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5-3-1 Assignment for Hollinger Chapter 1

Questions:

1. According to consequentialist, an act is considered good or bad based on what criteria?
2. Which ancient greek philosopher laid the foundation for ethical egoism by defining personal pleasure as the highest good and main goal of life?
3. What does Hollinger consider the basic problem with a deontological approach to ethics?
4. According to principal ethics, a moral obligation can be put on hold or ignored under what circumstances?
5. Hollinger contends that a significant practical problem for utilitarianism is that it makes what assumption regarding a given action?

Answers

1. The degree to which the action produces "good" consequences.
2. Epicurus (341 - 270 BCE)
3. Its tendency to make principles themselves the end of the moral life rather than God's glory.
4. Only when another principle or rule supersedes it.
5. Utilitarianism assumes that we can objectively weigh the consequences of a given action.

Terms

Objectivism: philosophy out forth by Ayn Rand, a form of ethical egoism that holds that society functions best when individuals pursue their own self-interests.
Utilitarianism: a form of consequentialist ethics that contends that the moral good is determined by the greatest good for the greatest number of people.
Deontological ethics: a position on ethics that maintains that actions are inherently right or inherently wrong regardless of consequences.

Summary:

In this chapter, Hollinger examines two traditional approaches to ethics, consequentialist ethics (results determine what is right) and principle ethics (actions are inherently right or wrong). Hollinger evaluates these two schools of thought, highlighting the consequentialist forms (ethical egoism, utilitarianism) as well as the thinkers that made significant contributions to each position. In his evaluation of principle ethics, Hollinger shows Christian ethics is in agreement that actions have inherent moral value. He discusses various Christian approaches to ethics (Kingdom, agape love, etc.) concluding that neither consequentialist nor principle ethics can provide a suitable, complete, and biblical foundation for sustaining the moral life.