UNIT 9: UTILITARIANISM: BENTHAM AND MILL

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9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- discuss utilitarianism as a standard of morality.
- explain Jeremy Bentham's idea of Utilitarianism
- describe the basic points of Bentham's moral philosophy
- explain the critical comments on Bentham's moral philosophy.
- explain Mill's idea of Utilitarianism
- describe the basic points of Mill's moral philosophy
- analyse why Mill's moral philosophy is called as refined utilitarianism.
- explain how Mill's Utilitarianism differ from that of Bentham's Utilitarianism.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces to you Bentham's theory of morality. Ethics is primarily concerned with moral judgements. But it is evident that moral judgement presupposes a standard or norm or ideal with reference to which an action is judged to be right or wrong. The actions which are conductive to proposed moral ideal are good or right, and those that do not conform to the moral ideal are wrong or bad. There are different theories regarding the nature of the ultimate moral standard. The two prominent moral theories are: teleological theories and deontological theories. Teleological theories are concerned with the consequences of an action that is rightness or wrongness of our action depends on the good or evil generated. On the other hand deontological theories emphasises on the relationship between duty and the morality of human action

Utilitarianism is a powerful approach to normative ethics. This theory holds that the consequences of any action are considered as the standard of morality and as such it belongs to the teleological theory of obligation. According to this theory of morality, the ultimate end is the greatest general good. Utilitarianism holds that an action is right or obligatory if and only if it produces a greater balance of good over evil in the universe as a whole. Thus, Utilitarianism appeals to the 'principle of utility' for passing moral judgement.

This unit also introduces to you John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism. Mill developed and refined Bentham's quantitative utilitarianism. Like Bentham, Mill accepts hedonism and states pleasure is the proper 'end' of all actions. But unlike Bentham, Mill says that pleasures differ in quality as well as in quantity. The highest good, according to Mill, lies in the enjoyment of noble, dignified, and elevated pleasures, even though these are of small intensity and duration. Hence, his doctrine is called Refined Utilitarianism as contrasted with Bentham's Gross Utilitarianism. Mill utilitarianism explicitly states that the standard of morality is not the agent's own happiness but happiness in general.

Mill advocated rule-utilitarianism. Rule-Utilitarianism emphasises the centrality of rules in morality and insists that rightness or wrongness of an act depends upon its conformity to a rule. He tried to meet up the criticisms against utilitarianism raised by the opponent particularly the criticism like utilitarianism is 'a doctrine worthy only of swine'.

9.3 UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarianism is a theory about what we ought to do. It states that the best action is the one that maximizes utility. "Utility" is defined in various ways, usually in terms of the well-being of sentient entities, such as human beings. Though there are many varieties of Utilitarianism, generally it asserts the view that morally right actions are those that provide greatest possible balance of good over evil for the majority of people. That means right action is one that produces the most good. Thus, it appeals to the 'principle of utility' to tell what is right or obligatory.

Utilitarianism is a certain kind of teleological theory of obligation. So, it is a powerful approach to normative ethics. Utilitarianism is mainly concerned with the question, "What ought a person to do?" The answer is that a person ought to act so as to produce the best consequences possible. As such it maintains that the rightness or wrongness of an action depends upon the consequences. In assessing the consequences utilitarianism relies upon some theory of intrinsic value i.e. Something is held to be good in itself, apart from further consequences.

Utilitarianism is distinguished from egoism with regard to the scope of the relevant consequences produced by an act. On the utilitarian view one ought to maximize the overall good - that is, consider the good of others as well as one's own good but egoism does not take other people seriously. Unlike egoism, utilitarianism considers all interests equally.

Utilitarianism eliminates the possible conflicts of the basic principles of ethical egoism and deontological theories. Deontological theories take other people seriously but do not take the promotion of good seriously. On

the other hand egoism takes the promotion of good seriously but does not take other people seriously. But utilitarianism remedies both of these defects at once.

Utilitarianism also differs from ethical theories that make the rightness or wrongness of an act dependent upon the motive of the agent, for, according to the utilitarian, it is possible for the right thing to be done from a bad motive.

Some utilitarians are hedonists. They equate good with pleasure. For example, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill have usually been hedonists in their view about what is good. They identify good with pleasure and asserts the view that moral end is the greatest balance of pleasure over pain. But some utilitarian are not hedonists, for example, G.E. Moore and Hasting Rashdall. They have been called 'Ideal' utilitarian.

9.4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarianism has its origin in the ancient Greek Philosophy. But the tradition of utilitarianism properly begins with Bentham, and has included John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick, R. M. Hare and Peter Singer.

A hedonistic theory of the value of life is found in the early 5th century B.C. in the ethical teachings of Aristippus of Cyrene, founder of the Cyrenaic school and a century later in that of Epicurus and their followers in ancient Greece. Aristippus and Epicurus advocated Egoistic Hedonism. According to them, the only good of life is the individual's own pleasure i.e. every person ought to seek his own greatest pleasure.

The seeds of ethical universalism are found in the doctrines of the rival ethical school of Stoicism and in Christianity. Other significant dimensions of the theory can be traced to the 17th century writings of Hobbes, Locke and Richard Cumberland. Some historians have identified Bishop Richard Cumberland, as the first to have a utilitarian philosophy. A generation later, however, Francis Hutcheson, a British "moral sense" theorist, more

clearly held a utilitarian view. Hutcheson first spoke of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers' as a principle of moral conduct in An Inquiry Concerning the Original of our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good (1725). Bentham read David Hume's Treatise of Human Nature and from him Bentham learnt that moral philosophy, like natural science, must begin with empirical observation and the techniques of the one were equally applicable in other and he also learnt from Hume to equate virtue with utility. Of course, Bentham was not entirely satisfied with Hume's moral philosophy because Hume explained moral judgement in terms of 'moral sentiments'.

Bentham in his first product A Fragment on Government critically analysed English law and set the new foundation of the principle of utility. In this book, Bentham first stated the 'fundamental axiom' that 'it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right or wrong'.

Bentham's major work of his early period is An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (1789). In this work he clarifies the basic concepts of his utilitarian philosophy. The early chapters make it clear that utility is the operative principle upon which all else is based. Subsequent chapters explain the incricacies of human motivation, consequences of actions, classification of offences and elements of appropriate laws and punishments. Later on, Sidgwick gives the definition of Utilitarianism in his The Methods of Ethics in a precise way. He says, "By utilitarianism is here meant the ethical theory that the conduct which, under any given circumstances, is objectively right, is that which will produce the greatest amount of happiness on the whole; that is, taking into account all whose happiness is affected by the conduct. "

Let us discuss Bentham's utilitarianism in the subsequent paragraphs.

9.5 BENTHAM AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

Jeremy Bentham was an English philosopher. He was born on 15 February 1748 and died on 6 June 1832. He was the elder son of an attorney, Jeremiah Bentham and his wife, Alicia Whitehorn. He entered Queen's

College, Oxford, at the age 12 and after graduation entered Lincoln's Inn to study law. He was admitted to the bar in 1767 but never practiced. He spent his life writing, advocating changes along utilitarian lines of the whole legal system.

From Bentham's early writings, it is known that he was from the first an empiricist. He held that all knowledge is derived from sensation. In the seventeenth century empiricism had been appropriated to serve the needs of physical science. Bentham also claimed that the science of legislation ought to be built on the same immovable basis of sensation and experience as that of medicine. The basis of both sciences is observation of the human nature.

Bentham rejected all forms of idealism in philosophy, and he held that there were no rational grounds which compelled belief in a God. He insisted that existence is a purely material phenomenon. As matter is quantifiable in mathematical terms, this principle is extended to the pleasures and pains that we experience.

The focus on human action and the pleasures and pains that motivate action constituted the psychological foundation of Bentham's utilitarianism. As a psychological hedonist, he holds that pleasures and pains determine what we do. The questions of utility, according to him lie at the heart of all that an individual seeks to do.

3.6 EUDAIMONIA AND FUNCTION

Universalistic hedonism or Altruism is the theory that what we ought to aim at is the greatest possible amount of pleasure of all human beings. According to this theory 'the greatest happiness of thegreatest number' is the ultimate moral standard. This theory encompasses two essential elements: (1) the rightness or wrongness of an action is determined by the goodness of its consequences; (2) the only thing that is good in itself is pleasure and the only thing bad in itself is pain, and happiness is the aggregate of pleasures over pains. The chief exponents of this theory are

Jeremy Bentham, J.S. Mill and Henry Sidgwick. According to this theory, whatever the good and the bad are, they are capable of being measured. Bentham has recognised this most explicitly and thus he believes in hedonic calculus of pleasures and pains using seven dimensions of value: intensity, duration, proximity, certainty, purity, fecundity and extent. But Mill has introduced quality as well quantity into the evaluation of pleasures.

9.7 BENTHAM'S VIEW OF UTILITARIANISM

Bentham, in his major work An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (IPML) introduced the notion of utility as a 'principle' and argued that as a first principle used to establish everything else. The principle of utility simply means usefulness, coming from the Latin word utilis meaning 'useful'. Bentham says that 'by utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good or happiness or to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil or unhappiness'. The key point is that there is a single source of value which can be called utility, and it is to be maximized. Bentham considered that moral actions were to be justified on the basis of utilitarian principle.

Bentham in the first chapter of his major works 'An Introduction to the Principle of Morals and Legislation' states that only pleasure (or happiness) is intrinsically good, and its opposite, pain (or unhappiness),is intrinsically bad. The desire to increase pleasure and avoid pain not only determines how we do act, but how we ought to act. This forms the basis of his 'principle of utility', which he later called 'the greatest happiness principle'.

Now question is,whose happiness or unhappiness should we consider? Bentham makes it clear thatit is the entire 'community', not just certain individuals. The community is composed by the individual persons. So, the interest of the community is the sum of the interests of the several members who compose the community.Bentham therefore associated 'utility' with the aim of **'greatest happiness of the greatest number'**. The underlying notion of utilitarianism is that the end of human conduct is

happiness. This theory, therefore judges all actions according to their utility as means for the promotion of general happiness or prevention of general pain. An action that conforms to the principle is an action that 'ought' to be done.Therefore, Bentham's utility principle involves two important features. First, by this foundational principle Bentham meant to refer to a feeling that approved the utility of an action. Second, the principle of utility generally meant 'public' utility, and the utility of the individual was that part of public utility in which the individual shared.

According to Bentham, the moral worthiness of an action depends upon the consequences of that action.An action is right if it produces most good i.e. best action is the one that maximizes utility. Thus, Utilitarianism is a form of consequentialism, meaning that the rightness or wrongness of an action is determined by its outcome.

Bentham's utilitarianism as it based on consequence holds that right action is justified by future states of affairs rather than by past event. For example, Bentham's account of the justification of punishment is a deterrent account. Punishment is justified if it deters people from committing undesirable actions. More precisely, for Bentham, the proper aim of punishment is to produce pleasure and to prevent pain.

Bentham's Utilitarianism reflects psychological hedonism that pleasure and pain defines the motives of human behaviour. Bentham, in the first chapter of An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation writes, "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign matters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what ought to do, as well to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say,in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it." (IPML 11). Bentham views pleasure and pain as the primary motives by reference to which all human activities can be explained. They are the 'real entities' of individual experience, acting both

as the final cause of individual action, and as the efficient causes and means to individual happiness. For Bentham, the relationship between happiness and pleasure and pain is straightforward; pleasure contributes to happiness, while pain detracts from it.

In chapter three of Bentham's work An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, he discusses four 'sanctions' to explain how an essentially self-interested individual directed to perform actions which enhance the general happiness of both himself and others. The four external sanctions are: the physical, the moral, the political and the religious. Bentham explains the transition from egoism to altruism by means of these sanctions. In Bentham's utilitarianism, any law or action is considered as good if it can produces 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number'. In chapter Four of his work An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, Bentham raises the important question of how one is to measure pleasure and pain. In this regard, Bentham developed a 'hedonisticcalculus' of pleasure and pains using seven dimensions:intensity, duration, proximity, certainty, purity, fecundity and extent. Thus, Bentham describes that pleasure and pain can be evaluated in terms of quantity. It follows that Bentham's utilitarianism is quantitative in nature. He justifies that only standard of value is quantity.As he said, "quantity of pleasure being equal, pushpin is as good as poetry". That is, 'pushpin is as good as poetry' if they are equal in the quantity of pleasure they produce. Of course, John Stuart Mill introduced quality as well as quantity into the evaluation of pleasures.

9.8 PRINCIPLE OF UTILITY IS THE BASIS OF LEGAL AND SOCIAL REFORMS

Bentham based the legal system on his utilitarian principle. He understood the legal system in the same way of his moral thought. Bentham announced that the principle of utility is the foundation of his system and the business of government is 'promote the happiness of the society by punishing and rewarding'.

Bentham did not acknowledge any necessity for the intercession of religion in moral life. Bentham's theory of utilitarianism evaluates actions considering their consequences. Bentham in his work A Fragment on Governmentattacked the legal theory of Sir William Blackstone vehemently, who was advocating tradition, and Bentham holds that the justification of obedience to Government depends upon the calculation of consequences.He wrote, "The principle of utility' neither requires nor admits of any other regulator than itself'. Bentham holds that pleasure is itself a 'good' and pain is itself an 'evil'.

Bentham was particularly indebted to Hume and Helvetitus. From Hume he learnt that moral philosophy; like natural science must begin with empirical observation and that the techniques of the one were equally applicable in the other. Also, in Hume's moral philosophy Bentham found that the source of the rules of justice were located in general utility and he learnt to equate virtue with utility.

Bentham was conscious that to achieve its objectives the science of legislation had to combine a study of what the law is and of what the law ought to be. What ought to be the end of legislation is the greatest happiness. Thus, any action or law is could be considered good if it can produce 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number'.

Bentham considered utility principle as the foundation of social science. In the same way, he viewed pleasures and pains as the ultimate matter to which all social constructs and human activity could be reduced and thereby explained. They were the 'real entities' of individual experience, acting both as the final cause of individual action and as the efficient causes and means to individual happiness.

9.9 CRITICISM

Bentham's utilitarianism may be criticised on many accounts. Since Bentham's own day there has been continuous criticism. Both J. S. Mill and Sidgwick, although they continued the utilitarian tradition, were also critics

of Bentham. Bentham's utilitarianism is open to the following objections:

- Bentham has been much criticised because he thought that two pleasures are equal in value, if they are equally intense, enduring etc. As he said, "Push pin is as good as poetry" if they are equal in the quantity of pleasure they produce. But it has been thought that some pleasures, especially intellectual ones, are higher and deserve to count more. Thus, Bentham does not seem to recognise any qualitative difference among pleasures. Therefore, Mill thought that Bentham's philosophy did not acknowledge some of 'the deeper feelings of human nature', when he calculated the consequences of actions. Mill therefore introduced differences in quality between pleasures.

- One of the serious criticisms against Bentham's Utilitarianism is that this theory is thought to be "a doctrine worthy only of swine."

- Mill thought that in addition to the moral aspect of actions, there is also the aesthetic aspect of action. But Bentham treated only the moral view of actions.

- As feeling of pleasure and pain are subjective and variable so the hedonistic calculus, mentioned by Bentham is impractical.

- Bentham fails to explain satisfactorily the transition from egoism to universalism. Bentham mentioned four external sanctions to explain the social feelings in men but these external sanctions can create a physical compulsion not of moral obligation.

9.10 MILL'S LIFE AND WORKS

John Stuart Mill was one of the most influential English-speaking philosophers of the nineteenth century. He was a British empiricist, economist, administrator, moral and political theorist and utilitarian social reformer. Mill was born in London on May 20th, 1806. He was the eldest son of James and Harriet Burrow Mill. His fatherJames Mill was a Scottish

philosopher, historian, economist, and psychologist. He was the most influential person in Mill's life during his formative years. James Mill was a proponent of Bentham's utilitarianism. He met Bentham in 1808. He soon became Bentham's 'lieutenant' and Bentham did what he could to help the family. Mill's father thus, educated him with the help of Bentham. Mill concluded in his Autobiography, that as result of the formal instruction which he received from his father, he started life "with an advantage of a quarter of a century over my contemporaries."

The similar political thought of James Mill and Bentham prompted them to start and led the movement of 'philosophic radicals'. This group adhered Bentham's utilitarian political philosophy which was culminated in the doctrine of John Stuart Mill in 19th century. Utilitarianism as moral philosophy argues that maximizing happiness should be measured. Philosophical Radicalism tried to apply the implications of the utilitarian principles to legal and other social institutions. Mill was working in East India Company for almost thirty years. The year he began working for the East India Company, Mill began writing for newspapers, starting with letters to the editor.

Mill's works include books and essays covering logic, epistemology, ethics, religion, and social and political philosophy. Among them System of Logic, Deductive and Inductive, Political Economy, On Liberty, Utilitarianism, The Subjection, of Women are his major works.

9.11 MILL AND HEDONISM

Some utilitarian are hedonists equating the good with happiness and happiness with pleasure. Mill advocates Altruistic Hedonism. His theory is refined or qualitative in nature. He explicitly says that the standard is not the agent's own happiness, but happiness in general. Now question arises, how can we prove that general happiness is desirable? Mill answers that each person's happiness is a good to that person and general happiness is, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all person.

9.12 MILL'S UTILITARIANISM

Mill urges, with his father and Bentham, that the basic moral norm is the principle of utility, that an action is right provided it maximizes human welfare. But he wanted to be a utilitarian with a difference. He himself was one of Bentham's critics and as such tries to improve upon Bentham's utilitarianism. Mill, in his book 'Utilitarianism' offers a philosophical defence of his utilitarian principle in ethics. In this work, Mill makes an attempt to defend utilitarian position against its opponents-intuitionists, and makes an attempt to refine Bentham's utilitarianism and also tries to take utilitarianism as the principle of justice.

Mill argues against the intuitionists' principles of morality claiming that the intuitionists' principles are abstract, and there are no external standards to pass judgement in case of different moral claims. Mill claims that by the utility principle, we can evaluate different moral claims on the basis of an external standard of pleasure and pain.

In Chapter Two of Utilitarianism, Mill tries to describe "What utilitarianism Is"? Like Bentham, Mill accepts Hedonism stating the proper 'end' of all actions and so it forms the basis for the theory. Mill's principle of utilitarianism becomes clearer from the criticisms which he considers and which force him to provide more details as he responds to them.

The first criticism Mill considers finds fault with the hedonistic basis of the theory:

To suppose that life has no higher end than pleasure - no better and nobler object of desire and pursuit-they designate as utterly mean and grovelling; as a doctrine worthy only of swine…" (Utilitarianism, p.257-8)

Mill's response to this objection is not only a reply to the critics, but a reaction to the narrowness of Bentham's hedonistic utilitarianism as well. Unlike Bentham and others utilitarians, who take quantity for measuring pleasures, Mill says that some pleasures are qualitatively superior to others.

Mill often preferred a life as a human being dissatisfied against the life of a pig that is satisfied. Mill gives the famous line: "it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied." Bentham recognises only quantitative difference among pleasures, but Mill has admitted the qualitative as well. Pleasures differ in quality as well as in quantity. The highest good, according to Mill, lies not in intense or durable enjoyment of noble, dignified and elevated pleasure. Hence Mill doctrine is called Refined Utilitarianism as contrasted with Bentham's Gross Utilitarianism. In the matter of measuring quality against quantity, Mill appeals to the 'verdict of competent judges'. Mill insists that those who are 'equally capable of appreciating and enjoying both' prefer mental pleasures to physical ones. If, however, there is a conflict of opinion among the competent judges, we should abide by the verdict of the majority of them. And it is on account of the sense of dignity that competent judges prefer noble pleasures to physical pleasures.

Mill now turns to a second type of critic of the hedonistic aspect of utilitarianism, one who maintains either that happiness is unattainable or that we have no right to be happy. To those who maintain that happiness is unattainable, Mill replies that even "if no happiness is to be had at all by human beings" still "something might be still said for the utilitarian theory; since utility includes not solely the pursuit of happiness, but the prevention or mitigation of happiness". (Utilitarianism, p.263) According to Mill,' want of mental cultivation' and 'a sincere interest in the public good', are the two principal obstacles for not having such an existence. For Mill, both of which can be corrected through education.

Then, the answer Mill gives to those who ask 'what right thou hast to be happy' is that the goal of action is not your own happiness, but the happiness of all. We should try to bring about the greatest net happiness, taking everyone into account. Mill states that "The utilitarian morality does recognise in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for the good of others. It only refuses to admit that the sacrifice is itself a

good. A sacrifice which does not increase, or tend to increase, the sum total of happiness, it considers as wasted….The happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned." (Utilitarianism, p.268)

At this point, a third objection arises to utilitarianism. Some critics, thinking that we will on many occasions have to sacrifice our own welfare for the good of all, 'find fault with its standard as being too high for humanity.' But Mill points out that a good ethical theory is supposed to give us an ideal towards which to aspire. He also notes that the utilitarian theory does not require us to have a benevolent motive for our action. Mill claims, "The motive has nothing to do with the morality of the action." (Utilitarianism,p-270) We might have a self-interested motive, but as long as we do the action which is likely to result in the best consequences for all, we are acting correctly. Mill responses the objections arise to utilitarianism and try to explain his view on utilitarianism.

Mill, in Chapter Two of his work Utilitarianism claims, "The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, "Utility", or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure"(p.257). This principle of utility is the core of Mill's utilitarianism.

Mill, in Chapter Three of his work Utilitarianism considers the sanctions to influence individual to follow the principle of utility. Mill asks, why am I bound to promote the general happiness? In this regard, Mill has added to the external sanctions recognised by Bentham, the internal sanction of conscience or a 'feeling of duty'. This internal sanction refers to 'a feeling for the happiness of mankind', 'a desire to be in unity with our fellow beings', and 'a feeling of pain attendant on the violation of duty'. Mill believes that the moral feelings are not innate, but acquired. Education is the key to making sure that we have the right feelings. But Mill argues that even without

a proper education, there is a strong natural basis for accepting the utilitarian morality. Mill has given a psychological explanation of the transition from egoism to altruism. Sympathy grows out of self-love according to the laws of association and transference of interest. At first we egoist, and relieved the sufferings of others in order to relieve our own miseries. Then by repetition, our own interest became transferred from the end to the means. Thus, sympathy is acquired in the life-time of the individual.

Chapter Four of Utilitarianism is titled 'Of What Sort of Proof the Principle of Utility is Susceptible. 'It actually contains a defense of the hedonistic part of his theory of Utilitarianism. The chapter intends to provide a proof of the utility principle. Mill starts by suggesting an analogy with proving that something is visible. The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible, Mill writes 'is that people actually see it'. Similarly, for something being audible, the proof is that people hear it. In a like manner, he continues, 'the sole evidence that it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it. It generally acknowledged that this argument derives an 'ought' statement from 'is' statement. He here derives the desirable from the desired. He is saying that because people do desire happiness, they ought to be desirable. In the terminology of G.E. Moore, he commits the naturalistic fallacy.

But how can we prove that general happiness is desirable? Mill answers that each person's happiness is a good to that person and the 'general happiness' therefore, is a good to the aggregate all persons. Here he seems to move from egoism to altruism. But this argument involves two fallacies which are known in logic as 'the fallacy of composition' and 'the fallacy of division'.

Mill gives argument for the hedonistic view, that 'all pleasure is intrinsically good'. Here Mill addresses the issue of psychological hedonism. He accepts that the psychological account of human being of liking pleasure and detesting pain are the prime motivators in any course of action. Other things are sought, at least initially, as means to pleasure or the avoidance

of pain. But he argues that by the process of associative mechanism, they can be transformed and be associated with the ends for which they were means at an earlier point of time. Mill says that other things which we value, like health or money, are initially thought of as valuable because they lead to pleasure. After a while, we may think of them as desirable in and of themselves i.e. these things later on be sought as ends in themselves. He says through the process of association, it is possible that extrinsic values can over a period of time be treated as intrinsic value. Thus, though according to psychological hedonists, pleasure alone could be treated as intrinsic value and all others as extrinsic values, that is, ways of attaining pleasure, Mill argues that over a period of time that which was extrinsic value can be taking place of intrinsic value. Mill's theory in that sense goes beyond Bentham's conception of utilitarianism. Mill says,

"From being a means to happiness, it comes to be itself a principal ingredient of the individual's conception of happiness…What was once desired as an instrument for the attainment of happiness, has come to be desired for its own sake…." (Utilitarianism, pp-291)

Mill, once again tries to prove the hedonistic claim. He attempts to equate 'desiring a thing' with 'finding it pleasant'.

Mill says, "I believe that----desiring a thing and finding it pleasant,…are phenomena entirely inseparable, …in strictness of language, two different modes of naming the same psychological fact….that to desire anything, except in proportion as the idea of it is pleasant, is a physical and metaphysical impossibility. (Utilitarianism, pp-292-3) He says that we always desire pleasure, therefore pleasure is desirable.

Mill has advocated Rule-Utilitarianism as he is trying to judge the act on the basis of rule. But for utilitarians, rules by themselves are not something indispensable, because rules are selected on the basis of the principle of utility, that which can promote greatest amount of happiness. That is, the rule by itself is in a sense derived from the consequences of the

act repeated over and over again and thus to be followed as a rule for similar circumstances.

Mill has used this utility principle to come up with the principle of justice in social and political realm. He contends that whatever satisfies the principle of utility also satisfies the requirements of justice.

9.13 BENTHAM AND MILL

Mill Shared the utilitarianism of Bentham and James to a certain extent, and views that actions are right in proportion as they tend to produce happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. But Mill had different conception about the nature of happiness and justification of utilitarianism. We may focus on the following points and try to understand how Mill improves upon Bentham's utilitarianism.

- Bentham and James Mill understood happiness in terms of pleasure and they believed that the aim of each person is mainly the promotion of agent's own happiness, which is pleasure. Mill altered their hedonistic assumptions by introducing his idea of higher pleasure and thereby changing the notion of happiness.

- Bentham belonged to psychological egoist school and he proclaimed that persons act only to satisfy his or her self-interest. But he could not justify how and why one should concern with the happiness of others? He could not satisfactorily explain the transition from egoism to altruism. Mill rejects the traditional substantive doctrines of psychological egoism and hedonism that Bentham and Mill's father sometimes defended or suggested. Mill elaborates his criticism against Bentham in his essays 'On Bentham' and 'Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy'. Mill thought that because of Bentham's narrow concept of his philosophy, he could not accommodate many of the things within his domain of philosophy.

- Like Bentham's hedonism, Mill says that pleasure is the end of morality. Bentham's hedonism views that mental state of pleasure has intrinsic

good and similarly, the mental state of pain has intrinsic evil. All other things have value, either good or bad as far as they bring pleasure or pain. Mill, to a great extent, accepted this principle and argued that over a period of time that which was extrinsic value can be taking the place of intrinsic value.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Name one book authored by Bentham.

……

Q2: What is the meaning of the 'principle of utility'?

……

Q3: What is utilitarianism?

……

Q4: What is the principle of Bentham's utilitariam?

……

Q5: Write two points of Bentham's utilitarianism.

……

Q6: Fill in the blanks:

a) Utilitarianism has its origin in the ancient ……. Philosophy.

b) According to Bentham, the moral worthiness of an action depends upon the …… of that action.

c) Bentham advocates…….hedonism.

d) Utilitarianism holds that the best action is the one that maximizes …..

Q7: Who advocates qualitative difference in pleasure?

……

Q8: Name one book authored by Mill.

……

Q9: What are the types of utilitarianism?

……

Q10: What is Rule Utilitarianism

……

Q11: Fill in the blanks

a) It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a … satisfied.

b) Mill's utilitarianism is called…. Utilitarianism

Q12: What is altruistic hedonism?.

……

Q12: How does Mill argue against the Intuitionists' principle of morality?

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9.14 LET US SUM UP

- Utilitarianism is a teleological theory of obligation as it considers the consequences of an action for passing moral judgement. This theory holds that an action is right or obligatory if and only if it produces a greater balance of good over evil in the universe as a whole. Thus, Utilitarianism appeals to the 'principle of utility' for passing moral judgement.Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Henry Sidgwick are the leading representative thinkers of the British utilitarian tradition. Bentham declared that we aim at'the greatest happiness for the greatest number of the people'. Happiness is hence taken as the unique measure of value.

- Bentham's Utilitarianism reflects psychological hedonism that pleasure and pain defines the motives of human behaviour. Bentham brings hedonistic calculus in his moral theory. His utilitarianism may be called gross or sensualistic because it does not recognise any qualitative differences among pleasures.

- Mill is consistently a utilitarian, which is a collectivist philosophy. Mill believes that individuals have an ethical obligation to perform those actions which are likely to result in the greatest net good consequences, taking everyone into account. As a hedonistic utilitarian, Mill believes that it is the pleasure or happiness that is likely to result should be

considered as good consequences, and displeasure or unhappiness that is likely to result should be considered as bad consequences.

- Mill believes that quality as well as quantity must be taken into account in deciding which action is right. Thus, though Mill belongs to the school of utilitarianism, yet he differs from Bentham's utilitarianism on some key issues. Mill has used this utility principle to come up with the principle of justice in social and political realm.



9.15: FURTHER READING

1) 1) Frankena, k. W., Ethics, Prentice Hall of India, pvt.Lmtd., New Delhi 2007
2) Bunnin.N., and Tsui-James. E.P., The Blackwell Companion to philosophy, Blackwell publishing, Oxford, 2003
3) Mackenzie.John.M., A Manual of Ethics,Surjeet Publications, Delhi,1997
4) Sinha. J.N., A Manual to Ethics, New Central Agency, Calcutta, 1986
5) Lillie. W., An Introduction to Ethics, Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 2007.
6) Crimmins. James E., On Bentham, Cengage learning Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 2004



9.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q1: An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation.

Ans to Q No 2: Usefulness

Ans to Q No 3: Utilitarianism is a moral theory which appeals to the 'principle of utility' to tell what is right or obligatory. It states thatthe best action is the one that maximizes utility.

Ans to Q No 4: 'The Greatest happiness of the greatest number'.

Ans to Q No 5: According to Bentham's Utilitarianism, we ought to aim at the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. Bentham recognises only quantitative distinction among pleasures.

Ans to Q No 6: a. Greek b. Consequence c. Altruistic gross d. d. Utility

Ans to Q No 7: Mill

Ans to Q No 8: Utilitarianism

Ans to Q No 9: Act-Utilitarianism, Rule- Utilitarianism, General Utilitarianism.

Ans to Q No 10: According to Rule Utilitarianism, the rightness of the act depends upon its conformity to a rule i.e. Law.

Ans to Q No 11: a) Pig b) Refined

Ans to Q No 12: According to altruistic hedonism, the standard is not the agent's own happiness, but happiness in general

Ans to Q No 13: Mill argues that the intuitionists' principles are abstract, and there are no external standards to pass judgement in case of different moral claims. Mill asserts that by the utility principle, we can evaluate different moral claims on the basis of an external standard of pleasure and pain.

9.17 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very short Questions

Q1: Mention the different theories regarding the nature of the ultimate moral standard.

Q2: What is teleological theory?

Q3: What is de-ontological theory?

Q4: Mention the names of two hedonists.

Q5: Who says: "Greatest happiness of the Greatest number"?

Q6: Define 'utilitarianism'.

Q7: Mention two utilitarians' who are also considered as hedonists.

Q8: Write the ultimate moral standard of universalistic hedonism.

Q9: Mention the essential elements of universalistic hedonism.

Q10: Who is the author of An Enquiry concerning the origin of our Ideas of Virtues of Moral Good?

Q11: What is hedonism?

Q12: Name three famous works of Mill

Q13: What is altruistic hedonism?

Q14: Who says "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied'"

Q15: What is extrinsic and intrinsic value? According to Mill

Q16: What is rule utilitarianism?

B. Short Questions (Write in about 100-150 words)

Q1: Write a short note on utilitarianism.

Q2: Is there any difference between utilitarianism and egoism? Briefly explain

Q3: What is universalistic hedonism? Briefly explain

Q4: What is altruistic hedonism? Briefly explain

Q5: How does Mill reject Bantham's hedonistic principle? Briefly explain

Q6: How does Mill argue against the Intuitionists' principle of morality? Briefly explain

Q7: How does Mill argue against the Hedonistic aspect of Utilitarianism? Briefly explain

C. Long Questions (Write in about 300-500 words)

Q1: Explain critically Bentham's utilitarianism.

Q2: Discuss the historical background of utilitarianism.

Q3: Explain the theory of utilitarianism.

Q4: Discuss the criticisms raised on Bentham's utilitarianism.

Q5: State two points of differences between Mill's Utilitarianism and Bentham's Utilitarianism.

Q6: Describe critically Mill's Utilitarianism.

Q7: How does Mill improve Banthama's utilitarianism? Explain

Q8: How does Mill argue against the Hedonistic aspect of Utilitarianism? Discuss

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