happiness in his greatest happiness principle. He believed that happiness is the outcome of both higher (intellectual) and lower-order (sensual) pleasures. Individuals who experience the most pleasures always choose the higher pleasure. This implies that man should choose the highest quality of pleasure. He further claimed that moral rules, which are prescriptive in themselves, should serve the greatest happiness of man's purposes.

General moral rules, for Mill, should lead to the greatest happiness of the

greatest number of people. His utilitarian ethics, whose epistemological root is empiricism, claimed that moral actions with increasing level of pleasure should lead to greatest pleasure. However, Mill's essentially realized that since general moral rules are simply meant to guide human behavior based on our fleeting experiences, they do change over time. Thus, as a radical utilitarian empiricist, there are certainly no universal or absolute moral rules since human experience has non-permanence.

Despite Mill's utilitarian empiricism, he acknowledged the impossibility of proving happiness as the ultimate purpose that drives every human desires and actions. Consequently, Mill in all probability radically conceded the impossibility of providing a demonstrative logic with his greatest happiness principle being the foundational moral tenet. It only proves that Mill's normative ethics hinges upon psychological arguments and observations. Since Mill claimed for the ultimate happiness principle of utilitarian ethics, there are thus objections to it. Those on the opposing camp believe that utilitarian ethics demands that a person has to know all the consequences of his/their actions under a variety of complicated contexts. For them, how can Mill demand that a finite human being should know all the repercussions (end-result) of his of his action? Also, should a man then be liable for all the consequences of his action even when he is now fully aware or, in some cases, ignorant of the facts of it all? Isn't it that a person is mitigated from moral judgment when there are elements of unintentionality? Utilitarian Mill's obvious reply to this is that ethical principles only hold any rational person as responsible for the consequences of his actions under the weight of his general body of knowledge which he possesses.

Another objection to Mill's epistemological empiricism in his radical utilitarianism is that there are typically unlimited alternatives for action. So, how can a person then choose any of them fittingly each time he has to make a decision? Likewise, at what point any human being's moral responsibility to general happiness to be satiated considering that it demands determination of the overall happiness of the greatest number of people where he has to, at the very least, attend to his own needs?

Accordingly, the reply to this objection is two-fold.

First, rule utility (or indirect utilitarianism) is grounded on individual's sacrifice of his own happiness by means of rules-following for the collective (net) societal happiness. However, there is a second version in that there is a hedonic calculation (alternative mode) by which the collective repercussions for any particular person or group 'add up' to the greatest sum. Depending on the nature of the moral context, rule utilitarianism maintains that heuristic principles should guide a person's normal moral decision making whereas act utilitarianism allows a person to override moral rules whenever there is a conflicting issue. Thus, Mill's utilitarianism, in general, prescribes some counter-intuitiveness to any exceptions to rules especially when a person has to decide over the lesser evil.

Finally, Mill's Utilitarian Ethics whose epistemological basis is empiricism, primarily improves over hedonism considering that morals is objectively meted out for the general happiness of the greatest number of people. Noteworthy, indeed, that utilitarianism argues that reality, or morality in particular, has no rational basis, but only substantially material and that

human knowledge is accessible via its sensory perceptions, which preclude any moral innateness.

Works Cited

"John Stuart Mill". Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2012. Web. 10 Dec. 2012. .

Wilson, Fred, "John Stuart Mill." The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (Ed.). Web 10 Dec. 2012. .

3. Does Immanuel Kant's Deontological Ethics have as its epistemological basis Rationalism or Empiricism? Why? (700 words, Works Cited, Double Spacing, 12 points)

Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) Deontological Ethics (such as in his Groundwork in the Metaphysics of Morals) has as its epistemological basis Rationalism, which is based on a priori (reason) knowledge rather than a posteriori (empirical) truths. He argued that his duty ethics is based on pure reason using a moral rule which defines ultimate practical moral principles. Kant claims that there is not just moral, but also logical necessity, for the "Categorical Imperative." For him, there is an ultimate moral principle belonging to the realm of man's rationality – the autonomous will of the man. Accordingly, Kant believes that logically necessary, practical moral laws are universal. He asserted further that man's action should conform to moral laws, not simply in abidance with it; otherwise, it is then merely contingent upon any individual's subjective condition. However, it can be gleaned from the aforementioned proposition that, since Kant focuses his deontological theory not just on purely practical reason, he is reliant on metaphysical inquiry as well.

Kant further argued that man's reason influences his will to bring about the good, which is, for him, the final goal (end). It is good will that determines and motivates a person to act out of duty or moral obligation – and thus contains moral content. A person acting out of his sense of self-responsibility in attaining one's objectives has moral weight (value). It is Kant categorical imperative which paved the way for his notion of the universal moral law: "Act only in such a way that you can will that the maxim of your action should become a universal law." For Kant, a maxim relies on a volitional principle and rational principle. Hence, man's action becomes good in itself under volitional and rational motivation.

As an epistemological rationalist, Kant ascertained that a moral principle is not necessarily valid or true under certain situations, but under a rational, moral principle under all situations. Hence, the experiential knowledge is built upon experience as contingent (not logical necessary) truths under his deontological ethics. Kant further elaborated that since man's rationality is based on his will, thus, they are objectively (practically) necessary).

Kant has likewise aptly stated that the categorical imperative refers exactly to an individual's duty wholly defined by his rational thoughts such that volition itself should conform to it. But it is worth noting here that Kant also referred to the categorical imperative, which is objectively necessary and as a universal moral law of the will, as a 'given' for the imperfect human will (the perfect will is not bound by imperatives of any sort since it acts out of goodness).

Since Kant believed that an autonomous will, as the agent ('wherewithal') the maxim becomes a law to itself, it is thus the universal moral law. Briefly

stated, a person's free will becomes a universal law of morality whereas heterogeneity engender specious moral principles. He thus regards free will as conforming to natural necessity performed, not in accordance to subjective volition, but by objective rational reality.

Arguably, Kant's deontological theory of the universal law of morality polarizes moral judgments when they are reduced to statements concerning lawfulness or unlawfulness. Kant's Categorical Imperative, for one, is an oversimplification of the context where the morality under consideration is ambiguous or complex; hence, necessitates a moral compromise depending on the gravity of the scenario. Likewise, it can be deemed improbable that his categorical imperative can be adapted to all situations where a perfect will for moral actions is warranted. Kant, by the way, did not delved further concerning constraint or coercion as it impacts one's moral duty.

Works Cited

Johnson, Robert, " Kant's Moral Philosophy", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = .

Wood, Allen W. " Kant's Ethical Thought." UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Print.

4. Citing specific methodological tendencies and philosophical assertions, illustrate the polemic character of philosophical development as manifest in the teacher-student relationships of Socrates to Plato and Plato to Aristotle. (700 words, Works Cited, Double Spacing, 12 points)

Socrates (469-399 BC), an Athenian philosopher, is considered generally as one of the wisest men of all ages. He seemed well-versed with the Parmenidian, Heraclitian and Anaxogarian doctrines. Since Socrates has not

written anything, but comes primarily from his relationship with student Plato (that is, Plato's dialogues such as the Gorgias, Meno, Apology and Phaedo) and accounts of Xenophon. He spent his time exploring philosophical assertions such as piety, justice and virtue wherever he congregated with his fellowmen. From the extant works of Plato, Socrates sought wisdom concerning right conducts for the intellectual improvement and moral guidance of his fellow Athenians.

Socrates has been popularly known for his methodological, dialectical style of debate ("Socratic dialogue") wherein he drew out students' knowledge through a series of engaging question and answer portion with an end-view of examining every possible implication to arrive at the truth. Additionally, for him, self-knowledge is a virtue not to do evil. The soul, according to him, serves as the center of man's moral character and waking consciousness and posited that the universe was purposively and consciously well-ordered. However, because of Socrates' criticisms of the Athenian religious and political institutions, he had made a number of enemies. He was tried and convicted as a religious heretic aside from the case of corrupting the Athenian youth of their morals. Despite efforts of possibly saving his life, he rather willingly drank a cup of hemlock poison offered to him. His trial, conviction and death were described in Plato's Crito, Apology and Phaedo. Plato (427?-347 BC), another Greek philosopher, is a prized pupil of Socrates. Plato is credited for establishing the Academy, which is considered the most influential institution at that time. Aristotle was among his most famous student. Most of Plato's specific methodological tendencies and assertions are recorded as dialogues and epistles. His extant works concerning

Socrates' dialogues mentioned above include Gorgias, Apology and Meno (Early Years), as well as, the Symposium, Republic, Timaeus and Phaedo (Middle Years), which present the relationship among the state, soul and cosmos.

On the other hand, Plato's later dialogues (for example, Parmenides and Laws) consist of the laws, mathematics, natural sciences and philosophic problems. For Plato, man's rational soul is immortal in the world of souls. However, he claimed for the independency of Ideas (Forms) for their immutability in guaranteeing scientific knowledge and ethical standards. This then ensures order in our constantly changing world since virtue, or harmony with the Ideas, is supreme. For Plato, a philosopher in harmony with the Good (Idea/Form) must be the one to rule the state.

Plato's dialogues, which virtually tackled philosophical problems for subsequent philosophers, consider his teachings as tremendously influential in the annals of the Western civilization and, until these days, as among the finest literature worldwide. This is somehow attributable not only for his wisdom, but also considering the impact of Socrates' ideas to him – which are non-arbitrary manifested in him.

Aristotle (384-322 BC), also a Greek philosopher, is Plato's pupil. He was well-known for having established the Lyceum. It was he who tutored Alexander the Great (342-339 BC). Many of Aristotle's extant writings are from his students' lecture notes such as the Organon, De Anima, Physics, Metaphysics, De Poetica, Nichomachean Ethics, Rhetorics, and Biology. Aristotle's methodological tendencies and philosophical assertions as manifested in his student-teacher relationship with Plato is his systematic

use of logic (syllogisms), which is an immutable first principle and foundation of all truths.

Aristotle asserted that knowledge requires an understanding of causality as being primary truth. For him, the ultimate good for a human being is full exercise of rationality. Contrary to the philosophical assertions of Plato, he believes that Form or Idea (except God) is immanent in an object.

In summary, the specific methodological tendencies and philosophical assertions surrounding the polemic character of the philosophical development present in the teacher-student relationships of Socrates to Plato and Plato to Aristotle are apparent. Socrates is well-known for his methodological conversational skill (Socratic Method) and unrelenting quests for philosophical pursuit of truth; Plato taught the legacy of Socrates and abstract philosophical or absolute truth (Ideal Form); and, Aristotle (Logic), as a notable product of Plato, developed syllogism and philosophical understanding of the ultimate truth. Each of them having contributed accordingly, it can be inferred that the student was, indeed, not greater than his teacher – but one of the greatest in his own right.

Works Cited

" Aristotle". Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012. Web. 10 Dec. 2012 .

Brennan, Tad. Immortality in Ancient Philosophy. E. Craig (Ed.). Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online. Web. 10 Dec. 2012.

Nails, Debra. " Socrates" The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (Ed.). Web. 10 Dec. 2012. .

5. What is the fundamental distinction between the Heraclitian and the

Parmenidian ontological paradigms? Explain the difference between Becoming and Being. Citing particular metaphysicists, identify which of the two views (Heraclitian or Parmenidian) is predominant in the history of western philosophy. Try to account for the dominance of that metaphysical position. (700 words, Works Cited, Double Spacing, 12 points)