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Introduction to Philosophy, PHI2010

Essay Exam Three: The Freedom, Ethics, and Justice

## Freedom

Determinism is the essential theory when it comes to the topic of freedom. Determinism is the theory that everything in the physical world can be previously analyzed and predicted because of the cause and effect relationship that all objects have with one another. That is to say that everything in the physical world has a set destiny or set future. This theory goes against the belief of liberalism and thus spawned from it several interpretations; Hard Determinism, Soft Determinism, and Indeterminism some of these said theories.

Hard Determinism is the most basic form of Determinism, and the most radical at the same time. It is based on the belief that there is no freedom of choice within a human lifetime. It states that all decisions and actions made by anything physical can be predicted and therefore were already predetermined. This stems from the scientific discoveries of Issac Newton with his fundamental laws of physics: Gravity, and Inertia being the most essential for Hard Determinism. The idea of Hard Determinism clashes against the idea of free will and therefore sparked several counter arguments.

One of the counter arguments being Soft Determinism. Philosopher David Hume argued for the idea that freedom and Determinism can be compatible with each other and therefore be able to hold people accountable for their actions as a free individual within a Deterministic world. In this sense free is opposed to being coerced to do something because of a Deterministic cause. In effect his argument consisted on the basis that a person is free if had the person wanted to commit another act, the person would have been able to do so. Soft Deterministic philosophers argue that a person is able to have free will in almost all of the cases in which decisions are involved, except if the person suffers from a condition which prevents them otherwise.

Another argument against Hard Determinism is Indeterminism which argues that most events are not caused via a Deterministic case but are instead probabilistic in their occurrence. Therefore any person able to make a decision is free and has ample freedom to make a choice. This theory is more

modern than the previous one because of advancements in technology and scientific research, more specifically within Quantum Mechanics. One of the most important factors for Determinism is the fact that everything physical has a cause and an effect to that cause. However Quantum Mechanics have showed that the universe's smallest particles behave randomly most of the time, and all of the time the effect of their existence is unknowable by a human perspective. Therefore this gives way for an indeterministic approach to philosophy.

## Ethics

Ethics and Morality are very difficult topics to consider, the main question of how to behave in society has been attempted many times. Two theories of how to behave in society pop up during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, these being Deontology by Immanuel Kant, and Utilitarianism by Jeremy Bentham, later reconstructed by John Stuart Mill. Deontology deals with the ethics of duty, while Utilitarianism deals with the ethics of happiness.

Deontology was first publicly declared by Kant in the year 1788, it dealt with the ethics of a society in which the most important element was the duty to one's work. Deon being the Greek word for Duty. It stated that one must act within a certain set of principles regardless of the outcome, this later split up into religious deontology in which set of principles were set by the religious head. However Kant's Deontology used a set of rules, which he called maxims, that were derived from reasoning. This set of reasons would be set by the populous in general taking elections within a democratic system, such as the laws of today's governments.

Jeremy Bentham disagreed with Kant's Deontology theory and thus thought of another. Bentham's solution to the problem of societal ethics, or morality, was the theory of Utilitarianism, which unlike Deontology focused totally on the reaction rather than the action. Utilitarianism's main theory is that one must take any course of action that positions the person on the most satisfactory of scenarios possible. Meaning that the preferred moral action within any circumstance is that which is the most pleasurable one. Jeremy Bentham then came up with a way to measure the most societal happiness thus indicating the most moral course of action for society. This theory had a severe flaw however, because it permitted society to commit atrocious inhumane acts that would end up with a more pleased society in the end and due this theory, be at the same time morally better.

Along came John Stuart Mill with a solution to utilitarianism. This solution being the split between pleasures. Mill split pleasures into two categories, low pleasures and high pleasures. Low

pleasures being those pleasures belonging to the body and body sensations, and high pleasures being those that belong to the mind. This in term allowed Mill to modify the theory in a way that nullifies atrocities as morally better, because a better result may be achieved without these acts.

## Justice

John Rawls was a philosopher of Justice at Harvard University. One of his main achievements during his time being the Two Principles of Justice. Rawls' main perspective of justice is that freedom and equality are not self contained within their own ideals but can instead be compounded to form a better system of justice. He argues that in fact any system of justice that cannot incorporate freedom and equality in the same frame of mind is inherently flawed and needs reworking.

Rawls' Two Principles of Justice are the Principle of Equal Liberty and the Difference Principle. The Principle of Equal Liberty is the essence that claims that everyone must be fundamentally equal within all of their most extensive liberties compatible with similar liberties for all. The Difference Principle being that all social and economic inequalities should be arranged so that they both, become to the greatest benefit for the least advantaged, and are attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of equal opportunity. The most essential idea from his argument is that within society, all self-interested rational persons would accept these two principles for their societies.

We can see that both principles are underlined within Rawls' most basic assumption of society, that people have two moral powers. These two moral powers being the ability to sense justice, and the conception of what is ethically good. These two moral powers are what he perceives to be the extent of the necessary knowledge needed to participate within a just society. These can be defined further, A sense of justice being the capacity to understand, to apply and to act with respect to the public conception of justice under fair terms of cooperation. The conception of good being the conception of what is valuable in human life, normally concerning with a determinate schemes of set goals or achievements. The concepts that Rawls theories can be applied within any societal moral base such as Deontology or Utilitarianism and are supposed to be comprehensive.