

Article summary for criminal justice class

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Article Summary The theory of utilitarianism is not being understood or used in its true spirit. Originally, the theory was proposed not to distinguish between utility and pleasure but nowadays, whenever this theory is used, the utility is understood as something that has no connection with pleasure. In the true essence, pleasure and freedom from pain are the ultimate desirables according to the theory of utilitarianism. There is lack of clarity about what constitutes pleasure or happiness and the standards of happiness vary among humans and animals. Despite humans have higher standards of happiness than animals, yet they would not want to become animals to be easily pleased. People knowingly indulge in acts of lower good out of temptation in spite of their knowledge of what is higher good that can be attained instead of the lower good e. g. preference of smoking over health. The preference of lower over higher can be voluntary or involuntary. There is subjectivity about which pleasure is to be preferred over which and which pain should be avoided in comparison to which. Utilitarianism attains its end only by cultivating the character's nobleness. Critics say that happiness is unattainable so it cannot be the purpose of life. Even with that, something great can be sorted out to live for. The complexity of human nature makes room for exceptions in the rules of conduct and accordingly one common pleasure or utility cannot be agreed upon by all analysts. Utility must address the discrepancies in standards if it is to be used as the ultimate source of moral obligation.

Questions and answers

Would any one of you like to become an animal to be easily pleased?

At least I would not. And I think I can be sure that no one from you would also like to become an animal to be easily pleased. While it is true that it

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often takes much less to be pleased as animals than to be pleased as humans, yet there are things more important than pleasure like wisdom and sanity that make being a human greater and better than being an animal. Besides, humans are also pleased at some point even if it takes more to be pleased as humans.

Are you able to decide what the overall happiness in a matter is?

The theory of utilitarianism emphasizes that the approach that increases the overall happiness should be adopted. While we think that we are able to estimate what the overall happiness is, and which approach would lead us to the overall happiness, yet our ability to think is limited, and there are certainly some aspects that we fail to include in our analysis while establishing one approach as better than others because it increases the overall happiness. Besides, what is good to one may not be good to another because of difference of opinions. These points make the theory of utilitarianism subjective and erroneous.

The decision should be based on utility or pleasure?

I think it would be wrong to differentiate between utility and pleasure in the theory of utilitarianism because utility only exists when an approach brings pleasure.