

Utilitarianism

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AI Statement: I used the assistance of AI (prompt: “outline an essay responding to the claim that Mill’s utilitarian standard is not ‘too high for humanity,’ give me key points on both sides so that I can organize an argument for either or”)

John Stuart Mill’s utilitarian standard is arguably not impossible for ordinary human society, especially given his emphasis on maximizing happiness for the greatest number of individuals. The definition of utilitarianism is as Mill states on page 113, paragraph 1, “the creed which accepts as a foundation of morals, utility or the greatest happiness principle holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness by happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain by unhappy pain and privation of pleasure” However, due to always having to think for the majority whole it could lead to making immoral decisions against an individual. It could strain the individuals within the society. Julia Driver argues on page 119 paragraph 2 that, “The excessive demands on individuals by requiring them always put the interest of others ahead of their own, even in ordinary circumstances, risks robbing people of personal happiness, and can cause moral burnout which in turn reduces the overall good utilitarianism seeks to maximize.” However, with too many moral values and without the value of utilitarianism, individuals will be lost in society, as there will not be a common goal or moral standard.

In my own personal experience, I believe that we are already living the utilitarian lifestyle as members of the church; we are taught to extend our influence and service to others instead of utilizing them to benefit ourselves. In societies as a whole, we can see that when the common people work towards a common goal, we can achieve so much more with a much happier population and a much more fulfilled society. Some of those examples include the nuclear family in the idea of the nuclear family and in societies that promote the nuclear family. We can see that society benefits in many ways as the family unit becomes strong. Although as individuals, we may give up comforts and freedoms that we once had as singles, what we gain far outweighs what we lose. As families stick together, we can see that the overall individual happiness is improved, and children grow up to be respectful members of society, and in turn, the parents contribute much to the economic community and culture of the society. Of course, to achieve greater happiness as a whole, individuals do need to sacrifice; however, without this culture of sacrifice, the society cannot grow, and therefore cannot achieve a greater purpose. Starting from 1942, the United States joined the Second World War, and in its efforts, we could see the citizens of the United States unifying in order to achieve a common goal. Without utilitarianism, societies cannot function outside of small communities.

John Stewart Mill's argument that utilitarianism isn't impossible isn't that far from reality, as humans have demonstrated how much utilitarianism has benefited societies during times of crisis and times of peace. Of course, complete utilitarianism is too high as Julia Driver has argued; however, controlled utilitarianism with enough wiggle room to meet individual identity is completely realistic and has been done in the past.

