

1. Term

Classical utilitarianism

Definition

The belief that an action is morally right if it produces the greatest happiness or good for all. It is a teleological or consequentialist theory, focusing on the end results of actions.

2. Term

Intrinsic goods

Definition

Things that are valued for themselves, not for what they can get us. Utilitarians believe only intrinsic goods should be considered when evaluating morality.

3. Term

Greatest Happiness Principle

Definition

Mill's definition of utilitarianism, which states that actions are right if they promote happiness and wrong if they produce unhappiness. The standard is the greatest happiness for all, not just the individual.

4. Term

First Alternative

Definition

The belief that everyone should seek happiness, which is an ultimate end desired for its own sake. Mill argued that utilitarianism is not godless but based on the belief that God desires the happiness of His creatures.

5. Term

Second Alternative

Definition

Mill's response to the objection that utilitarianism is 'mean and grovelling'. He argued that humans have elevated faculties and seek gratification beyond animal appetites.

6. Term

Dichotomy of act and person

Definition

The objection that utilitarianism ignores personal qualities and focuses only on consequences. Mill replied that utilitarianism is about judging actions, not persons, and that other qualities are relevant to our interest in people.

7. Term

Motive and morality

Definition

Mill argued that motive is irrelevant to the morality of an action, but it matters for the worth of the agent. A good act remains good regardless of motive.

8. Term

Temptation and excuses

Definition

The objection that utilitarians will make excuses for breaking moral rules. Mill countered that all moral systems face the issue of conflicting obligations, and utilitarianism provides an ultimate standard to resolve these conflicts.

9. Term

Appeal to expedience

Definition

The objection that utilitarianism is a mere appeal to self-interest. Mill clarified that utilitarianism recognizes self-sacrifice for the greater good and that happiness considered is that of all, not just the individual.

10. Term

Happiness as the purpose of life

Definition

Mill countered the objection that happiness is unattainable by distinguishing between a life of continuous rapture and a life with moments of pleasure and few pains, arguing that the latter is attainable and worthy of the name 'happiness'.

11. Term

Calculating consequences

Definition

The objection that we cannot calculate all consequences to estimate an action's impact on happiness. Mill replied that we can still make estimates and that prudence, like morality, relies on foreseeing consequences.

12. Term

Time for calculation

Definition

The objection that there is no time to calculate consequences before acting. Mill responded that humans have learned from past experience, and this guides our conduct.

13. Term

Distinguishing kinds of happiness

Definition

The objection that utilitarianism cannot distinguish between good and bad kinds of happiness. Mill agreed that some pleasures are more valuable, and that the judgement of those who can appreciate both is key.
