

Chapter 8.3 - 8.7 & 2.2.3

Team 3

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§8.3 - Egotism, Altruism, and Generalized Benevolence

Egotism - an exaggerated sense of self-importance

The attitude that gives pride of place to our own welfare

Altruism - unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others

The doctrine that the interests of others should be put before our own interests

Generalized Benevolence - disposition to do good

One's own happiness is just as important as anyone else's but not any more important

§8.4 - Act and Rule Utilitarianism

“Act in accordance with rules which, if generally acted upon, will lead to the greatest happiness.”

In the previous definition - “The action is best which leads to the greatest happiness”. There is a flaw:

Ex: Children often spontaneously laugh at peculiar movements of handicapped people

Ex: Killing a vagrant and using his organs to benefit others.

Mill's Claims

The moral rules which forbid mankind to hurt one another are more vital to human well-being than any maxims. (Mill, 1871, 1998: 103)

Justice is a name for certain moral requirements, which, regarded collectively, stand higher in any scale of social utility, and are therefore of more paramount obligation, than any others. (Mill, 1871, 1998: 106)

Justice

What is called “justice” is vital to everyone’s happiness. - not just about laws or fairness, but the complete picture of living a flourishing life.

Justice is vital to happiness because humans live in societies, and justice creates fairness and stability. Without justice, society would break down, and people would not be able to live fulfilled lives. So justice supports the happiness of both individuals and the community.

§8.5 - Utilitarianism and Consequentialism

- Actions should be judged directly according to their consequences for happiness
- Hedonic-happiness/pleasure in the ultimate good
- Consequentialist- actions are judged by their outcomes

Consequences vs intentions

- Utilitarianism- consequences matter most
- Kantianism- moral worth comes from intention
- Existentialism- moral value comes from authenticity

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§8.6 - Ascertaining Consequences

Every action has its immediate consequences, and those immediate consequences have further consequences. This repeats indefinitely, and is further complicated when considering negative consequences - things that don't happen because of an action. This means the total consequences of an action are impossible to calculate.

Consider Franz Ferdinand's driver, who by making a wrong turn, gave assassins a chance to shoot Ferdinand, leading to World War I, which then led to the rise of Stalin, the rise of Hitler and the Holocaust, and World War II which led to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His wrong turn could be said to be one of the worst actions in all of human history.

Instinctively this feels wrong. Some say these events might have happened regardless of the driver's wrong turn. Others say that it is not the driver, but the assassins who deliberately shot Ferdinand who are to blame.

Responding in the second way reveals that we naturally look beyond just the consequences of an action to call it right or wrong. It also reveals that the chain of consequences is not necessarily the same as the chain of responsibility. Though the assassination was a consequence of the driver's actions, it can't be said that he should be held responsible.

Another objection to consequentialism is that if we could trace the chain of consequences indefinitely, we could look before the driver's wrong turn and attribute the blame for World War I and all that followed to someone earlier, such as the officer who assigned the driver to drive that day. Or why not look even further back?

§8.7 - Assessment and Prescription

Assessment Vs Prescription

- **Assessment:** Evaluating an action after it has occurred
 - Making a judgment based on actual consequences that resulted
- **Prescription:** The action you most likely should take
 - Making a decision based on anticipated consequences
- We can only anticipate consequences before an event actually happens.
- By estimating consequences and using past experience “we summarize our experience in useful general rules of conduct”

§8.7 - Assessment and Prescription

The Driver Example

- **Assessment after the event**
 - The consequence: WWI and everything after
 - The driver is not responsible as this was an unforeseeable consequence
- **Prescription**
 - The driver anticipated taking the Archduke home safely by turning the car around
 - The driver made the right decision based on what he knew

§8.7 - Assessment and Prescription

How We Decide What to Do

- Actions have indefinitely long chains of consequences, and it is impossible to anticipate and consider them all
- So we focus on “the chiefly agreed consequences of the action that matter” and only judge the morally important consequences
- Anticipating good consequences generally leads to good results in most cases

§2.2.3 - *From Essence to Being*

Passive vs Active Essence

Phenomenological vs Existential

Phenomenological:

- “The metaphysical study or theory of phenomena in general (as distinct from that of being)”
- **Φαινόμενον** (phainomenon): apparent (to the senses or mind)
- Borrowed from German “Phänomenologie”
 - Edmund Husserl

Existential:

- “Of, relating to, or concerned with individual human existence”
- Existere: to come into being
- Borrowed from German tracing back to Danish “Existentiell”
 - Kierkegaard

§2.2.3 - Passive and Active Essence

Passive Essence:

- “Unrealized, and its non-abstract reality remains unknown, a yet-to-be-conceived possibility”
 - Exists only as a representation
 - Not happening in reality
 - Hasn't entered concrete existence
 - Exceeds current symbolic form

Active Essence:

- “Actualized reality subject to awareness and direct experience as a conceivable potentiality”
 - Reality is happening
 - Reality can be noticed encountered or known
 - Lived experience
 - Not fixed, has possibilities

§2.2.3 - Primacy and Being

“With existential essence, the question of primacy is meaningless. With phenomenological essence, the question of primacy is nonsensible.”

“Being, as the ultimate reality, grounds “what is found” (existence) which is actualized as particular beings (existent) through the grace of Being”

“Be is the first principle; everything else is categorically contingent and cannot serve as a firm causal foundation.”