Three Minds are Better Than One

“Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever” (NIV Bible, Eccles. 1.4). This verse, from Ecclesiastes in the Bible, is believed to be quoted from Qoheleth, otherwise identified as Soloman or the king of Jerusalem (ZA Blog). However, many scholars believe that there is a contradiction to this verse when reading further through the Bible in Second Peter verse 3.10, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.” In the quote from Ecclesiastes, one of the so-called prophets of God states that the earth will continue to exist for eternity but the quote from Second Peter seems to disregard this claim and instead put forth that in the end, the earth will be “laid bare”. If the Bible is the word of God, as 2.3 billion Christians in 2015, according to the Pew Research Center, believed, then we must admit that if there can be a contradiction in God’s philosophy, there must be all manner of imperfections in the philosophy of any mere human. These imperfections range from incomplete foundations on the rights humans deserve to short-sighted assertions of moral principles. For example, Immanuel Kant bases the reason for humans having innate rights partly on our ability to function autonomously, allowing us to choose free of our desires and treat ourselves as ends. But this is rooted in nothing except human beings being ends themselves and so requires us to believe that we are more than physics and chemistry despite our current inability to disprove determinism as well as our lack of qualifications to prove God. This falsity is remedied by John Rawls’ “veil of ignorance” which foregoes the need for humans to be above physics and chemistry by focusing solely on what will please humans in society whether we are ends ourselves or simply pursuing our own ends, “People become attached to people and institutions that they see benefiting them, and the two principles create a social world in which each citizen can pursue her own ends on a basis of mutual respect with other citizens” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Although Rawls’ philosophy does well to explain a starting point of a society's attempt to create laws that guarantee freedom and care for all, it falls short of explaining the virtues a society should cultivate in its people and how those virtues should be instilled. Aristotle, however, in his prose on the “virtues” that people in a healthy society should carry in their daily lives—prudence, justice, temperance and courage (Summers)—gives a concise explanation of the traits that a society should strive to bestow on its citizens. Furthermore, he lays out the purpose of politics in an effort to explore how the politics of a society should be employed to shape its citizens into people who can “live a good life.” Circling back to Kant, we can see an example of short-sighted assertions of moral principles with his refutation of Utilitarianism, “By resting rights on a calculation about what will produce the greatest happiness, he argues, utilitarianism leaves rights vulnerable” (Sandel, 79). From these critiques we can draw a conclusion; because humans are imperfect and we can not prove that God exists, in order to have the most perfect philosophy we must draw on the perspectives of separate philosophies to create one that can endure the test of the ever-evolving human experience.

In a presentation by Stephen Hawking, the late theoretical physicist who discovered Hawking radiation, he stated:

Living in this vast world that is by turns kind and cruel, and gazing at the immense heavens above, people have always asked a multitude of questions: How can we understand the world in which we find ourselves? How does the universe behave? What is the nature of reality? Where did all this come from? Did the universe need a creator? Most of us do not spend most of our time worrying about these questions, but almost all of us worry about them some of the time. Traditionally these are questions for philosophy, but philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics. Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge.

Hawking’s maxim denotes philosophy’s inability to reconcile itself with an unknowable, uncaring and inhospitable universe. A universe in which humans may not be in the very control we think we are clinging to. On Albert Einstein's deathbed, he penned his last notes on what he termed the Unified Field Theory. This theory was meant to resolve the contradictions between the General Theory of Relativity (gravity) and electromagnetism (Sutton), the, “Science of charge and of the forces and fields with charge” (Kashy). This theory, if Einstein had been successful, would have explained how all the forces in nature work together (Fiorentino); in philosophical terms; are “one”. However, though scientists have been exploring unified field theories into the present, no one has successfully proved one that unifies all fields. Humans are currently incapable of explaining the very basis of natural phenomena and because of this, we can not base any philosophical theory on putting humans on a pedestal (treating ourselves as ends) as though we are special because we can not rule out determinism, “Thethesis that all events in the universe, including human decisions and actions, are causally inevitable;” (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica) meaning that every human action is only the amalgamation of an almost infinite (or infinite) amount of physical and chemical reactions spanning back to the beginning of time. If determinism is correct, life essentially has no meaning and humans are not ends themselves because we are not in any actual control of our decisions; we are slaves to the universe. Therefore, a theory such as Immanuel Kant’s that bases itself on humans being autonomous is in essence baseless until proven otherwise. This begs the question; how then do we guarantee ourselves human rights? John Rawls tripped upon the answer. Rawls’ theory takes us to a point outside of ourselves; a point where determined fate does not matter by starting with the “veil of ignorance;” an imagined state that works only to create a society where humans are respected and protected and that is not reliant on us being in control of our own destiny, but that results from us existing whether we are slaves to the universe or ends in and of ourselves. The “veil of ignorance” is a state in which one knows nothing of where they will start in the social and economic hierarchies of the world and so must exist by laws that benefit all regardless of their starting points in life. Rawls elucidates two principles of justice that would take shape if humanity stood under the “veil of ignorance.” One, that all citizens would be guaranteed basic liberties such as the right to vote and freedom of religion and two, that social and economic inequality would only be permitted in the cases in which it helps the least well-off in a society such as paying a doctor more to incentivize them to provide better healthcare (Sandel 106). Because Rawls' philosophy does not stand on the basis of something that is currently improvable, it guarantees that human rights stem from existence rather than the right of being human itself. However, Rawls’ philosophy, though groundbreaking in its ability to prove human rights, was not complete enough to make a society that could mold humans into people who respect themselves and others.

Rawls’ philosophy scantily covers what makes a person good, opting instead to cover the beginnings of a society that values all people the same and supports their interests regardless of ability. This can be rectified by employing Aristotle's theory of the virtues all humans should hold and his thoughts on the purpose or “telos” of politics. Aristotle argues that the four cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, temperance and courage (Summers). He did list other virtues but they are out of the scope of this paper. With these virtues, a person can become a “virtuous person” or someone who “not only knows what the good thing to do is, she is also emotionally attached to it” (Gottlieb). In Aristotle's terms, they can “live a good life.”

Someone with prudence contemplates properly on how to live a good life. Prudence is synonymous with “practical wisdom.” In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle defines practical wisdom as, “A true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man.” A society with prudent people would have an understanding, as a whole, of what is productive and detrimental to it. Another cardinal virtue that Aristotle argues will allow a person to be moral, joyful and prosperous is justice. Justice impels us to do what is right and to want to do what is right, “Prudence deals with judgment; justice with action and desire” (Summers). A just person is impartial to others and has integrity. A society in which people are just is a society devoid of corruption. The people will treat each other with respect of their own volition. Aristotle’s virtue of temperance is equivalent to self-control. Aristotle lists three types of lives: the life of pleasure, of politics and of the philosopher. He immediately disregards the life of pleasure as below that of the life of politics and the philosopher,

He builds on his thesis that pleasure cannot be our ultimate target, because what counts as pleasant must be judged by some standard other than pleasure itself, namely the judgment of the virtuous person. Amusements will not be absent from a happy life, since everyone needs relaxation, and amusements fill this need. But they play a subordinate role, because we seek relaxation in order to return to more important activities (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

A temperate person does not fall to their base desires. They will indulge in them, but only to a point that they are still in control of themselves and they will ultimately pursue a life dedicated to lasting substance (Summers). A society in which temperance is valued would be a society that can depend on its people to be responsible for their actions and act in ways that better themselves. Courage is a balance between excessive timidity and excessive boldness, “For the man who flies from and fears everything and does not stand his ground against anything becomes a coward, and the man who fears nothing at all but goes to meet every danger becomes rash” (Aristotle, 22). Courage is directly related to temperance in that a courageous person uses their temperance to control their emotions to overcome their fear. With courage a society would not stumble when there are disagreements among its populace; it would have the bravery to allow its people to voice their concerns and deliberate on how to overcome adversity.

Aristotle furthers his exploration into living a good life by synthesizing a philosophy on the telos of politics, “For Aristotle, the purpose of politics is . . . to form good citizens and to cultivate good character” (Sandel 142). Politics should allow people to develop into the best versions of themselves, namely people with the previously stated four cardinal virtues but also with their unique talents. In addition, politics exists to, “Develop their [peoples] distinctive human capacities and virtues—to deliberate about the common good, to acquire practical judgment, to share in self-government, to care for the fate of the community as a whole” (Sandel, 143). In cultivating people who are capable of living the good life, Aristotle states the primary purpose of the law is to promote habits that lead to good character.

A political system built on the telos that Aristotle outlined will work to promote the cardinal virtues in its citizens and in turn those virtues will drive citizens towards favoring the very political system that was created to nurture those virtues. Aristotle states,

But the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g., men become builders by building and lyreplayers by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.

This is confirmed by what happens in states; for legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them (21).

This quote illustrates two important points relevant to creating a just society. Habits are the beginnings of virtues and the legislatures (politicians) “make the citizens good” by habituating these virtues in them. In a society that values the “distinctive human capacities and virtues” of its citizens, the political leaders will naturally try to instill the cardinal virtues in them and will accomplish this through habituation. Prudence will be habituated because the society will need citizens who “deliberate on the common good”. Justice will be habituated because the society will need citizens who “share in self-government” and to govern oneself, one must be just in that one will do what is right and want to do what is right without the need for others to be responsible for them. Temperance will be habituated to instill “practical judgment” in the society's citizens. A person must be temperate to live a life of substance and to choose a life of substance over that of base desires requires one to reason with “practical judgment”. Finally, courage must be habituated in the society's citizens so that they “care for the fate of the community as a whole”. To “care for the fate of the community as a whole” a citizen will need to face adversity and without courage, they will fail to stand up against it. By engendering these virtues in the legislature's citizens, the citizens will come to see the importance of them, “. . . if all goes well, the habit eventually takes, and we come to see the point of it” (Sandel, 147). When the citizens see the points of these habits they will understand why their political system is necessary and take it upon themselves to promote a political system that strengthens these virtues in themselves and engenders them in the later generations. Thus completing the cycle.

The cycle, begun outside of itself by Rawls and completed by Aristotle, is not without detractors. Some would opt for an entirely different philosophy that draws its moral decisions according to the beliefs of the majority, not from objective reality. In 1789 Jeremy Bentham published *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Within this book, he coined the philosophy, Utilitarianism. Bentham’s Utilitarianism argued, “Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure” (1). And defined his “principle of utility” otherwise known as the “greatest happiness principle” as the,

Principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question : or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever ; and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government (Bentham, Morals and Legislation 2).

And defined utility as,

By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness, (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered : if that party be community in general, then the happiness of the community : if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual” (Bentham, Morals and Legislation 2).

In addition, Bentham tells us who benefits from his philosophy in *A Fragment of Government*, “It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong” (93). Through these four quotes, we can delineate an understanding of Bentham's Utilitarianism. Humans are controlled solely by pleasure and pain. The utility of an action is evaluated by its ability to generate pleasure or prevent pain to the party it is concerned with and by the degree of its ability to produce joy or to prevent suffering for the largest group of people. Utility will be the sole judge of if an action is moral or immoral. Bentham’s Utilitarianism is not where the philosophy ended, however, it is only where it began.

In 1802, a Scottish man named James Mill moved to London and later became friends with Bentham. James Mill was an astute man who graduated from Edinburgh University and passed down his acumen to his son, John Stuart Mill. John Stuart Mill learned about Utilitarianism from its creator himself, Jeremy Bentham, and his father (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). But he saw issues with the philosophy.

In Mill’s book, *On Liberty*, he revised Bentham’s Utilitarianism in two foundational areas. I will list both but will only address one because the second is outside the scope of this paper since we did not go over other philosophers whose views support or dispute it. He challenged Bentham’s assertion that utility should purely be evaluated on its intensity and duration, adding quality to the properties by which it should be judged. This qualified Mill’s contention that utility should be maximized in the long run. Where Bentham would have considered a dog fight superior to listening to Beethoven if it maximized happiness for the largest amount of people, Mill would have done the opposite, valuing the lasting effects and deeper experience of Beethoven over the dog fight. In addition, he argued that the state should regulate an individual’s actions that affect other members of the state, “The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign” (Mill, 13). I thought it would be good to mention both for completion but do not have a supporting or opposing view that is not Utilitarian itself, to address the second.

Although Mill’s additions to Utilitarianism appear, on the surface, to plug some of the holes of the philosophy, the ground they stand on is insecure. Emmanuel Kant challenges Bentham’s allegation that humans are governed solely by pleasure and pain by arguing that humans can behave rationally. Although in the beginning of this essay, I argued that Kant’s point of humans being ends cannot be maintained with our current knowledge of the universe, that does not mean humans are not capable of being rational. On the contrary, “being” is defined by Dictionary.com as, “The fact of existing”, “rational” is defined as, “Endowed with the faculty of reason” and reason is defined as, “To think or argue in a logical manner.” Humans exist; we are constantly in a state of “being”. In this state of being, whether caused by ourselves or the universe, we come to understand why we act in certain ways; whether we understand that reason to be an amalgamation of physical and chemical reactions or the reason that forms in our mind as a result of being (from reactions or something more than reactions), we understand why we act because of the reasons that we have gathered from our existence. Put another way, humans are capable of being rational because we understand why we act a certain way and even if we are slaves to the universe, understand why we must forgo pleasures and take on pain to better ourselves. It may currently be unprovable that we are autonomous, but we can “be” or “exist” rationally. Thus, the piece of Bentham’s philosophy that acts as the crux that all human action is dependent on is rendered mute by Kant’s case of the human’s ability to be rational. Kant not only belies Bentham’s claim of what governs humanity's actions, but he also invalidates Bentham’s method for discerning what the morality of a party’s actions should be judged by.

Bentham's judgment on the morality of an action rests on two aspects of his philosophy. One, that the action must have utility, and two, that it serves the “greatest happiness of the greatest number” of people. Kant believes that utility can not be used to judge if an action is just because what brings people pleasure changes, is dependent on how they feel and varies from person to person,

Empirical principles are not at all fit to serve as the basis of moral laws. For moral laws should be universal, valid for all rational beings without distinction, that being what makes them unconditionally practically necessary; but this universality is lost if moral laws are derived from the specific constitution of human beings—·a constitution that may not be shared by other rational beings·—or the particular circumstance in which human beings happen to live (Kant, 53).

Kant believed that for an action to be just it must be able to be universalized. An action that is universally moral is an action that will always be moral no matter the situation. Kant believed that morality stemmed from intention, not consequences, “According to Kant, the moral worth of an action consists not in the consequences that flow from it, but in the intention from which the act is done” (Sandel, 82). Someone who does the right thing for the right reason acts out of “duty”. Therefore, an action is universally correct if it is done out of duty. This is in direct contempt of Bentham’s belief that an action is moral if it serves the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. To demonstrate the folly of Bentham's argument and the truth of Kant’s we can use a simple example. There are only two people. One will be given some sum of money which means the other will not get the sum of money. One has lived a life of greed and the other has lived a life of generosity. They both plan on spending the money on themselves, but the greedy person will spend it on a fancy classic (it will keep its value) car and the generous one would spend it on a trip to the Amazon. In both these scenarios they gain the same happiness, but the greedy one gains happiness by impressing their friends with their car and the generous one wants to make cherished, lifelong memories in the Amazon. Bentham’s theory states that the money provides utility. But it also states that the money should go to the party that will be provided the greatest happiness for the greatest number. However, in this scenario the happiness derived from getting the money would be the same between both parties and the number of people in each party is the same. Bentham’s philosophy falls apart. Kant’s on the other hand provides an answer. In this case, Kant’s philosophy tells us to pick the person who will go to the Amazon. They plan on getting the money so that they can better themselves. They display duty because they have the right intentions for why they want the money. Bentham’s views appear short-sighted when confronted by Kant. And Mill’s attempt to save Utilitarianism is built on Bentham’s philosophy; thus it is ill-fated from the start but still worth covering.

When utility is judged with Mill’s addition of quality, the higher pleasure is chosen. However, this is not Utilitarian. In adding quality to the mix of aspects that one evaluates a pleasure on, Mill must concede that Kant is correct when he claims a person can be rational; their actions are not only governed by pleasure and pain. This is because in selecting a higher pleasure over the lower pleasure, Mill is admitting that humans are capable of handling the pain that comes with working to accomplish something greater, such as dedicating four years or more of one’s life to attain a college degree, to better themselves through a less rewarding and even painful experience in the short run, but one that yields greater pleasure in the long run; a rational decision. But Mill’s goal of including rationality in judging a pleasure was to open up Utilitarianism to maximizing utility in the long run. And Mill emphasized exactly that, he put maximizing utility in the long run above the short run, arguing that it is immoral for a society to censor dissenters or withhold individual liberties, “If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind” (Mill, 18). Mill defended these rights on the grounds that minority views could end up being true or partly true and that allowing for dissenting views would stop people from becoming dogmatic and prejudiced (Sandel, 39). However, Kant cautions that using a calculation to determine a society's rights leaves the resulting rights contingent on the variables that went into the calculation (Sandel 79); the rights are only guaranteed so long as the variables stay the same. Kantianism, instead offers a method of determining if a maxim can be called a categorical imperative, meaning it is a universally, morally right action, “If the action [imperative] is thought to be good in itself and hence as necessary in a will that conforms to reason, which it has as its principle the imperative is categorical” (Kant, 19). An imperative is a categorical imperative if in every scenario it is just. If the maxim, “A society should not censor dissenters and withhold individual liberties because it will lead the society to the greatest happiness by stopping the society from becoming dogmatic and prejudiced,” could be just in every scenario then it is a categorical imperative. But this maxim is not universally true. Even the United States, a country whose first amendment guarantees freedom of speech, understands that people who have the right to free speech are not guaranteed to use it responsibly and can use it to cause more harm than good. I will not write them, but there are many words in English, that I am sure the reader can think of, that are considered overwhelmingly hateful and if used in the wrong way and/or by the wrong person can be extremely distressing to the groups they refer to. When people who are not a part of the groups these words belong to say them, they set a precedent that strengthens hate groups. This can be seen in multiplayer online games where young children learn to shout homophobic and racial slurs from the older players swearing while playing the game. PewDiePie is one of the most popular gamers in the world. As of writing this line, his Youtube channel has 111 million subscribers. In 2017, he was 28 years old and used a racial slur in a video that was heard by millions of young fans (Game Fanatics). Some of his fans thought he was morally in the wrong but many who were used to hearing such rhetoric in gamer culture supported him. It is well known to most people that words are powerful, but his nonchalant use of the racial slur pushed kids who didn’t know any better towards speaking irresponsibly and simultaneously emboldened hateful people to use slurs to harm others. We can see with the rise of Donald Trump that someone with power and influence can make hateful people feel like their beliefs are valid, “One in five U.S. Asians cites former President Donald Trump as the main reason for the rise in violence against Asian Americans” (Kai). In 2020, Covid 19 spread across the world. Trump was quick to blame Asians, specifically, the Chinese, for the virus, calling it the “Kung Flu”, a play on words of the popular martial art Kung Fu. This emboldened many people to spread hate, “According to a recently released report by the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, anti-Asian hate crimes in 16 of the largest U.S. cities increased 145 percent in 2020” (Kai). As we can see, the maxim does not universally hold water. It not only fails as a categorical imperative, but the rights it derives are contingent on the reasons that they were derived from and therefore cannot be relied upon in the ever-evolving human experience.

“The only thing that is constant is change” (Heraclitus). The aforementioned quote was found in the remains of a destroyed book that is thought to have been written by Heraclitus (Reference.com), a Greek philosopher who lamented that people do not understand the, “Universal principle through which all things are interrelated and all natural events occur” (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica). In the beginning of this paper, I wrote about how Einstein's Unified Field Theory would have explained how all the different forces in nature work together; how they change the universe by affecting each other. But that humanity has never been successful in producing a Unified Field Theory and so we can not truly understand the universe we inhabit. We live in a universe that is constantly in flux and in tandem with that ever-evolving universe our understanding of the world is ceaselessly changing. Over thousands of years, humans have written holy books they claim are divinely inspired by God. Because the Gods these holy books represent are purportedly perfect, the holy books derived from them supposedly inherent their infallibility. Critics of the diluting principles approach to a guiding philosophy, such as the many followers of holy books around the globe, may claim that a philosophy built on many philosophies is prone to contradict itself and may even go so far as to claim that if it is not passed down by God or Gods, it will never be worth following because it will never be perfect. But as we can see there are contradictions in the verses of even the most ubiquitous religions on the planet. I have also proven that none of the esteemed philosophies I have covered are flawless or complete in their capacity to advise someone or people in all aspects of their lives despite the fact that these philosophies are considered to be some of the most ingenious who have ever existed. We can see the advantages of taking many opinions into account reflected in the way diversity affects a company's productivity. In the book, *Which Two Heads are Better Than One* by Juliet Bourke, a partner at Deloitte who leads their Diversity and Inclusion practice, she gives the following points: companies with high diversity and inclusion are two times more likely to exceed financial targets, three times more likely to be high-performing, six times more likely to be innovative and agile and eight times more likely to achieve better business outcomes. Taking different perspectives into account is the only way people can ensure (or come close to ensuring) that they possess a foolproof and resilient philosophy.

The impossibility of proving God and the fallibility of humanity preclude any qualifications we have to prove or create a perfect philosophy. Contradictions in even the most ubiquitous of religious texts, the Bible, give cause for society to refrain from sanctifying one philosophy as absolute. Pushing the point further we can find all manner of imperfections in the philosophies known to be of humankind from incomplete foundations on the rights humans deserve to short-sighted assertions of moral principles. Immanuel Kant’s grounds on which he builds his argument for humanity’s obligation to uphold a person's innate rights are shaky at best, but can be rectified by John Rawls' metaphysical “veil of ignorance”. However, Rawls’ philosophy is sorely lacking when addressing the virtues that make a person good and how they should be engendered and so Aristotle’s virtue ethics and political theory must be employed to remedy the shortcomings of Rawls’ theory. Finally, Utilitarianism, itself, is thoroughly debunked by Kantian philosophy with Kant’s claim that humans are not only governed by pleasure and pain, but are also governed by their ability to reason, his argument that intentions matter more than consequences and his concept of the categorical imperative. By exposing the flaws in the philosophies of deities and people we can see that in order to construct the most steadfast philosophy we must draw on the perspectives of separate philosophies. We may never find the ultimate philosophy but one thing is certain; there are so many perspectives drawn from the almost limitless amount of experiences people are capable of having that there will always be something we can learn from each other. In the words of Sun Tzu in *The Art of War*, “There are not more than five musical notes, yet the combinations of these five give rise to more melodies than can ever be heard. There are not more than five primary colours, yet in combination they produce more hues than can ever been seen. There are not more than five cardinal tastes, yet combinations of them yield more flavours than can ever be tasted.”

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