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## Morality: Breaking Apart Some Ideas Of Mill's Moral Philosophy

Taking the life of a human being is seen as immoral in most situations but there are exceptions to this. If a psychopath that has caused a great amount of harm to numerous people is holding a person hostage and threatens to kill them, would it not be justified or would it be the epitome of immorality if he were killed. Most would say it would be moral to kill the psychopath to save the life of that innocent person. This is the basis of Mill's philosophy which focuses on the outcome of an action to determine morality. In this essay, many points will be broken down and analyzed to determine the validity of this type of philosophy.

Breaking apart some of Mill's ideas, he lays the foundation of his philosophy on Utilitarianism. Looking at Utilitarianism, it is noted that the root word is utility which is to be beneficial and useful. To Mill, the consequence is what ultimately determine an action moral or immoral. He also bases these theories on happiness, which to him is increasing pleasure while lessening pain. If Mill's moral theory is founded on Utilitarianism then if the action is beneficial and useful for the greatest amount of people then the action is moral. This means that the same action can be seen as moral or immoral. It is simple but complicated when looked at from different perspectives.

In part Mill's moral philosophy is concrete and makes sense in many scenarios. If an action allows the most pleasure to be spread then when looking at it superficially, it would make sense to have more people satisfied. For example The Trolley Problem, the bystander has two options, either change the course of a trolley and killing one railroad worker on the tracks or leave the trolley on its course which will kill five others on the track. According to Mill, the greatest amount of happiness and less pain will be felt if that one worker loses his life as opposed to the five. This is quite logical and most will agree as well that one life should be sacrificed in order to preserve the lives of the other five.

Murder and lying are the first acts that one thinks about when thinking of immoral but with Mill's theory all these could be justified. The murder is justified when killing the person whose struck terror in the heart of thousands. Lying is justified when it helps the innocent evade the talons of an evil force with the desire to wipe them clean off the face of the earth. Now if the consequences of these actions cause more pain then it shifts to an immoral act. From this perspective, having the consequence determine the morality sounds logical.

It would seem that his moral philosophy should be the standard. If you had to choose between two actions, the action that benefits the most people would be the obvious choice right? His ideas sound concrete but not quite so in all situations. Imagine being a surgeon with the opportunity to save the lives of five sick people but in order to do so you would have to allow a healthy individual die to be able use their organs to heal those five people. Without a doubt, most look at this situation as immoral but how is that so if more happiness is acquired by more people.

The other night I watched a special on Netflix that ties into morality. Latin History for Morons is a standup comedy performance done by John Lequizamo. In this show he goes through the

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history of the Americas and the Latin history. What caught my eye through the comedy was an important fact that has been overlooked. The pillaging, raping, extortion, animalization, and extermination of the indigeous people of America have been made moral, which in Mill's terms are more than moral. The consequence of these horrid actions are being lived today. One can only imagine how the world would look if it weren't for those actions that in turn influenced what we have today but that does not justify the actions that took place throughout the centuries.

It is roughly estimated that there approximately were from as low as 8 million to 112 million people in America right before it's "discovery" in 1492 according to "The Native Population of the Americas in 1492.". According to European colonization of the Americas killed 10 percent of world population and caused global cooling, it's more probable that the population was 60 million in the Americas and 70-88 million in Europe. Now taking Mill's theory into consideration it makes sense that more would benefit in Europe from the acquisition of this new land. Taking this land would be a utility for the "bigger society" but the chain of actions taken to acquire said land had no definite and clear consequences.

One flaw in his theory is that the consequences of an action are the most important factor in determining the morality of an action. Basing his theory on consequences is a flawed theory primarily because who really knows the consequences of the actions we make in our day to day lives. An immediate consequence can be moral or immoral at that instant but later down the road who knows what consequences that have been accumulating. One can look at the life of Adolf Hitler as an example of unpredictable consequences. Little people know of Hitler's pursuit for an art career throughout the 1900's. He was eager and was dedicated to getting into the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna but with every attempt he was denied entry. He struggled throughout the years but his passion for art kept burning inside. Failing to make a break, those passions were crushed he got caught up in the Great War which lead him to the notorious and horrid life we all now. Now how different would the world be if Adolf Hitler didn't lead one of the biggest exterminations on Earth. What if he was accepted into the academy? What if Columbus was never funded, if Rosa Parks decided to get up, or if Martin Luther King Jr. deliver this world changing speech? Those are what ifs that could probably never answered. We can only speculate the outcomes if such events were to be erased from history. Consequences of our actions are unpredictable even if the action tends to bring positive consequences. If consequences are the pinnacle of Mill's moral theory and if consequences are unpredictable then in turn it makes morality unpredictable.

Morality is a difficult subject because of how complex and diverse society is. Two people can see an action and have very different opinions on the morality of said action. I agree that consequences weigh into morality but is not the most important when determining if the action is moral or immoral. Consequences are important but culture, beliefs, and much more way into morality. I do agree that moral actions should benefit not only the person who performed them but also the people around them. Morality should be based on making yourself a better person to make the world a better place.