

Utilitarianism

Sociology



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Utilitarianism: A highly regarded theory that is misguided in a way that is inimical to liberty. Liberty and freedom are common terms in the society as people and entities seek autonomy and protection of private rights. Liberty defines a free state in which no external force restricts a subject and while it remains the desire of every person and entity, there exist moral and legal provisions and theories that are inimical to its existence. This paper reviews utilitarian ethics with focus on its contradictory scope to the doctrine of liberty.

Demonstrating the scopes of concepts of liberty and utilitarianism illustrates their conflict in which the moral perspective restricts people's liberty. Arora and Awasthy identify elements of liberty for that guides evaluation of the relationship between liberty and the utilitarian theory. The authors explain that even though freedom from restraints identifies liberty, a positivist's perspective of liberty expands beyond these and includes "private, political, and economic" aspects (2007, p. 150). Liberty also means existence of fairness and therefore focuses on equality doctrine and absence of special treatments and bias from moral or legal centers of power. Personal rights are also supreme in an environment of liberty. Significant to the evaluation of utilitarian theory are private aspects of liberty that grant people such rights as rights to life, freedom of choice as long as effects of the choice is limited to the individual, right to privacy, and freedom of expression. Economic liberty that provides for freedom from poverty also identifies the need for autonomy and individualism (Gray, 2013). Another aspect of liberty is other people's contribution to effects of a person's acts. Even though liberty considers such effects, involvement of the victims to generate effects safeguards the actor's liberty (Su, 2013).

Contrary to liberty concepts that focuses on an individual's freedom unless the freedom is a direct threat to other people's welfare and without the people's contribution to the effects, utilitarianism is biased to people's welfare at the expense of an individual's freedom and autonomy.

Utilitarianism is a moral theory that supports maximum good for a majority of members of a society (Lamb, Hair and McDaniel, 2011). It encourages actions and decisions whose consequences will benefit most people and diminishes the concept of an individual as offered by the concept of liberty.

According to Birsch, utilitarianism tries to shift people's interest from individualistic satisfaction to utility of the larger society in which an individual's action affects other people (2013). The subjective scope of utilitarianism that makes it difficult to quantify effects of a person's action, and identifies challenges such as different levels of sensitivity, challenges the civil liberty's aspect of equality as some people may even exaggerate sensitivity. Contrary to supremacy of personal rights and liberty's protection of such rights as long as victims of consequences of an act are parties to occurrence of the consequences, utilitarianism does not regard causes of consequences. This victimizes a person contrary to civil liberty provisions. Utilitarianism would also infringe a person's privacy and freedom of speech and expression as long as such breaches would derive benefits to more people (Lamb, Hair and McDaniel, 2011; Birsch, 2013).

Utilitarianism, a moral theory that esteems maximum good for a majority of members of the society, is therefore biased in a way that is inimical to liberty because it undermines individuals' private rights for maximizing welfare of the society.

References

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