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Humes 103

Professor Bory

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Annotation Assignment

Measuring Justice

Through a close reading of Jermy Bentham's *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* I realized the importance of quantifying pleasure and pain and how this concept could help communities serve true justice.

A pattern I noticed in my annotations was considering format choices, underlining significant verbs, and highlighting phrases that connect to pain and pleasure and the fact that each can be measured. Bentham chooses to italicize terms that are central to understanding his principles including: *pain*, *pleasure*, *principle of utility*, *body*, and *members*. I was drawn to these words as a reader because of the italics, and realizing that they were key terms allowed me to think more about these concepts when reading. Understanding the basis for an argument helps me to think deeper on the relevance of the theory to my life. I also noticed that I underlined similar verbs such as: augment, diminish, promote, and oppose. These verbs were used to describe the effects that an action could have on one's happiness. I choose to underline these verbs because they support a concept that I have trouble grappling with: that happiness is measurable. Additionally, I highlighted sentences that mentioned community, specifically the interest and happiness of a community. When I consider the principle of utility with respect to a community the applicability of the theory is more apparent. The principle of utility can be understood as a way to better communities, rather than a set of moral instructions to follow.

When Bentham asserts that pain and pleasure are measurable he establishes a simple way to consider what actions are the best for an individual or a community. Annotating the text helped me to understand this concept on a deeper level and consider how the principle of utility could be useful when discussing issues of justice. Thinking of justice within the parameters of the principle of utility would help communities decide on the best ways to deliver justice.

If it is possible to quantify pain and pleasure then consequently it should be possible to determine how much pain was caused by an injustice, thus measuring how great an injustice against an individual or community was. Therefore, to repair the damage that has been done, the original balance of pleasure and pain must be restored. When thinking about justice one can consider how much pleasure must be given back to an individual or community. Though it may not be possible to completely make up for an injustice, attempting to maximize justice in terms of pleasure is more beneficial than causing more pain to balance out the scales. Thinking of concepts like justice as something quantifiable is key to finding true justice.

Bibliography

Bentham, J. (2007). *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Dover Publications.