Reading Reflection 2

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In this analytical essay, we will analyze the categorical imperative introduced by Immanuel Kant and will compare it with the ethical theory of utilitarianism presented by Mill. Immanuel Kant is the 18th-century philosopher and is one of the most important scholars of deontological or duty-based ethics. Deontological ethics are based on the idea regarding which choices are morally forbidden, permitted, or required. The ethical framework of Kant's philosophy is organized around the idea of 'categorical imperative.' Categorical imperative states that humanity in others must always be respected, and one should not act but in accordance with the rules that are applicable and could hold for everyone.

According to Kant, ‘goodwill’ is only one thing valuable and is able to add value to any action. The only way to possess moral worth and make an action praiseworthy is through goodwill. That goodwill, which results in good or bad results, is totally based on reason and has nothing to do with emotions. We can acquire knowledge of morality only by dint of reason and emotional thinking while staying away from desires as far as possible (Shafer-Landau, 2018). The rightness of an action is dependent on its maxim on which it is performed. If the maxim is true and is in accordance with ethical principles, the consequences of that action have no impact on the status of moral action.

Mill’s ethical theory is the contrast of Kantian ethics. The idea of utilitarianism is based on the consequences of the actions. The actions are considered ethical and right in proportion if they tend to promote happiness and considered wrong if they tend to promote otherwise. The general theme of utilitarianism is often described as a greater benefit or pleasure for a more significant number of people. According to Mill, happiness is characterized as the satisfaction of desires, peaceful and detached existence, and the presence of pleasure and absence of pain. What we learn in this comparative essay is the conclusion that the Kant’s ethical theory or the idea of the categorical imperative is the exact opposite to that of utilitarianism as is is not based on consequences of an action rather on duty based principles. Both of these ethical theories are needed to be analyzed for suggestions for further studies to determine which theory best suits the modern civilization.

References

Shafer-Landau, R. (2018). The justification of morality. In *morality* (pp. 109-120). Routledge.