

Philosophy

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Utilitarianism Among different theories that were implemented in XIX-XXs century the concept of utilitarianism is still the matter to discuss. Although firstly the suppositions of utilitarianism appear in the writings of the British moralists of XVI-XVII centuries, the modern theory of the concept is most often associated with the British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) who elaborated the theory from a hedonistic version proposed by his mentor Jeremy Bentham (1748- 1832) who thought a person should experience a lot of pleasure and avoid suffering. As most clearly stated by Mill, the basic principle of utilitarianism is:

" Actions are right to the degree that they tend to promote the greatest good for the greatest number". (Charles D. Kay, 1997)

As for Robin Penslar and Aaron Ridley, utilitarianism is teleological moral theory which asserts that the correct action is a function of its consequences (" the greatest good for the greatest number") which can be predicted. The consequences of the good must be distributed as widely as possible; the person making moral choice should look not only for personal good or for whom they care about, but also for welfare. The choice made is provided by the rationale and logical argument and a person can use it on an individual basis. According to this ethical theory, the correctness of behavior is determined by its final use. The supporters of the theory say the utilitarian principle is the only moral criterion of human acts, and this principle is to ensure that we should always seek to maximize the predominance of good over evil. The ethics of utilitarianism defines natural process in a person coming into antagonism with itself in consciousness.

According to the utilitarianism morality is based upon the common good (happiness for most people) which Bentham called the common benefit, of <https://assignbuster.com/philosophy-essay-samples-14/>

course, distinguishing it from self-interest, or personal benefit. Under the principle of common benefit he understood the principle of action selection and evaluation of acts, which focuses on the greatest possible benefit. If the act concerns the interests of the community, we are talking about the benefits (happiness) of community, if it is about the interests of the individual, so, the benefits of the individual is a predominant thing.

Utilitarianism is also a theory directed against selfishness. The admissibility of pleasure or profit made in each case is determined by whether they contribute to a higher purpose. The definition (assessment) of phenomena and events either good or bad is also based on that principle. And according to the theory a person should (bearing in mind the supreme moral principle) strive to provide at least their own good. In the spirit of the Protestant ethics thus assumed that a person must fulfill their professional and social purpose in the first place, but to fulfill it with clean hands, in good conscience - virtuously. (Robin Penslar, Aaron Ridley)

Recently utilitarianism has been the dominant trend in world ethics and had a major influence on the choice-making in public policy. However, the theory itself has been heavily criticized. Early versions of it boiled down to the fact that in each particular case the moral choice is dictated by the principle of utility. In this case, strictly speaking, we cannot assess with moral principles such deeds as lying or keeping promises until we understand the situation, in which the act will be done, and only then we are able to evaluate the consequences of acts. Some scientists argued that this would lead to moral judgement, contrary to common belief. If two options provide the same preponderance of good over evil, but one assumes a lie, and the other - the truth, utilitarian does not know which one to choose because their effects are

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equal. The "utilitarianism of principles" answers that we should follow certain moral rules because these rules lead to benefit. (Robin Penlar, Aaron Ridley)

So, the world has got an effective social and ethical teachings. But it forms only one part in the big world of philosophy and science. The universal belief, prevailed in the period of rationalism, that the proposed reforms should be carried out under the auspices of ethics loses its force nowadays. Ethics that seeks to create the future of human society is valued less and less. And it is definitely the matter for us and future generations to discuss and implement.

References

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- Ridley, Aaron. 1998, Beginning Bioethics. New York: St. Martins Press, viewed 5 March 2015, Web