

Ethics - Utilitarianism

QUESTIONS

RESPONSES 12

Name? (12 responses)

Scott

Jacques Lam

Curtis

Alexander Chan

Sylvester Chan

Amos Chiu

Sabrina

Mingyu Liu

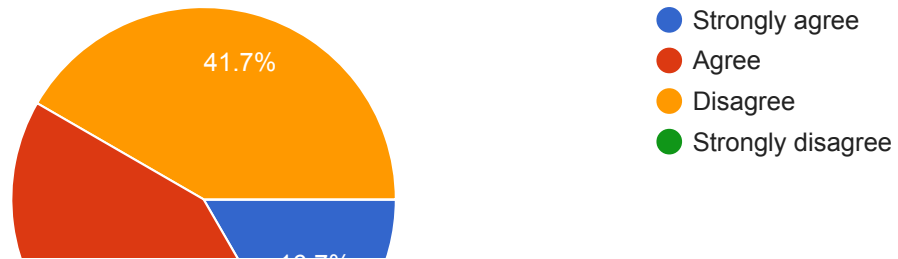
Rachel

Jeremy Wong

Aaron

Christopher Tu

Is it ever ok to kill a person? (12 responses)



Was it ok to murder Richard Parker to keep the other sailors alive? Explain your reasons.

(12 responses)

Yes, one person dies is better than all people die. Killing one person can save people's lives.

No, Richard parker is innocent, he had nothing to do with the whole thing. It is the fate, that initially the sailor should be killed, however, murdering richard parker is disobeying fate, and caused an innocent person to lose his life. No individuals should ever be granted the power to kill someone, even the jury are no individuals.

I think that murdering Richard parker is a not morally ok , as the other sailors should accept their own fate , it isn't an excuse for them to turn to cannibalism , as Richard Parker was in a defenceless state , and although they said he will not be grieved by his friends , the captain and the first mate went into jail after that incident and will probably be their for the rest of their live , and it wouldn't really be worth to just kill someone just to get locked up

In a situation where everyone needs to survive I think it is possible that people might have a thought of murdering someone to survive. These cases are extremely relevant and also revealing the true morality of human nature. As Richard Parker is a close friend to the rest of the sailors, i believe that it would be possible but not most likely agreeable to what they are trying to do.

Yes. Saving 4 life is with 1 life is better than having 5 life flow away

No, because his fate was decided by someone else, and he could not object the decision due to his physical state. The whole situation was unfair to him. Meanwhile, the rest of the crew can wait until Parker died from illness and then eating his body. In this case, I think it would be fair to Parker's life and will.

No, it was not okay to murder Richard Parker to keep the other sailors alive. By doing so, it was an act of manslaughter. One of the defense's arguments was that the death of Parker had less of an impact on society than the other sailors and deprived no one of support, for Parker was an orphan, and other sailors had families - wives and children to tend to. However, this argument is completely ignoring the fact that Parker had friends - we do not know whether Parker's friends had depended on him in any way. Aside from this, I do not believe it is acceptable to place a value on life - especially not in the case where the value of life depends on the person's relations with others.

The other argument by the defense, and labeled as the strongest argument by the defense, states that "given the dire circumstances, it would have been necessary to kill one to save three." Parker had no say in whether he wanted to live, he had simply been killed. This again poses the question of whether a value can be placed on life - if not (as I believe), it was not okay to murder Richard Parker: Dudley obviously, from the reading, had singled out Parker and had decided his fate; there was no discussion, for Dudley had decided Parker's life was less valuable than his, and the other two sailors.

Yes, because he dooms to die previous to all the other three people. It is essential for the rest of the sailors to eat his body afterwards. Killing him immediately may also decrease the pain of organ damage before his natural death.

It is ok to murder Richard Parker as killing one would help the other three to survive. Since Parker is ill and he appears to be dying, he is the only choice. Although murdering is a crime, there are exceptions.

It wasn't ok for the members to commit the murder of Richard Parker. Although I personally agree that in some situation, killing a person can be ethical, but I don't think it should be done without informing the victim. The only acceptable scenario for killing a person in my opinion is that the person would need to either be threatening someone's life or having him or her to agree that they would sacrifice for a greater good. Linking back to the lifeboat scenario, it is not acceptable for the other crew member to kill Parker since they haven't gained consent from Parker. On top of that, they did the murder for their own survival, lacking a "greater cost" to justify their action. In which they might have been able to wait for Parker's death to eat him since he is ill and likely to die soon anyway.

I think that it is ok, as Richard Parker was about to die anyways, and if they didn't sacrifice anyone, they would all die. In addition, killing him would affect a lot less people than if they decided to kill anyone else.

To some extent yes, because killing one person to keep 3 people alive is clearly the right thing to do number wise. But the way they chose the victim is what is most morally and ethically wrong about this scenario. It was mentioned that the first 3 survivors were mentioned to be all men of excellent character, from this we could see that there are a difference in classes between the first 3 sailors and the cabin boy, as they are even introduced in separate paragraphs. Although they first thought of a fair way to draw straws to choose who sacrifices, in the end they resulted in choosing the cabin boy to sacrifice and to some extent it was due to the social class difference between the characters, although it was never mentioned. Furthermore I feel like it is hard to measure morality and what is and what isn't ethical. Therefore in their scenario I would believe that they felt like they had no choice but to murder richard parker.

Explain how Utilitarianism can be applied to the lifeboat scenario?

(12 responses)

Killing Richard Parker to benefit the other sailors is an example of utilitarianism. The main idea of utilitarianism is simply stated and intuitively appealing: The highest principle of morality is to maximize happiness, the overall balance of pleasure over pain. By killing Richard Parker, other sailors are satisfied with minimal pain.

The life of richard parker is less valuable, less important than the sailor's

Utilitarianism is applied when the captain and the first mate killed Richard parker in order for them to survive , where the captain and the first mate made a decision out of their best interest in where killing Richard Parker and feasting on his corpse would allow them to survive a few more days.

Utilitarianism is a theory in normative ethics holding that the best moral action is the one that maximizes utility. Utility is defined in various ways, but is usually related to the well-being of sentient entities. Utilitarianism fails to respect the rights of individuals. By caring only for the satisfactions of the community, it can do so at the expense of individual human beings. For Utilitarians, individuals only matter in the sense that each person's utility should be calculated along with everyone else's equally to achieve the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest amount of people. Applying this form of logic, however, would justify ways of treating people

without a sense of decency and respect. As explaining the definition of this word, it is more applicable to have impact in the lifeboat scenario because of how the benefit or goods come to one person, people would be selfish and they would only start thinking of themselves due to this type of situation the lifeboat scenario fits the best of having murders happened, which they only cared for themselves.

Although killing is illegal, but now because the situation is not going to end well too if they all die, where the most people will be happy in this situation. So killing is right in this situation.

Utilitarianism is about a person sacrificing something and it is for the greater good. Richard Parker was decided by the Captain, that Parker's life would save the rest of the crew.

Utilitarianism states that "the highest principle of morality is to maximize happiness, the overall balance of pleasure over pain". Happiness equates to living and surviving in the lifeboat scenario, and killing Parker would have meant less suffering for the other sailors, and more pleasure, for they would have been able to live and feed.

The boy has the least happiness to stay alive as he is likely the first to die and he feels the worst among all. He is an orphan and has no dependents, so his death brings about the least side-effects to other people. So, his death has the lowest cost for himself and for the society, so the cost is minimized by killing him.

Dudley murdered Parker to feed on the body and blood of him with the other two men. It is an utilitarianism, as I had mentioned above, murdering is a crime but if killing someone who appears to die soon would save the rest of the people, it would be ok.

Utilitarianism is applied to the scenario by how the sacrifice of Richard Parker can save three full-grown men. In the scenario, we are presented with an ill young man with no family members in the world. The other crew members have wife and children as stated in text and they know the meat from Richard Parker would allow them to survive possibly until rescue come. As the concept of utilitarianism is to "maximize happiness", the "happiness" in the scenario of which Richard Parker is killed and treated as a source of food would allow the three men feel happy. The fact that Richard Parker is an orphan also adds value into the point that no one would be unhappy. Therefore in the scope of utilitarianism, killing Richard Parker would be the best and most ethical choice as the happiness of the three men outweighs Parker.

Utilitarianism can be applied, as they are sacrificing Richard Parker for the greater good for more people, as all of the other sailors have families and friends, meaning that their deaths would affect a lot more people than Richard Parker's life.

In this scenario speaking utilitarianism wise, would actually make the scenario morally right, as the consequences of the situation did not create any adverse effects, and seeing that the cabin boy is in a lower social class and apparently less of an excellent character, he should be the one that is murdered is utilitarianism is applied because he creates the least consequences.

What do you think of Bentham's plans to 'round up beggars'?

(12 responses)

I think it is a great idea. This idea can improve "pauper management" by establishing a self-financing workhouse for the poor. The plan can reduce the presence of beggars on the streets. Less beggars on streets can make the society better looking.

Totally unfair to the beggars, he simply indicating that the life, the happiness of a beggar should be

ignored. Beggars are still human, however, Bentham treat view them as an animal first, then a money maker (labour force). He aim to promote general benefit, through eliminating small, individuals benefits.

To an extent I do agree on what he is doing , by removing the beggars it would benefit the public and increase the happiness but some beggars would be miserable , some beggars being miserable is something that is inevitable , as the majority would be much happier . However at the same time they should have given a choice to the beggars whether they want to go in the workhouses or continues to stay on the streets .

Bentham proposed plans to improve what he called "pauper management" by creating a self-financing workhouse for poor people. His plan, which was a plan that would reduce the presence of beggars on the streets, offers a clear illustration of how immoral Utilitarianism is. Bentham noticed that while people encountered beggars and the like on the streets, it affected the happiness of the passerby in two ways. "For the passionate souls, the sight of a beggar produces the pain of sympathy; for hardhearted folk, it generates the pain of disgust." Both ways reduced total utility of the general public. Bentham then proposed that they should round up all of the beggars and lock them away in a workhouse. He was sure to acknowledge the utility of the beggars that were rounded up (some would be happy working and some would prefer to keep begging), but he concludes that "the pains suffered by the public is greater than whatever unhappiness is felt by beggars hauled off to the workhouse."

Work with no paying?? Nope. I rather go work at mcdonald or some other funny places than work at those something house.

It is true that the beggars can have the chance to support their own living. This increases the self-esteem of the beggars. However, except the workplace, they go nowhere to settle and basically they are locked forever and unable to pursue their goals in other places. It is a great idea for settling the beggars but it is only temporarily.

I disagree with Bentham's plans, and believe it to be unfair to the beggars. Bentham assumes that the majority would be people other than the beggars in this case; where the reading does not provide any statistics.

I also don't think it is very fair to the beggars who have no say in what they do, being confined to a workhouse. After all, it was not in their plans to become a beggar in the first place, and I doubt only working in a workhouse would be any easier than becoming a beggar, for it is not stated what work the beggar will have to do.

To add to the unfairness, there is a reward for turning in beggars to the workhouse, 20 shillings, to be paid by the beggar's work. It is unfair to the beggars that they are working not only for themselves, but also to pay for others, especially when it is a reward for turning them in - something they may not agreed to in the first place.

He points out the cost of maintaining the beggars in the street, he says that the bad social external features and people's pain raised from seeing the pathetic people are the underlying cost for the society. He points out a workhouse can create the same benefits for beggars as they are still able to feed themselves upon their works. He points out the costs in the scenario of rounding up baggers, which are beggars' bad feelings of being apprehended, so he proposes the remedy to them in terms of money. I think it is good for the society as long as the beggars can also receive greater benefits in the scenario into the long run. If the workhouse creates a place for potential social unrest due to the deteriorated bagger's condition, the cost is obviously going to be larger.

I don't think it is a good idea because it is unfair to the beggars as they will have no freedom and it is too harsh for them.

I don't think it is a good system for the beggars or even society as a whole. This is because

reasons of becoming a beggar are not often due to the lack ability to work, but instead lack the fortune and opportunity to work. Not all beggars necessary have no education or ability to work effectively, but due to a sudden misfortune, they might not be able to pick up their life in a short period of time. If we follow the 'round out beggars' system, yes, we can deal with the problems of beggar. But that would also mean beggar would be forced to work for the sake of work and no longer have the chance to return to society and contribute for a greater good. In my opinion, the happiness of the normal resident not seeing the beggars are a lot less compared with the happiness it would create by the beggar getting back in the society and actually playing their part to help the world their way.

I don't think that it isn't an ethical idea, as it separates society into classes without giving them the option to climb up the social ladder, forever condemning them to the bottom of society.

The plans of Bentham idea of utilitarianism, believed that happiness and pleasure is utility and we are all governed by our emotions. To a certain extent he is correct but his plans to round up beggars and providing harsh conditions even when the beggars are already in a somewhat horrible position. Is morally unethical, because it will create certain amount of consequences therefore contradicts with his own philosophy.

Can you think of any objections to Utilitarianism as an ethical system?

(12 responses)

It lacks ethical depth. It reduces values to facts. It is also very subjective.

I think it is quite subjective, how to define happiness? who should be defining and deciding when it comes to a decision making.

I do think that one of the main objections I could think of would be that Utilitarianism is more towards a positive side as within the context of the lifeboat situation we see the captain , first mate surviving but however at the end they got arrested , at the time he most likely didn't consider the any bad consequences like after eating Richard parker , there was still no boat in sight , most times the future possibilities are more towards positive then negative .

It lacks ethical depth and it reduces values to facts. It is also doing for the maximize utility, pleasure, happiness. About humans rights, justice, truth telling. Utilitarianism often collides with deontology

It's subjective. Happiness can be a slippery concept. What causes, say, authentic happiness versus false happiness. Might self-sacrifice, pain and suffering ultimately contribute to happiness. It's too simplistic.

What if I'm not happy but everyone is happy? I'm not ok with that.

What about bullying. (If I'm not the one that get bullied than it's alright for me)

Utilitarianism focuses on maximising the benefits of the bigger group. In this case, it often creates decisions that is cruel to the smaller group. To the smaller group, it is unfair to them and their basic human rights was taken by the bigger group. It is quite unethical for a system to make such kind of decisions. The system should follow the principle of fairness, instead of maximising benefits.

For example, in the final scene of "The Dark Knight". Two bombs were placed on two separate boats. One boat carries civilians and the other one carries criminals. Both boats have the trigger to blow up the other boat, deciding the fate of the people. Some of the civilians suggest that they

should blow up the criminal boat, because they are merely criminals! If criminals survive, the society will be ruined and destroying the benefits of the bigger group—Civilians. As one can see, the civilians ignore the criminals and decide to aim for maximising benefits. This is unfair to the criminals, who deserve a second chance and a start over.

The highest principle of morality in Utilitarianism states that it is to "maximize happiness, and the overall balance of pleasure over pain", where happiness and pleasure is felt by the majority. This poses many ethical dilemmas, where Utilitarianism only takes into the account of the majority and not individuals; certain individuals' opinions and feelings would be ignored.

Besides this, it cannot be ignored that there is no single way to measure happiness. It will thus be hard to ensure the overall balance of pleasure over pain, for there is no single, universal measurement for happiness or pain; the way of maximizing happiness is to presume there will be more pleasure than pain, and not that both will be equal or the other way around.

It's difficult to calculate the social costs and benefits of an action. Benefits and costs are changing incessantly all the time and it's difficult for us to tell, especially when the consequences are to be considered in the long run. For example, it maybe beneficial for government to possess more authority during social hardship or economical recession, but the potential to develop dictatorship makes war more possible. The case of Nazi Germany is a good example. It is notable that the social well-being improved tremendously within Germany after Hitler came to power. Last but not least, people are largely self-centered, in the lifeboat example, the three people are less likely to consider the social well-being when confronted with the problem of killing the boy or not.

There will be lack of religious sensibility, utilitarianism never think about that and they are largely irrelevant a a guide to behaviour.

An argument that can be posted to utilitarianism is the definition of utilitarianism and the definition of ethics. Ethics refers to doing the right thing, making the right judgment in complicated situation. In the principle of utilitarianism, we seek the maximize happiness and the best result out of the worse situation. This is a very rational and formalised way to make judgment during situation. As an ethical system, this can indeed lead to a result with factually the best outcome. But when we look at it in an emotional, a more humane way, it might not necessarily lead to the best result. Using the crew case, the utilitarianism result is to kill Richard Parker for the survival of the other three. But if we look at it as an act human would do, we would not consider cannibalism after murdering a living person ethical even under extreme circumstances. If we look on it only on the outcome, utilitarianism may give you the best result, but there might not be an ethical process through the way of achieving the most ethical ending.

One objection could be that it takes everyone's control of their lives out of their hands, meaning that you have would have no right over your own life and decisions, as it is all determine by the system.

i think ethics and the ethical system is a much more complicated matter than we normally think they are. First of all I think the idea of utilitarianism is reductionist and don't consider every aspect of ethics, and as result only base morality and ethics on consequences and pleasure. I dont think we should base our ethical system on pleasure because humans has personal emotions and thoughts which vary from one another. Therefore there may be any personal agendas and disagreements towards different people's perspective towards pleasure.
