Virtue theory in utilitarianism ethics

Sociology, Ethics

Utilitarianism ethics emphasize that action should be morally beneficial to a group. This course of ethics is often known as " the greatest good for the greatest number" or simply put, " the greater good" (Boylan, 2009). In other words, the consequence of any ethical action should be beneficial for all by mass appeal. This is a common underlying theme for ethics in capitalist economies and business as well as in democratic governments (Boylan, 2009). Virtue Theory

Virtue theory, also known as virtue ethics, focuses more so on the character of a person rather than the rules and consequences of specific acts. What this essentially means is that the primary focus is whether or not the person acting ethically is a person who upholds high morals and virtues, in turn expressing " good character" (Garrett, 2005). Rules, intent, consequences and outcome are not necessarily irrelevant; however, the emphasis of virtue theory is primarily on a person's character, their virtues, and their expression of good intentions (Garrett, 2005).

Deontology Unlike virtue theory, deontology has a heavy emphasis on duty in action, in adherence to rules. The right action is important here, where upon completion, should bring about the greatest good for all involved. This is somewhat similar to utilitarianism, which does focus on the consequence of the greatest good. However, deontology does not lean on the consequence itself, but more so the principle behind committing the right action. (Boylan, 2009). In turn, the ethics behind deontology is about principle and following rules. Similarity Between Theories

All three of these ethical practices have tangible similarities. The primary similarity is consequence of action. Even though consequence is not always the primary focus of the action, it is expected in all three theories that the consequence should have a beneficial result as an outcome of the action. Whether the action is based on principle, values or virtues, the end should justify the means. Difference Between Theories The best way to express the differences between virtue theory, utilitarianism and deontological ethics is to take a common scenario and analyze from these three different perspectives.

A good example to use would be a person having car trouble and has pulled their car on the side of the road. They are in obvious need of help. In committing the action of helping the person, an individual is acting on a moral or ethical duty. An individual who practices virtue theory ethics would point out that by helping the person, doing so would be a charitable act and would express good character of the person assisting the one in need. One who practices utilitarianism would say that by helping the person, doing so would be good for both the person in need and the person helping.

A deontologist would say that by helping, it would be so in accordance to a moral rule, such as karma, or what you do to others will come back to you. (Hursthouse, 2010). As the example shows, virtue theory focuses on a person's moral ethics, and not on any specific outcome or rule. Utilitarianism has an emphasis on the greater good, focusing on a beneficial outcome for all persons involved, where the consequences of acting are beneficial to a

community. Finally, deontology emphasizes duty as specific action being done in completion of following a specific moral code, rule or command.

In a previous job position, I had anethical dilemmathat required making a fair decision for all parties involved. It involved a quality assurance process for outbound marketing in a call center. There was a Spanish speaking division where the manager wanted a special call monitoring process just for the Spanish speakers. I decided against the process for the simple fact that the Spanish speakers did not say anything different or offer anything different than the non-Spanish speakers. The reason I chose to do this was to make the quality assurance process fair for all the call agents.

If I had done the opposite, the non-Spanish speakers would have sought similar treatment. I consider this to be a utilitarian action for my ethical dilemma. References: Boylan, M. 2009. Basic Ethics. 2nd Edition. Pp. 153, 171 Garrett, J. (2005, November 28). Virtue ethics. Retrieved fromhttp://www. wku. edu/~jan. garrett/ethics/virtthry. htm Hursthouse, Rosalind, " Virtue Ethics", The Stanford Encyclopedia ofPhilosophy(Winter2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), http://plato. stanford. edu/archives/win2010/entries/ethics-virtue