Moral and social philosophy

Philosophy

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Moralphilosophyis focused on the habits, customs, and values of a certain individual (Wikipedia, 2007). It has the following sub-categories: meta-ethics; normative ethics; as well as, applied ethics (Wikipedia, 2007).

One of the major contributors to this school of thought is Immanuel Kant who said that " deontology" holds that an act is considered to be right if it goes with the moral rule or principle (Ethical.., 2001). For example, parents will have to decide whether or not to have their children immunized. Since it is required by the law then the parents will have to allow their children to be immunized; it is the right thing to do because it goes along with the moral rule or principle (Ethical.., 2007).

Social Philosophy

Social philosophy is technically defined as a study that addresses dilemmas concerning social/human behaviors (Wikipedia, 2007). It covers the following

areas: effects ofculture, effects ofscience, revolution, social contract, etc (Wikipedia, 2007). Simply put, social philosophy concerns itself with moral principles as applied to problems ofequality, freedom, as well as, justice (Wikipedia, 2007).

One of the major contributors of social philosophy is John Locke who stated that: men are equal, free, as well as independent; thus, they possess the faculty of reason, which gives them the right to preserve their property including their life, liberty, as well as, estates (Bennagen, 2000).

In addition to that, he believes that the state of nature is one that is in a state of perfect equality, freedom, liberty, and rationality but it is possible to turn into a state of war especially in cases where there exists the absence of a common judge (Bennagen, 2000). Thus, for him, entering into a social contract is necessitated so as not to go through anything that is similar to the state of war (Bennagen, 2000). Last but not least, he also believes that people have the right to resist a government that tyrannical in nature (Bennagen, 2000).

Subjectivism

Subjectivism is the act of making moral judgments, however, based on an individual's emotion (Ethics.., n. d.). For example, judging if something is " nice", an individual has to have positive emotions about it otherwise it should not be labeled or declared as something " nice" (Ethics.., n. d.).

Advocates of subjectivism claim that since moral judgments are decided upon subjectively or basing on emotions, then individuals are fully rational during such a period (Ethics.., n. d.).

The major problem with subjectivism, however, is that, since it is based on emotions, the person may all the more arrive at wrong decisions or judgments, for example, dating a nice and handsome young but married man may feel nice but that doesn't mean it is moral to do so (Ethics.., n. d.).

One kind of subjectivism is known as metaphysical subjectivism and one of the major contributors to the aforementioned school of thought is Descartes (Wikipedia, 2007).

Egoism

Ethical egoism or simply egoism is doing something to fulfill an individual's own interest whether it may be good or harmful to other people (Wikipedia, 2007). Egoism does not take into consideration the well-being of others nor does it do anything to be of assistance or help to others (Wikipedia, 2007).

One of the contributors to this particular school of thought is Thomas Hobbes who advocated that self-interests should be pursued and practiced so that freedom may be equal to everybody (Wikipedia, 2007). He also believes that even if there is self-interest, it is impossible that an individual may be harmed because humans are typically the same when it comes to their wants and needs (Wikipedia, 2007).

Virtue Ethics

Virtue Ethics is where Aristotle's moral theory is taken into consideration (Ethical.., 2001). Here, it is said that " an act is right if it is what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances" (Ethical.., 2001). Let's take, for instance, the case on immunization, currently, there is a dilemma with regards to having every child immunized before going to school, utilizing

virtue ethics incritical thinking, parents may decide that they will allow their children to be immunized because it is not only good for their children, but it will benefit all the others as well (Ethical.., 2001).

Ethical Relativism

Ethical relativism is where social, personal, historical, as well as, cultural considerations are the basis of one's judgment or decision (Wikipedia, 2007).

A contributor to this school of thought named Jean-Paul Sartre in fact claims that somebody's morals, if any, will be proven only if the person follows certain social norms (Wikipedia, 2007).

Utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism is built on the concept or principles of utility, which he believes is the foundation of morals (Bennagen, 2000). It holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promotehappiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness (Bennagen, 2000). Happiness, according to John Stuart Mill, is equated to pleasure and the absence of pain, while unhappiness, for him, refers to pain and the privation of pleasure (Bennagen, 2000).

Categorical Imperative

This rationally dictates a course of action independent of whatevergoalsthe agent may have (Encarta, 2007). By this, Immanuel Kant also meant that the moral law is categorical or that it applies to all situations, and by imperative, he meant, it is commanding, thus making it absolutely authoritative (Gaarder, 1991).

Immanuel Kant stated the Categorical Imperative in two key formulations: 1) Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a general natural law (Encarta, 2007), meaning, that it should apply to all people in all societies at all times (Gaarder, 1991); and 2) Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only (Encarta, 2007). By this statement, he meant, we should not exploit others to our own advantage (Gaarder, 1991).

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