

The death penalty is a highly controversial issue in today's society and is often questioned as to whether or not it is morally permissible. I will be discussing the pros and cons of the death penalty and providing John Stuart Mill's theory of utilitarianism and how it reflects the argument supporting this issue. In addition, I will include my opinion on the subject matter and the supporting arguments to back up my beliefs.

Those who support the death penalty, or capital punishment, may argue that it is morally permissible and extremely beneficial because it protects victims' justice, is a more cost effective alternative, and is a powerful warning for future crimes. When a criminal gets arrested, tried, and sent to prison for committing a murder, the victim's family and friends are also strongly affected. As they grieve over their loved one, executing the criminal may not end their grief but it can give them closure and assurance that the one who committed the murder can no longer do this to anyone else. They may feel at peace and a sense of justice knowing that the perpetrator cannot cause any more harm.

Another reason why someone may support the death penalty is because it is a lot cheaper than incarceration. The costs for life without parole cases are extremely higher than execution. According to a criminal justice improvement organization, Justice For All, it can cost \$1.2 million to \$3.6 million more for life without parole expenses than capital punishment cases. Each year, the funds for incarceration is estimated \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year for each prisoner. In addition, it will cost even more to pay for those prisoners who spend decades or even life in prison.

Furthermore, capital punishment is a method to help prevent future crimes. One of the best ways to convince someone not to do a certain act is to demonstrate the fear of the

ramifications of his conduct. When people realize that a death sentence is a possible consequence for their actions, it can stop them from doing terrible deeds. For example, for someone who is plotting to murder or committing genocide, a life sentence in jail still may not be enough to stop them from doing this act. However, when they become aware that the death penalty may be one of their punishments, they may not go through with the crime.

According to Mill's theory of utilitarianism, an action is morally permissible if the consequences of that action gives the most amount of happiness to the greatest amount of people. He focuses on the consequences of an action rather than the action in itself. Mill's principle of utility takes into consideration everyone's happiness and believes that it is the best decision for happiness to be dispersed among many people. He states that the goal of each action is to generate "the greatest happiness for the greatest number." By analyzing Mill's beliefs, it seems that the death penalty would be morally permissible if the consequences of executing someone will bring the highest quality of happiness multiplied by the sum of people.

In contrast, those who are against the death penalty may argue that it is immoral because there is a possibility that someone who is innocent may be executed, it does not teach the condemned anything, and that it is cruel and hypocritical. Some people may believe that a capital punishment should be banned because of the possibility of the innocent being confronted with wrongful execution. It has happened in the past with other victims and can cause a loss of faith in justice. Therefore, the death penalty should not be legalized to avoid such possibilities.

Furthermore, another argument against execution is that it doesn't teach the perpetrator a lesson. The purpose of a punishment is so that the person who has done a bad deed can learn from their mistakes. If a person is killed, there is no way they can learn from it if they are already dead. They are better off in prison where they are deprived of their freedom and rights,

which can give them time to think about their actions that sent them to jail in the first place, and to never want to commit the crime again. Thus, the death penalty should not be an option because a person can not change for the better if they are no longer alive to do so.

Lastly, capital punishment is cruel and hypocritical. It is ironic that a country who condemns murder does the exact same act. By making the death penalty legal, we are advocating the right of life by taking life away from other people. If the justice system agrees to not take part in executions, it can teach people that killing is something they also should not do.

For me, I agree with Mill's Principle of Utility when it comes to the death penalty. I do believe that the death penalty is morally permissible and should be legal in all states. I think the pros outweigh the cons and that it can produce the greatest amount of happiness to more people. As long as the person being sentenced to death row is one hundred percent, without a doubt guilty, and the crimes they have committed are extremely gruesome and terrible, execution would be a better alternative than being sentenced to life in prison. The family and friends of the victims would have closure and have peace knowing that this criminal is gone. They don't have to live every day knowing that this person is still alive and can possibly do the same crimes to other people. Overall, it is also more cost effective. I think it's completely ridiculous that government funds and the hard-earned money that taxpayers pay are being used to run prisons for criminals who have done cruel and unforgivable crimes in society. Lastly, it can be a warning to those who may commit crimes and murders in the future if they know this can be a possible punishment for them. It can help lower crime rates and cause people to fear the consequences in their actions, preventing conspirators from going through with terrible deeds. Overall, I do support the death penalty and believe that it is morally permissible as long as the perpetrator is one hundred percent guilty and is a threat to society.

Meta-ethics Analysis

Alfred Jules Ayer was a philosopher who advocated logical positivism and believed that ethical claims are non-verifiable. He believes that moral statements like “killing is bad” or “donating to charity is good” are not true or false, but insignificant. They are merely commands. It is the equivalent to saying “do not kill” or “donate to charity”. When someone makes a moral claim, they are just giving their approval or disapproval of something. Thus, if we looked at the death penalty through Ayer’s perspective, because he believes that moral claims are conclusively unanalyzable, the death penalty is neither good nor bad. He would conclude that the statement “the death penalty is morally permissible” cannot be verified or proven true or false.

Works Cited

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