

Justice with michel sandel



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Justice with Michel Sandel Silvia Molina University of Texas at El Paso Justice with Michel Sandel Harvard university professor Dr. Michel Sandel introduces two lecture episodes that discuss a number of philosophy related issues. In the first episode “ The Moral Principles” Dr. Sandel begins the lecture with a story of a trolley cart in a path that may lead kill one, or five people. The decision to kill the one person in oppose to five, is left to a show of hands by participating students. The hypothetical scenario he paints in the story is to introduce moral reasoning.

The students then participate in a critical thinking discussion to conclude what would be morality correct, whether to kill the one person so that five should live or vice versa. His story quickly unfolds to introduce two moral principles, one being consequentialist moral reasoning and the second is categorical moral reasoning. In the second part of his first lecture, Dr. Sandel discusses a very popular nineteenth century law case involving an ocean stranded crew of four. Sandel proceeds to initiate the discussion of the principles of utilitarian philosopher, Jeremy Bentham.

The inauguration of arguments of utilitarianism follows what is discussed in the second episode “ Putting a Price Tag on Life/How to Measure Pleasure”. The lecture in episode two also includes discussions of critical thinking and arguments by the students to support their contrasting views. Part one of the second episode discusses the cost benefit analysis that companies follow to put a price on human life. The second part in episode two introduces British philosopher John Stuart Mill who argues that utilitarian, those who have experienced high pleasure and lower pleasures will desire the higher pleasure.

Utilitarianism is further debated in the lectures of Dr. Sandel as he goes in to details showing how utilitarianism plays a large role in everyday life circumstances as well as in economic situations. The Moral Principal Episode part one opens up with Michel Sandel sharing a story about a trolley cart. The story is as follows, a trolley cart is on a deadly path headed to the fatal crash that will kill five people. The wheel on the trolley cart works and can be steered to kill only one person. The students are asked their educated opinions on what is the right thing to do given the circumstances of the story.

Most students answered saving five human lives with the expense of one human life would be the right thing to do. When the story is changed by Dr. Sandel and the human that is to save the lives of the five others is murdered the students opinions change. Sandel then proceeds to introduce the two moral principles that take place which are cosequentialist and categorical. Consequential moral reasoning is one that locates morality in the consequences of an act. Categorical locates morality in certain duties and rights. Both these moral principals where greatly debated by the students. On the second part Dr.

Sandel gives a brief introduction to utilitarianism and the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham. It describes Bentham's view on the balance of pleasure over pain and the belief of the happiness or well being of the greatest number. The real life case presented, describes four sailors that survive after a massive shipwreck and are now fighting for survival at sea. One of the four sailors gets sick and the others decide to kill him to feed of his body. One of the students finds the idea of cannibalism in the case of necessity morally

wrong and that it should not justify murder even though it would keep the rest of the three crew men alive.

Another student defended the opposing view, by saying that as humans in a situation like such “ we got to do what we have to do to survive”. Other circumstances are debated and the positions of the students change to be morally ok to have eaten the fourth member of the crew to keep the greater good for the greater number. In the opposing view some students still believe that it is morally wrong to not value human life as equally as the weaker sailor. The thoughts of this very famous case are the debates of categorical morality and of Bentham’s idea of the greater good for the greater number.

Michel Sandel opens the second episode with a brief history on philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Bentham’s views on utilitarianism is that the highest principal of morality whether personal or political it is to maximize the general welfare or utility. Bentham states that we are all governed by pain and pleasure and must find a balance to achieve the greater good for the greatest number. Maximized utility is best attained when all the benefits are added up and all the costs are subtracted and the result is that happiness is greater than suffering. Dr. Sandel describes utilitarian logic as a cost benefit analysis that many corporations as well as overnments use to give measure to human life usually in a monetary figure. A cost analysis example is based on a proposal to increase sales tax to cigarette sales in the Czech Republic. The analysis concludes that the Czech government benefits more from smokers. The cost analysis conducted states that the benefits of smoking are greater because smoking increases tax revenue, increases healthcare

savings when people die early, and no more pension payments to those elderly that die early. Therefore the only costs would be an increase health care, which in this case does not outweigh the benefits of smoking.

In a way the analysis are giving a monetary value to human life. Another view point by Dr. Sandel, is the Pinto case where a cost analysis was conducted to see if the benefits of adding a protective plate to the car were lower than the costs of human lives affected by not adding a protective plate to the fuel tank of the Pinto car. In argument, the utilitarian principle is discussed by some students that those lives and opinions of the minority should not be less valuable than those of the majority. Some students believe that no monetary value should be placed on human lives.

In other circumstances the students think someone has to make those decisions to be able to adequately take risks in certain situations. The monetary value that is placed on a human life by conducting cost analysis is done for the well being of the greater good to conclude into making important decisions by companies as well as governments. The second part in episode two Dr. Sandel mentions a personal experience that raises the question if all values can be turned into utilitarian terms. The objection to transform all values in to a single uniform measure such as utilitarian is objected by John Steward Mill.

Mill believed that utilitarianism can be aligned with defending human rights. Mill also reasons that utilitarianism can distinguish higher pleasures from lower pleasures. The distinction of the lower and higher pleasure can be distinguished by having experienced both pleasures and one who has experienced both will choose the higher pleasure always. Dr. Sandel proves

his point by showing the class three videos in which they must choose one that can be described as the higher pleasure. After the viewing all three videos which were a clip by Hamlet, the other by fear factor, and finally The Simpsons.

The class greatly agrees that the majority would pick the highest pleasure to be the clip by Hamlet and that Shakespeare is the highest pleasure out of all three. Exploring further the idea of utilitarianism a series of hypothetical moral reasoning situations can occur in the border cities of El Paso, TX and Juarez, MX. The drug war happening in the city of Juarez is crucially affecting a developing economy that participates in the NAFTA trade agreement. Large corporations have positioned its manufacturing plants to operate in the city of Juarez.

With Juarez and El Paso trading goods and money extensively among countries raises the idea of the following hypothetical scenario. In this hypothetical scenario involves a professional CEO of a major corporation residing in Juarez. The CEO of the corporation lives in El Paso and has to cross the international border to Juarez to be able to attend work on a daily basis. Sadly on any given day the CEO finds himself kidnapped by one of the drug cartels that are at war in Juarez. The drug cartel is asking for five million dollars in ransom for the CEO of the company.

Therefore the company is suffering 10 million in losses a day without its CEO leader that conducts all major profitable operations run by him in the company. This scenario brings up the use of cost benefit analysis or utility discussed by Bentham. What would the company do in this situation? What is greater good for the greatest number is the question that should be asked?

Would it be worth it to the company to pay the ransom or would the death of the CEO result in greater profit of interest to the company. This example shows how a cost benefit analysis that can be conducted by the company in which it gives a monetary value to human life.

It can be argued that there are other moral benefits to saving the CEO not just for the company but maybe because his family needs him. In a way it can also be argued that it is morally wrong to put a price on human life and that no matter what the company should pay a ransom no matter the amount. It can also be said that the CEO can easily be replaced in less than half a day and that the company could save its 10 million dollar losses for the day. Whatever the decision in the hypothetical scenario might turn out to be, the idea of cost benefit analysis is one that is used by all companies and business around the world.

One, especially in business must sometimes come across difficult decisions and it is then when all theories moral reasoning and utilitarian must be applied to come to a conclusion. In sum, the discussion of the two episodes concludes that utility is applied to most certainly justice but to everyday decisions that are made by businesses around the world. Utilitarianism is referred by Bentham as the greater good for the greatest number in episode one of Justice with Michel Sandel.

Last but not least in episode two, John Stuart Mill defends the concept of human rights in these words " Justice is a name for certain moral requirements, which, regarded collectively, stand higher in the score of social utility and are therefore of more paramount obligation than any others". This quote, Mill says that it is ok to keep the laws and rules that

exist only if there is a much greater reason for breaking them. Therefore utilitarian's reason could be that saving a human life is a better reason in comparison to the loss of millions of dollars a company could sustain.

Mill and Bentham dispute significantly ideas and create extensive room to ponder, but it is in our reasoning that these ideas can be concluded and interpreted only by one's own moral reasoning. References Episode 01 - Justice with Michael Sandel. (n. d.). Justice with Michael Sandel - Online Harvard Course Exploring Justice, Equality, Democracy, and Citizenship. Retrieved June 12, 2012, from [http://www. justiceharvard. org/2011/03/episode-01/#watch](http://www.justiceharvard.org/2011/03/episode-01/#watch) Episode 02 - Justice with Michael Sandel. (n. d.). Justice with Michael Sandel - Online Harvard Course Exploring Justice, Equality, Democracy, and Citizenship.

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