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TH604.OA

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“Consequences vs. Principles in Ethics” (5-3-1)

Questions

1. **What is the difference between consequentialism and principle ethics?** The difference between consequentialism and principle ethics is that one utilizes results, whereas the other utilizes guidelines, for the basis of its approach to ethics.
2. **Name one of the challenges, as outlined by philosopher J. Budziszweski, of utilitarianism.** One of the challenges of utilitarianism that Budziszweski outlined is being able to calculate the net gain or loss for each person through a utilitarian approach to ethics.
3. **How does Hollinger believe that humans can best fulfill what God intended?** Hollinger believes that humans can best fulfill what God intended through a dependence on God and interdependence with other human beings. He adds that Genesis 2:18 is an indication of one’s need for others as much as it is an affirmation of marriage.
4. **What does the author identify as a basic problem with a deontological approach to ethics?** The basic problem, as described by the author, with a deontological approach to ethics is its tendency to make principles the end of the moral life rather than God and divine glory.

5. **What ethical approach did Socrates employ when he decided to forego his friends' offer to help him escape from prison?** When Socrates decided to forego his friends' offer to help him escape from prison, he did so on the grounds of principle ethics.

Vocabulary

- **Teleological ethics:** another word for consequentialism or an ethic of consequences
- **Deontological ethics:** another word for the principle approach to ethics or an ethic of principles
- **Ethical egoism:** the belief that one ought to do what will produce one's own highest good, as determined by the amount of pleasure or happiness received from the action

Summary

The first chapter of Dennis P. Hollinger's 'Choosing the Good' compares the main differences between an ethic of consequences and an ethic of principles. In doing so, Hollinger invests considerable time defining both approaches before explaining some of their perceived benefits and unavoidable drawbacks. An ethic of consequences, or consequentialism, is results-based. In other words, right or wrong is determined by what produces the best results. Meanwhile, an ethic of principles adheres to a set of guidelines to evaluate the difference between what is considered right and what is considered wrong. Hollinger provides a brief history of how these schools of thought were established and have maintained influence over time. Still, in the end, Hollinger points out that neither approach is entirely satisfying from a Christian perspective, nor adequate to meet the needs of a "complex, secular, and pluralistic world."