

Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: The Debate over utilitarianism

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- I am expecting to learn about the good side as well as the bad side of the theory of utilitarianism

Quote:

“The strength of utilitarianism is that it firmly resists ‘corruption’ by possibly irrational elements. By sticking to the Principle of Utility as the only standard for judging right and wrong, it avoids all danger of incorporating into moral theory prejudices, feelings, and ‘intuitions’ that have no rational basis.”

Book Review:

This chapter tackled three propositions: first proposition is when we judge our action based on what we know is right and wrong. Hedonism is about pleasure and nothing bad when your action is for pure pleasure because you are just satisfying you're needs as a human being. The response by the defenders of utilitarianism to hedonism is their two doctrines ‘the good and the right’.

Second proposition, when we think about the consequences of our action after we judge it and thus doing the right actions and to balance happiness over unhappiness. Utilitarianism is about pleasure that is right and good for the human being.

Third proposition is calculating the happiness and unhappiness that we feel after our action. Justice, rights, and promises are being done because they don't want to have scandals and riots. In short, justice, rights, and promises are done to have peace and order in the society. The act utilitarian considers the consequences of the act while the rule utilitarian considers the result if it follows the existing rules.

What I have learned:

- I learned that utilitarianism is not entirely good, there are also some bad sides

Integrative Question:

1. What is act-utilitarianism?
2. What is rule-utilitarianism?
3. Why should we know utilitarianism?
4. What is lacking with the principle of utilitarianism?
5. When do you think we should apply utilitarianism in our society?