

Philosophy essay deontology

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Deontology Immanuel Kant's deontological moral theory provides a strong base for making correct decisions and is a better ethics system than Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that is attributed to philosophers John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham. Utilitarianism is a theory holding that the proper course of action is one which maximizes happiness for the majority. [2] It is considered a 'consequentialist' philosophical view because it holds the belief that outcomes can be predicted based on the course of actions.

Utilitarianism is another way of stating 'the end justifying the means.' Deontologists argue that the means of one's actions should be ethical regardless of the outcome contrasting to utilitarianism where the outcomes must benefit the majority. [3] Deontology demands that ethical norms be used with the belief that there are transcendent ethical norms and truths that are universally applicable for all. Deontology reinforces that actions can be immoral regardless of their outcome because the actions made can be wrong in themselves. Through this Kant uses 'a categorical imperative' meaning one must act morally at all times.

Kant believes that all people base their moral conclusions on their rational thought. Thus, deontology is another way of stating 'the means justifying the end.' Suppose an evil villain holds you and four others hostage and instructs you to kill one of the four hostages and if you chose not to do this, the villain will kill every one. You have no doubts about the reality of the villain's treats therefore you fully believe that he will do what he says he will. This leaves you with two options. The first option is to kill one of the four and save the lives of the other three as well as yourself.

From a utilitarian perspective one would come to the conclusion that they must kill the one person because in the end, it has the most beneficial outcome for all. (the most people leave the scene alive) In contrast, deontologists would conclude that you should not kill the one person because killing people is wrong as a universal moral truth. How do we know what is right? Utilitarianism is justifiable in a sense where it considers the pain and pleasure of every individual affected by a particular action or situation. [4] It also considers every individual as an equal and does not permit a person to put their interests above anything else.

Utilitarianism also attempts to provide an objective method of making moral decisions. However, utilitarianism cannot assign a significant measure to all pains and pleasures considering that some pains and pleasures cannot or should not be measured such as the life of an individual. Through suggesting that the 'ends justify the means; would lying or cheating be considered ethical if the outcome is positive? Suppose a person murders another and gets away with it. Would this be considered ethical in the sense where in the end his outcome is positive because he gets away with it?

Utilitarianism assumes that outcomes can always be determined before an action is put in place. Outcomes, however are unpredictable, making utilitarianism fundamentally flawed: it is impossible to predict the outcomes of one's actions with absolute certainty. Thus one can argue that utilitarianism can evolve into a dangerous moral case where people can justify evil actions on the belief that the outcome is beneficial for all (in the case where the other hostages as well as yourself get away alive) or positive (where one gets away with lying and cheating).

Furthermore, assuming the population would not feel guilt in their actions and that the unhappiness of the minority would be less than the happiness of the majority, but one must remember that it is net consequences not just who is happiest. Deontological theories do have their pitfalls. For instance, it is not always clear how to rank moral duties because they can at times be insoluble. [5] In the example of telling the truth to fulfill a moral duty, it could lead a person to tell a murderer where to find an intended victim.

Showing that one set of rules cannot account for every scenario leaving people without guidance in some moral decisions. Despite these drawbacks, deontological theories hold that human beings have a moral obligation to follow certain principles. Through Kant's 'categorical imperative', human beings are required to treat others ethically, morally and fairly. [6] This allows people to evaluate what they are doing and it permits them to go above and beyond the basic requirements of the rules: lending a helping hand.

Deontology is a more applicable theory because forces human beings to better themselves; 'to treat others the way you would want to be treated.' It is considered to be a 'non-consequentialist' moral theory because deontologists assert the righteousness of an action as not simply defined on the beneficial outcome of the majority but the morality of the action and if that action is morally acceptable. It demands that actions be ethical. Deontologists do not necessarily have universal claims, but rather absolute claims and it recognizes that actions can be wrong regardless of their results. In the example of killing people to save people, killing people is still ethically wrong.) A deontologist would argue that one can only be

responsible for ones' own actions and not the actions of others. In this example you are only responsible for your decision to kill one person since the villain is ultimately the one making the unethical choice to kill the rest of the prisoners. Even though killing the one person would maximize the good of the majority there is something ethically wrong.

Through this, deontology recognizes that utilitarianism does not respect rights and is too destructive because it disregards all morals. In order for utilitarianism to work, the minority must suffer while the majority thrives, leading to great sacrifice to maximize the "good of all". [7] Deontological ethics capture the features of virtue because, in a sense it is simply a theory of our moral duties. While moral theories like utilitarianism speak of happiness as the ultimate goal of morality, deontology instead focuses on what we need to do be worthy of that happiness.

Utilitarianism can lead a person to calculate utility in situations where one should not, making utilitarianism flawed in comparison to deontology because utilitarianism does not assert the rightness of an action on what is ethically acceptable. [8] Focusing on the majority regardless of the minority makes utilitarianism not applicable. Even if we wanted to put utilitarianism into effect, we would not be able to because there is no practical measure of utility. Whether that measure is pleasure, happiness or the object of desire, the outcome is not the same for all, therefore it is not applicable. To the contrary, deontology there are ethical norms applicable to all because people come to moral conclusions about what is right or wrong based on their innate human rationality.

References

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