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Period 3

Multicultural Studies

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A Reflection on Hours of Service

Life and Dignity of each person means that everyone is created in the eyes of God and deserves respect. Your family is who conceived you and members of their family. Community is the environment of people surrounding you. Everyone has basic inalienable rights given by God which no one has the right to take away, however some people have their rights suppressed. It is our responsibility to make sure that God's plan is carried out on earth. As a Catholic, you are required to take care of those less fortunate for you, and to promote the life of Jesus through your actions. Everyone has worth, it is important to recognize the honor and dignity of others around you as it is in yourself. We are all made in the eyes of God, he is the father to all so we are all brothers and sisters through him. Since we all belong to Allah, it is important that we care and love not only one another, but everything he made.

Matthew 25:31-46 tells of the very reason christianity is even a religion. The whole basis for christianity is the son of God, Jesus, came down to open the gates of heaven for the deserving, and redeem those who weren't. In this passage, it tells of the second coming of Jesus and how you can be ready to be saved. It speaks of doing things because they are good and just, to be an example of Jesus in your community. If you do, Jesus will deliver you to Heaven.

Utilitarianism is the ethical and philosophical theory that states the best action is the one that has the most beneficial outcome. This stems from consequentialism, which states that the

consequences of an action are the only standard of right and wrong. Utilitarianism was first used in 1781, in a letter from Jeremy Bentham. Since then, it has widely been adopted through history, even being used in some of Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas' works. The evolution throughout the ages has come to base it as justifying a pursuit of happiness, which in itself was justified by William Paley's *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*. (1785)

The Catholic Church does not agree with utilitarianism, and abhors the idea of it. Utilitarianism shifts the focus from our purpose being love and unity with God as our end goal, to ourselves being the end goal of life. The Catholic Church is more deontological, focusing on the value of the actions more than the outcomes. Utilitarianism is rooted in the capitalistic economic structure, while deontology has more liberal roots. To a Utilitarianist, if someone is able to donate lots of money to society, it does not matter where that money comes from.

From an economic perspective, service hours are a form of unregulated currency, bartered in a niche market. As kids are forced to labor and obtain this currency, a reward based motivation for charitable events arises. For a student, they are able to sell their labor to an event, receive payment for it, and then exchange that payment for a grade in a class. Over time, this process becomes the same as studying to get a grade in a class, or doing remedial work to turn in for a grade. As the child ages, these hours become obsolete as they can no longer use them in a market. In a paper by Henny, Hackett, and Porreca, over 90% of respondents strongly agreed that it is important for them to choose volunteer opportunities that they believed that they could make a meaningful contribution too rather than being forced to. As quantified by a research paper at Simon Fraser University, over 50% of participants strongly disagreed that they would volunteer again if they felt forced to do the activity.

For those who continued to volunteer, they did so because of their belief in the cause rather than habit. They did not need a shiny medal or token of acknowledgement, they did so because of strong morals instilled in them throughout their life. “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men.”

(Matthew 6:1-2 New King James Version) As shown in this passage from the book of Matthew, God would rather see people instilled with this moral righteousness than people only doing actions because of their need for rewards.

Of course, the idea of service hours is an honest and noble one. Promoting goodness and unity in a community is at its very nature, exactly what Jesus set out to teach us. However, even in action rooted in the best intentions, can become corrupt if done for the wrong reasons. In an anonymous survey taken with STA students from varying amounts of hours completed, less than 15% of students said they would have completed the hours they did if it was not mandatory. On top of that, on a scale from 1 - 7, 1 being out of complete kindness, the average answer was 5. This proves that while kids did feel good and had good intentions, they were overwhelmed by the sheer volume of wanting a medal or too look good for colleges. In general, the higher the hours completed, the less likely they were to be done out of kindness.

As kids are lazy, and society only urges them into a secularistic mindset, it is almost impossible to guarantee the motives behind any action. Kids will oftentimes lie and cheat just to get ahead or look better to their fellow classmates. Only 9 students had not received hours for time they did not work, (double hours, fake hours, etc..) and out of those 9 the highest hours

completed was only in the 300's for all 4 years. While it might seem like the kids are too blame, they are just receiving hours from a benefactor, and how can the kids be expected to say no to extra hours since they pose such a heavy impact on their lives.

“For the desire of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.” (1 Timothy 6:10-11 New International Version) God knew humans could not resist temptation. By instilling something that can install divisions between people, and even be used to further someones earthly life, how can we be expected to go against the very nature that God knew for us. In order to fully bring about the kingdom of heaven on earth, we must ingrain this righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness that Timothy had which pleased God rather than force kids into situations and hope they learn it for themselves.

In my experience, I am who I am not because of the classes I took at school, nor the service hours I was required to complete. My mother, bless her soul, knew that I was going to be in many situations in life, all influencing me in some way. She took it upon herself to instead of only give me good situations, give me good morals and values. That is why I have so few hours, I feel it is rude to offer to help someone in their time of need then forcing them to pay you in return, even if they offered from the start. If we start imbuing a mindset of help people because they need it, not because you want payment, then I believe the world as a whole would benefit.

Even looking back at the 72 hours I did for STA robotics last summer, my heart was not in it. The idea was pure, as a mentor I went with my partner Noah and our teacher Dr. Williams to help kids learn and better themselves. It was fun, we ended up building battle bots and the kids

all enjoyed it and had a blast, some even made friends that they interact with to this day. The problem I have is I don't feel like christ was actually a part of my work. Of course at the very start he was there, ready to oversee everything and everyone, but as my motives turned from wanting to do it to help to just needing the hours to be accepted into the senior class, I feel that Christs presence was transposed with a more sinister one. Once I turned my back on Jesus' guidance, There was nothing he could do to work through me. Even if I had prayed in any way he could have, but I had only used my wisdom and intelligence instilled by God at birth, not the help he could have given if I was open to him. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12 English Standard Version)

While my service did ultimately do more good than harm, I am not a utilitarianist. I don't think that it was correct to do because it was rooted in evil, even if I did help others throughout my time there. I showed them how to be unified as a single community but could not find that unity in myself. "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought." (1 Corinthians 1:10 English Standard Version)

Works Cited

Henney, Susan M., Justin D. Hackett, and Marie Rose Porreca. "Involuntary Volunteerism: What Happens When You Require People to "Do Good?"." Journals.SFU.ca. 2015. Simon Fraser University. 12 Feb. 2019 <journals.sfu.ca/jslhe/index.php/jslhe/article/download/126/51>.

More than 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to them to choose volunteer opportunities as they see fit. However, when asked about how they would feel if forced to volunteer, 51% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would volunteer again if they felt forced to do the activity. These findings highlight that participants placed substantial emphasis on the importance of feeling free to select the types of volunteer activities that they choose to be involved in.

Hibberd, Paul. TO WHAT EXTENT IS UTILITARIANISM COMPATIBLE WITH CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY? DISCUSS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE THOUGHT OF WILLIAM PALEY. Utilitarianism.com. 2012. 12 Feb. 2019 <<https://www.utilitarianism.com/hibberd/index.html>>.

So what went wrong? Writers like Halevy have presented Bentham and Mill as being exclusively concerned with personal happiness, making utilitarianism into a merely egoistic phenomenon. However, Francisco Vergara in 'A critique of Elie Halevy'(26) by carefully examining the original texts has shown evidence of an altruistic utilitarianism in the thought of both Bentham and Mill. Paley was aware that ethics was drifting away from Christian theology. He noted 'Mr Hume, in his fourth Appendix to his Principles of Morals, has been pleased to complain of the modern scheme of uniting Ethics with the Christian theology'.