

Utilitarianism and Feminism

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First of all, utilitarianism as Jeremy Bentham stated “the highest principle of morality is the maximize happiness, the overall balance of pleasure over pain”. It is a doctrine to guide our behavior in order to increase happiness and/or decrease pain and suffering for a community, which is the sum of its individual.

By attending a few talks and workshops related to feminism, I recognized the presence of a utilitarian approach to convince the audience about the importance of equality between men and women. For example, an increase in the percentage of women in the workplace will increase the national GDP. I am for sure an advocate for man/women equality; however, I think this utilitarian approach toward feminism can backfire. So, it important to shed light on some objections toward feminism in order to come up with a more efficient strategy.

The first point is that women's rights achieve their legitimacy intrinsically and not extrinsically. This means that the acceptance and implementation of women's rights because they are “rights” rather than the benefits the society reaps by encouraging women to work, open their own business, and so on. Suppose that the percentage of women is 30% of the overall population, so women will contribute less to the wellbeing of their community. Then, do women deserve fewer rights in this 30%-women society? Also, a good strategy to propagate the legitimacy of women's rights through generation is to present scenarios in classes where the percentage of women and

men are different, and then ask students/audience if there is a change in women rights whether an increase or decrease depending on the specific scenario.

The second point is that the utilitarian approach relies on cost-benefit analysis where costs and benefits are calculated to get a positive or negative result. This analysis requires to assign a specific value for the calculation to become feasible, and value assignment is to some extent subjective rather than objective. When assigning a subjective value for human behavior, the cost-benefit analysis can contribute to feminism or fire back depending on the intention of the person doing the calculation. Suppose that after some sophisticated calculations (this is an imagined scenario), an economist stated that women's participation in the workplace per family equals to 20\$ on average per day. This statement can encourage a feminist individual to believe more in feminism because it is reflected as an increase in life status by increase the family income. However, an anti-feminist individual can assume that women staying at home and not participating in the workplace hold more value than 20\$, so women at home have more utility than women at the workplace for an anti-feminist.

The third point is that some anti-feminist reject feminism from a religious, dogmatic, and ideological perspective rather than a utilitarian perspective. Utilitarianism is consequential; it is about the consequence of an act or behavior. However, some religions, dogmas, and ideology (RDI) are categorical with classifications regardless of the consequences. Then, if his/her RDI states that women have no right to lead the society such as appointing women as a judge or president is prohibited. Then, regardless of the evidence you bring to prove how man leaders cause and still causing wars, destruction, and bad choices which diminish the overall utility of the earth for a long period, these anti-feminists most probably reject substituting men with

women even in half the position because of a category or verse that states: “Woman cannot lead”.

In conclusion, utilitarianism is potentially able to propagate feminism. However, feminism must be propagated through more than one approach, and any feminist should always remind their right are right in itself regardless of the consequences.