

# Utilitarianism and kant's theory

Philosophy



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In order for one to best make a decision, it is important to carefully consider the best method to do so. Utilitarianism and Kant theories provide these methods. This paper presents the pros and cons of each of these theories. It also presents the comparison as well as the contrasts of these two theories and concludes with a summary of the text.

Utilitarianism and Kant theories both provide people with the moral structure which provide the basis for making a moral decision. Each of them has its benefits and flaws. For this reason, it makes it difficult to establish which one among them makes the suitable option with regards to everyday decisions. In order for one to decide, it is important to first understand the basic principles involved in each of them. Kantianism and utilitarianism have varied ways of determining whether or not our actions are right or wrong.

Kant theory states that we should consider the intentions and maxims of a particular action. This theory believes that "human life is valuable because humans are the bearers of rational life" (Harsanyi, 2017). In other words, this theory believes in the notion that human beings can freely behave rationally and that they cannot be merely used for the happiness or enjoyment of the other. Utilitarian, on the other hand, holds onto the belief that we should undertake the actions which result in a greater amount of happiness. The challenge with this belief is that it could involve the using of people as mere beings. This also means that sometimes it involves the sacrifice of one's lives for the greater good (Sen, et al., 2012).

According to Hill, Utilitarian's defend the punishment of the innocent, "if it is necessary to bring about a sufficiently important good effect" (Hill, 2014).

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that stems from the notion of consequentialism. Its basic idea is the fact that one can determine whether an action is correct or incorrect based on its outcome. In case the outcome brings happiness, then the choice is morally correct but in case it brings about sadness and pain, then the choice is morally wrong.

These theories have some comparisons

The two theories provide the moral structure with which people can decide on what actions to take. Both Utilitarianism and Kant's theory provides the basis for moral decisions. Secondly, these two theories both follow the principle that they should be applied in all situations with no exceptions. The two theories both have the elements of quantitative methods. Utilitarianism has the hedonic calculus whereas Kant theory has 'Goodwill + duty = Moral action (Sen, et al., 2012).

However, these two theories contrast in the following ways; one of these ways is that utilitarianism can be applied to any situation while on the other hand, Kant theory believes that non-moral commands such as hypothetical imperatives are useless. Secondly, these theories differ in the manner of their sense of duty. According to the Kantian theory the sense of duty is its guiding principle. Unlike utilitarianism, Kant's ethical scheme signifies a universal categorical domineering rule of ethics. Thirdly, Kant's theory contrasts greatly to the principle of Utilitarianism.

With Utilitarianism one acts in such a way that will bring about the greatest good for the greatest number, while according to Kant's theory, one is required to act a certain way mainly because it is their duty to do so.

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Utilitarianism is a consequentialist theory that states that morality is entirely based on the results while on the other hand Kant theory is based on the duty or intention. Kant theory disregards the emotions while in utilitarianism, emotions play a big part in the decision making.

### **The advantages of Utilitarianism theory**

Utilitarianism provides a strong sense of purpose. Through the use of this theory, one is able to make the right decisions. This is because it presents a broader view of consideration. It also promotes a world with more happiness. Utilitarian would want everything and everyone to be happy. For this reason, it results in a happy outcome for the whole world. Through this theory, individuals are able to consider the consequences of their actions.

Utilitarianism provides a clear and easy-to-understand guideline. Being one of the forms of consequentialism, this theory states that everything has a consequence. There are unit rewards if you are doing one thing sensible, and there are repercussions if you do something wrong.

Through this, people always strive to be morally and ethically good to avoid the consequences.

If everybody shares this ideal and puts it into apply, the planet would be a tremendous place to measure in. For example, no one would drink and drive because of the possible negative effects

The other advantage of this theory is that it takes into account all elements. Utilitarianism takes into considerations all sorts of elements that have good and bad side effects. As much as the theory is simple, it covers all sorts of elements. The theory is majorly concerned on whether or not the results of

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any actions will lead to happiness or unhappiness. In addition to this, utilitarianism helps in making tough decisions. This is because, through the theory, people will be able to think rationally and eventually make the right choices.

### **The disadvantages of Utilitarianism theory**

In as much as this theory has a lot of advantages, there are some setbacks as regards to utilitarianism as follows; through utilitarianism, it is impossible to determine the consequences of an action. This is because through this theory it takes a longer time to discover the consequences of an action. Also, through this use of this theory, there is no protection of the minority.

The other disadvantage of this theory is that it is disputable on whether or not who can decide good or bad. There is no one who can absolutely say they have the right to say what is good or bad. This is because this is due to the varying nature of human beings. People have different beliefs about certain things. This makes it harder to determine with certainty that an action can be good or bad. An example is drinking alcohol. Some people may believe that it brings happiness while others can hold the belief that it is toxic to the body and therefore is not good.

Utilitarianism also prevents people from making speculations concerning the future. When actions are judged mainly through their outcome, then this makes it difficult to accurately determine the exact consequences. As a result, the theory ideal irrelevant. This theory also promotes favoritism. It is more difficult for one to make a utilitarian decision with their loved one on the line. This is because in such cases, there will be a tendency to favor

a family member or the loved one. The use of utilitarianism is time-consuming and difficult. This is because, while using this theory, one considers the calculation and considerations of every action that one wants to take. This makes the whole process very difficult and time-consuming.

This theory also has negative consequences. It mainly focuses on the happiness result even if this means that one life has to be sacrificed. An example of this is euthanasia which is considered unethical and immoral in utilitarianism. So even if ending one person's life can rescue the other through the process of organ contribution, no one would dare kill a terminally ill patient even for a good cause. Even if the death of one will save ten people, the core idea of utilitarianism will prevail. Lastly, this theory is subjective. It makes it hard to determine where the line can be drawn. Subsequently, not all bad actions are absolutely wrong.

### **Advantages of Kant's theory**

There are several advantages of the Kant theory. One of these advantages is that it is very straightforward. This theory is based on reason making it easily accessible to all. The other advantage of this theory is the fact that it is universal. Through this, it ensures that judgments are objective. This thus avoids the risk of appealing to the self-interests of people. This universality also ensures that the decisions are consistent from one situation to another.

Kant theory makes it clear that morality is doing one's duty and not just following feelings. Through the theory, one cannot assume what is good for us is also good for all. The theory aims at treating everyone with fairness and

just. It corrects the idea of utilitarian that some can suffer as long as others are happy

The theory also sees humans as being of intrinsic worth as they are the rational high point of creation. Through this, the theory ensures that people can neither be enslaved nor exploited (Posner, 2009).

This theory also makes it clear that duties are part of human experience. It insists that morality does not depend on religious laws, motives, as well as consequences. Kant theory is very categorical in ensuring that it lays down clear guidelines that apply to everyone and commands people to respect human life. It draws a clear line between laws and duty.

However, this theory has some disadvantages as follows;

Through the Kant theory, having the goodwill is not enough. Consequences are also important (Mill, 2015). Humans are rational, they must be treated as an end in their own right and not as the means to a capitalist end, argued that the "good will" is not enough. The penalties of moral actions and social goals that lead to a reasonable society are very important. Through the Kant theory, it is difficult to resolve moral dilemmas which involve conflicting duties.

Kant's hypothesis is unique and not in every case effortlessly applicable. It reveals to us what kind of activities are great however not the best activity specifically circumstances. Kant appears to be confounded about whether morals are deontological or teleological. The fundamental thought is deontological yet there is a future objective. Some rationalist's trust that Kant's being agreeable to freedom and saying that ethical operators must

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comply with the standards given in the Categorical imperative. One cannot act out of obligation as they generally have some desire for what they'll receive consequently.

Kant's view relies upon some thought of God to clarify the judiciously requested world, which means agnostics cannot acknowledge this hypothesis. Some people think putting obligation above inclination is nice and brutal. This is because there is the wrong spot for affection and individual relations in Kant's hypothesis.

Kant's theory does not address the nature of humanity. This is in regards to issues like abortion, euthanasia and so forth.

In conclusion, both theories are useful in the making of moral decisions. All of them have an influence. It is, therefore, important that one carefully considers each of them before settling on one. It is also imperative to consider the different pros and cons that each of them presents. This will be useful in making a sound decision while considering which one to apply. Different situations will also help in the decision of which of the theories to consider. This is because every situation is unique and for this reason, it may require the application of one or even both of these theories.

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