**WEEK 11: Civil Rights and Society in the 1960s: Reform and Rebellion**

**Were the sixties a decade of hedonism, or heightened social responsibility?**

Contemporary position of ethics, such as Kantianism, lacked to address the role of happiness. As the philosophical world explored a consequentialist approach to ethics, they positioned themselves by taking a utilitarian approach. The sixties were a textbook definition of the drawbacks of globally applying utilitarianism. As those in the sixties attempted to apply the utilitarian approach to decision-making, they were often using the justification of redistribution of wealth as a means to justify their actions. They believed that stealing a few dollars in produce was OK since the owner of the supermarket wouldn’t be hurt as much as they would gain from receiving the benefits of the produce they took. Just because one can arbitrarily apply the utilitarian logic doesn’t make it morally or ethically sound. There were times of the sixties that applied utilitarianism in an appropriate manner. The Vietnam War was in full swing during the 1960s, and there was a massive loss of life. Do the hedons received by saving the Vietnam citizens outweigh the negative utility unit, sadons, of losing an individual, a husband, father and/or son? The yippies of the sixties were globally applying the utilitarian approach without regard to others. All-in-all I would say that the sixties were not a decade of hedonism.

**Do the ideas of the 1960s still have relevance today?**

The 1960s are being revived today more than ever in the past four decades since. We are seeing more individuals partaking in the medicinal and recreational use of marijuana, of which there are many benefits. However, all things are only good in moderation. Consistently being high to the point of seeing the universe isn’t a functional person in society. The youth has, in a small segment of our population, a lack of motivation to apply themselves in a traditional means. Although, isn’t the whole idea they’re rallying behind the idea of not being a traditional person? The ideas of the 1960s will stick forever, but by no means were they new in the 1960s; rather they are most well known for their influence of the 1960s.

**Which changes initiated in the 1960s are still with us, if any?**

We are seeing a stronger emphasis on individuals finding themselves, rather than the cookie cutter “you will work in X industry” such as we saw in the early 1900s. Without a defined path in life, this provides better insight of themselves as individuals. With a stronger understanding of self, this provides a better image. These benefits are not seen in today's society because of the complexity of today with the overconsumption of technology, overmedication of the youth and so forth. Any changes initiated in the 1960s are subdued by the complexity of living in the 2000s rather than the 1960s. Will we ever be able to live a simpler life, or is life determined to become more complex as time goes on?