Utilitarianism: Functions And Understanding

Introduction

Life is filled with unanswered questions that affect our daily life. Some attempt to research these sometimes mysterious questions in a quest for truth and oblivion.

Fields of knowledge, such as ethics and philosophy for example deal with broad questions that involve feelings, morality and justice for an example.

One main topic that is still unanswered to this day, is how we ought to live our lives, so we get the most out of it.

One may consider utilitarianism for this, since it proposes a normative theory, which involves its very own doctrine of actions, in which is deemed to be the best possible way to live one's life, that gains the most happiness for as many people as possible.

Whether or not this is reliable or not, I will attempt to answer in this paper, by determining if the theory is as well functioning in practice as it is in theory; This will be proceeded with putting the theory into different practical, ethical issues.

As well as this, an attempt to connect the good life with the aspect of happiness, that is the fundamental source in utilitarianism, will be made, to fully establish the true function of utilitarianism and its' accountability with the term of happiness.

What is Utilitarianism?

Utilitarianism is a branch of normative ethics and is also a form of consequentialism; As well it is both an ethical and philosophical theory that proposes the use of a doctrine, in which an action is defined as right, as it promotes the highest possible degree of utility or happiness for the mass majority of people involved in a situation where an actor needs good conduct decision making.

This is hereby used in a guiding principle of conduct, so the utilitarian actor should always keep this guideline in mind while deciding what is right.

Utilitarianism is a consequentialist theory of ethics, which may also be mentioned as a teleological theory, determines what accommodates value, whereafter it indicates a proposed obligation to which one must do whatever possible to gain the determined value.

The process of the theory is to analyze and determine what truly is of value in order to seek it out and propose a way of achieving it.

The theory constitutes different purposes, that inhabit various aspects, that need to be dealt with in different manners. So, as utilitarianism is both an ethical and philosophical theory, it is important to acknowledge the divergent analysis that accompanies the theoretical research.

All of the morality should be based on the principle

Utilitarianism captures the moral idea that happiness should be promoted, and suffering should be eliminated. Suffering is bad for all living beings.

Strength: Utilitarianism is built on empathy. Empathy is connected to a morally good emotion, which motivates people to promote utilized good actions, since it would mean, that it would promote happiness and reduce suffering. This is central in utilitarianism; the moral doctrine is based on the empathic aspect. Some may argue, that this is untrue, since the distinction between killing and let die, is irrelevant to utilitarians, if it does not impact the consequences the death bares with it. Utilitarianism is at this point not seen as a very empathic theory, which is why it can be argued to function as more of a guideline instead of an actual doctrine.

Ethical & philosophical

As Utilitarianism was first constituted as an ethical theory, it would seem, that since it inhabits these different characteristics, there is a need for different research done on to how to apply the theory in practice. Meaning, that as I understand it, the theory was adapted by Philosophy, as a preliminary attempt to answer the many questionable features it consists, that raise awareness to ethical questions that follow. Both ethics and philosophy intertwine on many accounts, since both fields analyze most of the same matters, only in slightly or sometimes widely different ranges. Indicating, that you cannot have on without the other, if one is searching for solutions or answers to complex quasi dilemmas.

As well as being a theory, it slowly haltered to adapt more features of a doctrine, which is somewhat more fitting, since it is an individual choice, to follow the doctrine.

All people inhabit various moral and ethical compasses within themselves, and utilitarian instead rely their inner compass onto the utilitarian doctrine, since they believe it is the best-presented attempt to reach the maximization of utility as possible.

Since happiness or utility is an ethical term, it also exists in the philosophy of happiness. Happiness is such a fundamental element within the spectrum of life, that the theme needs to be researched with different analytical tools, to misconstrue what it in reality is and how to apply that research into the field of knowledge. In this case, both in an ethical and philosophical field of knowledge.

How to understand utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is a moral theory that is a branch of normative ethics. solely focuses on the result or the consequences of actions; Which thereby treats intentions as being somewhat irrelevant, since it is not intentions that decide what happens, only actions do. Due to the role of the consequences, it is clear, that utilitarianism is related to consequentialism, whereas the right action is understood entirely in terms of the following consequences.

Consequentialism is used to clarify, whether an action can be deemed to be morally good or bad, based on the consequences.

- Good consequences = Good actions
- Bad consequences = Bad actions

This is to make clear, that Utilitarianism and consequentialism are one and the same ism.

Although, it may not be as simple as that for all, since making decisions, acting upon instinct or choosing to stay as a passive innocent bystander, are all parts of being human with a well-functioning nervous system; Where choosing to do right or wrong actions, adhere to guilt. Whereas the normative ethical theory, Utilitarianism, can produce the “best possible” doctrine, that ought to maximize the happiness in situations where actors need to take action, so one does not follow their own set of personal rules. The reason for this, is that, the Utilitarian view ought to maximize the happiness of others, as well as one’s own good.

The function of utilitarianism

As utilitarianism functions as a theory, it presents an attempt of creating equality amongst people. I say this, as it is my interpretation of, what is presented; Since a utilitarian does not demarcate between a person of high class in society and one who might be on a down lowered spiral. It functions as being relatively impartial, so it could, in theory, be applied on all scenarios, regarding all people. “I Choose to apply this to people in general, since they function as the decision makers. Making it easier to construe, since the point of view is narrowed down from etc. All living beings to solely human beings.”

I find this to be so, since it is grounded in the intuitive part of human beings, that is to seek pleasure and avoid pain at all costs; Which is directly linked to the concept of maximized happiness for the majority of people.