

Welcome students to the course on Moral Philosophy

Part one. This is a course for the Bachelors of Arts

Students in Philosophy in the first semester.

I am Miss Cinderella Sequeira assistant professor in the

Department of Philosophy, Dharmapala College of Arts and

Science, Panjim, Goa. The title of this unit is Theories of

Moral Standard, the name of the module is John Stuart Mill's

Utilitarianism. In this unit, we will be looking at the

introduction Mill's Utilitarianism, or refined or

qualitative utilitarianism. The shift from egoism to altruism,

the internal sanctions and criticism on Mill's Utilitarianism.

The Learning Outcomes are as

Follows: at the end of this module you will be able to

understand the concept of qualitative utilitarianism.

Comprehend the ethical philosophy of John Stuart Mill

and critically examine and evaluate John Stuart Mill's

qualitative utilitarianism. Let us look at the first concept.

That is, Mill's utilitarianism or refined or qualitative

utilitarianism. Mill's utilitarianism 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. Now in this paragraph we learn that Mill's theory is called altruistic hedonism. Altruistic would mean some being selfless and hedonism would be the idea that pleasure is the only important thing in life. So what you need is pleasure. You decide an action is right or wrong based on how much pleasure it gives you. So if it is pleasurable, the action is right and if it is not pleasurable then the action is wrong. Altruistic hedonism would mean that you get pleasure because you are selfless based on your selflessness. The principle it is based on is the principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number. So if you want to be happy, it's not only about your happiness, it's also about everybody's happiness or the happiness of the majority. Now, Mill recognized qualitative distinctions among pleasures, so he says that all pleasures are not the same. There can be one pleasure that is higher than some other pleasure. According to Mill what is the test of this quality? How do we

decide which pleasure is higher and which pleasure is low? So

Mill appeals to the verdict of competent judges who always

prefer intellectual pleasures to bodily or sensual pleasures.

Mill says that it's about

intellectual pleasures. The Pleasures of the mind are more

important or more valuable than the pleasures of the senses. So

if there is a conflict of opinion among the competent

judges, we should follow the decision of the majority of

them. We should think about what the majority enjoys. He

also appealed to the sense of dignity which is natural to man.

For example, if Mill is talking about two kinds of

pleasures, that is, take, for example reading a book or having

an ice cream or a chocolate Mill would say that reading a book

that is an intellectual

pleasure is more pleasurable is more enjoyable than eating a

chocolate. Why? Because the experience of eating a chocolate

or enjoying an ice cream lasts for a very

minimal time and the experience of reading a book can last you

for a much more longer period of time and you will enjoy it at an

intellectual level. It will also give you a sense of dignity,

right? So that's why Mill would say that intellectual pleasures

are more important than sensual or bodily pleasures.

According to Mill, it is better to be a human being

satisfied than a pig who is satisfied. It's better to be

Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. Mill followed the

Golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth who says that to do to others 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. So Mill says is that it's better to be a human being

who is dissatisfied than an

animal who is satisfied. So just satisfying your bodily

pleasures like an animal is not going to give you a sense of

being human. If you want to feel like you are a human being, you

should have a certain sense of dignity and that comes when you

enjoy intellectual pleasure.

And so Mill would follow the Golden rule given by Jesus of

Nazareth, that is to do to others as you would like it to

be done to you and to love one's neighbor as you would want to be

loved by others. The shift from egoism to altruism

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. So what is Mill saying here? Mill says that we move from egoism to altruism. So we start as egoistic people that are selfish people and we move to being selfless people and he says that there is a psychological explanation for this movement or this shift from egoism to altruism. And he says that altruism grows out of egoism. So initially we have sympathy for others, because we want others to like us and we will try to understand other people's pain so that they start liking us. But Eventually we forget our own pleasure and we take delight or we enjoy helping others. It's not about our feeling good about ourselves but we just enjoy helping others. And so this is how we move from egoism to altruism according to Mill.

So Mill gave two kinds of sanctions for altruistic conduct that is external as given by Bentham and added to that he gives the internal sanction Bentham's sanctions or you will get to know in the following module. Now the internal sanctions that John Stuart Mill gives us is basically the sanction of

conscience. So it is the conscience is our own personal conscience. That tells us what's right and what is wrong or how to behave or how to make sure that we do our duties or we make sure that other people are also happy. So he says that it is not only about what the external sanctions or the external norms are, but it's also about what our own mind and the heart tells us.

Now let us look at the criticisms on Mill's utilitarianism. Mill recognized the qualitative distinctions between pleasures. This makes him move away from the Hellenistic position because these pleasures of the intellect are considered to be superior to bodily pleasures by him. So when we look at Mill's utilitarianism, we do not simply accept his theory, we find certain faults or certain limitations of his theory. So the first limitation is that he moves away from his own position of hedonistic utilitarianism because he gives importance to intellectual pleasures. Now remember that hedonistic or hedonistic philosophy is about bodily pleasures mostly the moment you talk about intellectual pleasures you move away from the body. This is the first criticism against Mill's

utilitarianism. He gave a lot of importance to reason in his theory by recognizing the qualitative distinctions between pleasures. This is the second criticism that is, Mill gave importance to reason even more than to the senses. 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. So when he talks about the sense of dignity Mill is talking about, the sense of reason and not of sensibility, or he does not give importance to the senses.

The next criticism is that sympathy, which is purely an altruistic feeling, cannot be derived from pure egoism or self love. So how something so opposite as egoism or selfishness can lead to selflessness or even altruism is the question.

The next point is by introducing the internal sanctions, which derive from conscience. He again appeals to reason and goes against his own hedonistic position by introducing reason into his theory, he moves away from the hedonistic position. The criticism against Mill here is that by introducing the internal sanctions, that is conscience, he again appeals to

reason and moves away from his own hedonistic position.

And the last criticism here is that 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. So here the point is that the external or even the internal sanctions can only create a must but never an ought or moral obligation, It can only tell you what you must do, but not what you ought to do.

These are my references.

Thank you.