The Debate Over Utilitarianism – James Rachels

Review Questions:

1. Rachels says that classical utilitarianism can be summed up in three propositions. What are they?

The three propositions are that actions are to be judged right or wrong solely in virtue of their consequences, assessing consequences the only thing that matters is the amount of happiness or unhappiness that is caused and the last one is calculating the happiness or unhappiness that will be caused, no one’s happiness is to be counted as more important than anyone else’s.

1. Explain the problem with hedoism. How do defenders of utilitarianism respond to this problem?

The problem with hedoism is that it misinterprets the nature of happiness. People think that it is a misfortune when we lose them. The defenders of utilitarianism find a way to solve the problem which is to formulate their view without assuming.

1. What are the objections about justice, rights, and promises?

The objections of justice is that punishing the innocent man does not deserved to be punished. With rights actions are defensible if they produce a favorable balance of happiness over unhappiness. And the utilitarianism say about promises is that consequences are the only things that matter, seems mistaken.

1. Distinguish between rule and act utilitarianism. How does the rule-utilitarianism reply to the objections?

Rule utilitarianism says that tempted to bear false witness against the innocent man because the consequences of that particular act would be good. While an act considers the consequences of potential actions then choose from there the most pleasurable one. The rule-utilitarianism replied to this objection by saying that it cannot be convicted of violating our moral common sense.

1. What is the third line of defense?

The third line of defense is suggests that classical theory is at odds with ordinary notions of justice and individual rights.

Discussion Questions:

1. Smart’s defense of utilitarianism is to reject common moral beliefs when they conflict with utilitarianism. Is this acceptable to you or not? Explain your answer.

For me, it is not acceptable because when they conflict with utilitarianism it does not mean that the other one is true.

1. A utilitarianism is supposed to give moral considerations to all concerned. Who must be considered? What about nonhuman animals? How about lake and streams?

All must be considered whether you’re a human, nonhuman, lakes and streams. All must be equal, we have different roles in the world we live.

1. Rachels claims that merit should be given moral consideration independent of utility. Do you agree?

I don’t agree, we must be equally given moral consideration.