

Act utilitarianism



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Act Utilitarianism The theory of Utilitarianism was first developed by Jeremy Bentham who was a philosopher of the 18th century. Bentham developed this theory to create a modern and rational approach to morality which would suit the changing society. Bentham's theory Act Utilitarianism has many strengths and weaknesses. A Strength is that this theory is considers the consequences and happiness which an action has created. This is because Act Utilitarianism is a teleological theory where actions are based on results. For example if I splash cold water at someone to wake up for school this is a good action as it has good consequences because the person I splashed water on can go on to school and gain knowledge and this I will also create happiness. Another strength would be that this theory is always seeking the " Greatest Good for the Greatest Number". For example if I was going to bomb the world with a bomb I planted in a secret location and the only way to get the information was to torture me. An Act Utilitarian would say that I should be tortured so that I could give the information on where the bomb was and this that would create the greatest good for the greatest number. There are also many problems with Bentham's theory as it allows cruel or sadistic pleasure as long as it out ways the pain. For example if ten sadists torture one child pleasure out ways the child's pain making the action right in an Act Utilitarian eyes. Also if someone intentions are good but the consequence of their action is bad an Act Utilitarian would say this wrong even though the intention was good. For example if I help an old man across the street and then he assassinates someone my action which was good becomes bad because of the consequence. Another weakness is that there is always a minority which will not benefit from an action and this could cause a great amount of pain for that minority and the pain of this minority could

out way the pleasure of the majority but it is too hard and long to use the hedonic calculus in some situations. For example say there was a man called john normal calm guy then one day he finds out his daughter was raped by a man called max. Then john goes out and kills max. This situation would be too hard for the hedonic calculus to calculate as both men families felt pain and both men felt pleasure. Overall I believe that the weaknesses out way the strengths of Act Utilitarianism as there are many situations that it would not be able to give an answer. Even though Act Utilitarianism considers the consequences there are just too many weaknesses crushing this point. For example the hedonic calculus will take too long to find out whether an action is right or wrong in many scenarios. Ayyub