

## **Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials**

**Programme: Bachelor of Arts (First Year)**

**Subject: Philosophy**

**Paper Code: PIC 101**

**Paper Title: Theories of Moral Standard**

**Unit: 02**

**Module Name: John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism**

**Module No: 10**

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### **Notes**

#### **Mill's Utilitarianism or Refined/Qualitative Utilitarianism**

Mill's theory is called altruistic hedonism as it follows the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number as the ultimate moral standard.

Mill recognized qualitative distinctions among pleasures. Therefore, the theory is called refined or qualitative utilitarianism. This theory is called utilitarianism because it judges all actions according to their utility to promote general happiness or prevent general pain.

What according to Mill is the test of quality? Mill appeals to the verdict of competent judges who always prefer intellectual pleasures to bodily or sensual pleasures. If there is a conflict of opinion among the competent judges, we should follow the decision of the majority of them. He also appealed to the 'sense of dignity' which is natural to man.

According to Mill, "it is better to be a human being dissatisfied, than a pig satisfied, better to be Socrates dissatisfied, than a fool satisfied." Mill followed the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, "to do as one would want it to be done to you" and "to love one's neighbor as oneself" – this constitutes the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality.

Mill gave a psychological explanation to change from egoism to altruism. Altruism grows out of egoism. Sympathy grows out of self-love during an individual's lifetime. At first, we are selfish and relieve the miseries of others in order to relieve our own pain. Later, we forget our own pleasure and take delight in relieving the miseries of others and acquire sympathy.

Mill gives two kinds of sanctions for altruistic conduct – external (as given by Bentham) and internal.

Bentham's four external sanctions are external pressures which compel one to sacrifice his own interests to those of the society. Thus, one goes from egoism to altruism under the pressure of these four external sanctions.

Mill adds to these external sanctions, the internal sanctions of conscience. It is sympathy, social feeling of mankind for the happiness of others, etc.

### **Criticisms**

- 1) Mill recognized the qualitative distinctions between pleasures. This makes him move away from his hedonistic position because these pleasures of the intellect are considered to be superior to bodily pleasures by him.
- 2) He gave a lot of importance to reason in his theory by recognizing the qualitative distinctions between pleasures.
- 3) The decision of competent judges is also based on reason and the 'sense of dignity' he appeals to, is the dignity of reason and not sensibility.
- 4) Sympathy which is purely an altruistic feeling cannot be derived from pure egoism or self-love.
- 5) By introducing the internal sanction of conscience, he again appeals to reason and goes against his own hedonistic position. Thus, by introducing reason into his theory, he moves away from the hedonistic position.
- 6) The four external sanctions are obeyed for our own good and not for the good of others. They can create a must but never an ought or moral obligation.