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April 23, 2004

Phil 116 Section #

Philosophy is a study that focuses on inquiring into moral issues and how moral decisions are made. Typically philosophers deal with consequentialist versus non-consequentialist theories. Consequentialism has three versions Egoism, Altruism, and Utilitarianism. These three forms differ from each other because they look at different perspectives. Egoism focuses solely on the benefits of the person taking the action. On the other hand, Altruism excludes the costs and benefits of the person acting, and only considers others maximum utility. Both Egoism and Altruism differ from Utilitarianism because Utilitarianism takes everyone into consideration for determining the morality of an act. For the purpose of this paper we will only focus on Utilitarianism.

“Utilitarianism is a consequentialist ethical theory (S&H Pg17ⁱ).” It is consequentialist because it determines an action’s morality based on the consequences of that action. It is ethical because it is concerned with humans and their actions. Utilitarianism deals a lot with the cost benefit analysis, and how benefits and harms are calculated. The main goal of utilitarianism is to make decisions based on long-term outcome and the determination of morality in a situation. Utilitarianists follow the Principles of Utility. “An action is morally right if and only if the balance of benefit to harm calculated by taking everyone affected into consideration is greater than the balance of benefit to harm resulting from any alternative act (S&H Pg17).”

Hedonistic Act Utilitarianism is one of the three major utilitarian value theories. “Hedonistic act Utilitarianism claim that pleasure is the only intrinsically good thing

(S&H Pg19).” Intrinsic goodness is something that is not a means to an end, but has importance by just being. Sonevenbos and Humber discuss Jeremy Bentham’s seven criteria for determining the level of pleasure used to measure intrinsic value. Out of the seven, intensity, duration, and probability will be outlined for the Buffy Case scenario. Bentham formed an equation that all alternatives to an action should go through to determine the maximum utility. Basically, numbers are assigned to the duration of the pleasure, the intensity of the pleasure, and the probability of that action being successful. These figures multiplied together form the total utility. The purpose of the “hedonistic calculus (S&H Pg 20)” is to determine which of all the alternatives has the highest utility.

A Utilitarian would analyze Buffy’s situation using the four steps of hedonistic act utilitarianism. First, he or she would “set out all the relevant alternative acts that are open to him or her (S&H pg 17).” For this case Buffy going either with or against Spike are the only alternatives available. Secondly, Buffy and Spike will be listed as the only individuals “who will be affected by the alternative courses of action (S&H pg17).” The third step is to assess how Buffy and Spike will be affected by both alternatives. It is necessary to compute the balance of benefit to harm for both players. For the first alternative, Buffy’s intensity and duration under getting caught were selected based on her losing her job and all the money she would gain from Vampire. She has a much higher unit of intensity compared to not getting caught because of the consequences. On the other hand, Spike’s numbers were higher than Buffy’s because it being his company acting as the key player in manipulating the books, he stands to be in more trouble than Buffy’s company. Moreover, he also stands to gain more from not being caught. Thus, his numbers are significantly higher than Buffy’s on that affect. In the second alternative

Buffy's numbers are much higher than Spike's because he will win either way. If Buffy does not go with his idea, he will simply move his business elsewhere. Therefore, Buffy has high numbers because of the business and money she will lose. Now that all possible situations have been analyzed, the final step is to simply determine numerically which results in the greatest total of balance of benefit to harm. Once intensity, duration and probability are calculated, it is determined that from a Utilitarian viewpoint Buffy should give into Spike and render an unqualified opinion on Vampire's financials without forcing Vampire to book her suggestion adjustments.

Kantianism is an ethical theory arguing that the intentions behind an action determine the morality of said action rather than the consequence. Kant believed every action has a maxim, a basis of every action. He also believed in the "ethics of duty rather than the ethics of consequences (Bowie pg 4)". Therefore, he takes an opposite view of Utilitarianism. Since Kant views judging morality by the intentions, he adopts the principle of an imperative. An imperative is a command, or general suggestion of behavior. There are two types of imperatives Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives. A Hypothetical Imperative is when "you want to do X so you do Y. (Bowie pg4)," whereas, Categorical Imperative is a command that you have to obey no matter what. The Formulation of Universal Law, the Formulation of Humanity, and the Formulation of the Kingdom of Ends are of Categorical Imperative. Kant believed that "only human beings can follow laws of their own choosing because they are the only creatures that are free, and it is fact that we are free that enables us to be rational and moral. (Bowie pg 4ⁱⁱ)" Because of this Kant focuses his arguments on following the formulations of Categorical Imperatives.

In reference to the Buffy situation, a Kantian theorist would apply either the universalizability test or the respect for persons test. Because a Kantian believes in people having intrinsic value through free will, a respect for persons test is appropriate because it judges if an action is violating a human's intrinsic value. Also an universalizability test determines whether you can universalize the maxim of your action without committing yourself to a logical or practical contradiction. Therefore, Buffy's maxim is to save her largest account by following Spike's lead, and present an unqualified report of Vampire's financials. However, this maxim does not stand up once it is universalized. If everyone in the world were to cheat just to make more money, no one would ever be trusted. Therefore, Buffy's scenario of giving in to Spike does not pass, and is deemed immoral. Also, because the actions are a means to an end, they fail the respect for persons test. Buffy is being used by Spike and Vampire to help them create more instrumental value. That is directly violating Buffy's intrinsic value because she should not be used for such. Thus, a Kantian theorist would conclude that Buffy refuse to render a clean opinion unless Vampire books her suggested adjustments.

ⁱ Snoeyenbos, Milton and James Humber. "Utilitarianism and Business Ethics." *A Companion to Business Ethics*, ed. Robert Frederick, 17-29. Malden, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers, Inc. 1999

ⁱⁱ Bowie, Norman. "A Kantian Approach to Business Ethics." *A Comparison to Business Ehtics*, ed. Robert Frederick, 3-16. Malden, Massachussets, Blackwell Publishers, Inc. 1999