

Justice and Morality

Philosophy Lecture – 1

Possible Scenarios

- Trolley Scenario
 - Version 1: You're a trolley car driver
 - Version 2: You're an onlooker
- Doctor Scenario
 - Version 1: You're doctor in an emergency room
 - Version 2: You're a transplant surgeon

Option 1: Save five persons, while killing the one.

Option 2: Save one person, while killing the other five persons.

- **What would be the right thing to do? Why would you regard what you would do as something right thing to do?**

Two ways of thinking about morality

- **Consequentialist moral reasoning**
 - Locates morality on the consequences of the act.
 - Utilitarianism
 - Jeremy Bentham, J. S. Mill
- **Categorical moral reasoning**
 - Categorical moral reasoning locates morality on the certain absolute moral principle or certain categorical duties and rights.
 - Deontology
 - Immanuel Kant

Consequentialist moral reasoning

- The moral assessment of **x** is based on the effect of **x**.
- Effect of an act being useful for whom?
 - An act being useful for myself (**Ethical Egoism**)
 - An act being useful for maximum number of the people (**Utilitarianism**)
 - The cumulative happiness of a number of people.
- **Intrinsic good and Instrumental good**
 - x is intrinsically good iff x is good in itself
 - Y is instrumentally good iff y is good because of something else

Utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)

Principle of utility or the greatest happiness principle

- “The greatest good for the greatest number.”
- Utility is the balance of pleasure over pain.
- “Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.”

Elements to decide the happiness

- **Intensity:** the more intense the pleasure, the better.
- **Duration:** The longer lasting the pleasure, the better.
- **Propinquity:** How soon the pleasure is going to be produced?
- **Likelihood:** Whether the action definitely lead to pleasure or might lead to pleasure or only occasionally lead to pleasure

Is Bentham Right? Some of the objections

Ursula K. Le Guin: “The Ones Who Walked Away from Omelas” tells of a city called Omelas—a city of happiness and civic celebration, a place without kings or slaves, a place without the atomic bomb. Lest we find this place too unrealistic to imagine, the author tells us one more thing about it: “In a basement under one of the beautiful public buildings of Omelas, or perhaps in the cellar of one of its spacious private homes, there is a room. It has one locked door, and no window.” And in this room sits a child. The child is feebleminded, malnourished, and neglected. It lives out its days in wretched misery. They all know it is there, all the people of Omelas . . .

They all know that it has to be there . . . [T]hey all understand that their happiness, the beauty of their city, the tenderness of their friendships, the health of their children, . . . even the abundance of their harvest and the kindly weathers of their skies, depend wholly on this child's abominable misery. . . . If the child were brought up into the sunlight out of the vile place, if it were cleaned and fed and comforted, that would be a good thing, indeed; but if it were done, in that day and hour all the prosperity and beauty and delight of Omelas would wither and be destroyed. Those are the terms. **Are those terms morally acceptable?**

- What happens to.....
 - Trolley Scenario Version – 2
 - Doctor Scenario Version – 2
- What happens to.....
 - Legal system: If a judge can prevent riots that will cause many deaths only by convicting an innocent person of a crime and imposing a severe punishment on that person, act utilitarianism implies that the judge should convict and punish the innocent person.
- What happens to.....
 - Promise making
 - The idea of Trust
 - Commonsense Morality

Utilitarianism of J. S. Mill (1806–1873)

- Reconciling individual rights with the utilitarianism.
 - Maximizing utility, not case by case, but in the long run.
 - Focus is the utility of the rule not the utility of act.
 - **Rule utilitarianism**
 - Morally right actions are those that conform to optimal social rules.
 - Such rules are those that would generate best results were they are very widely endorsed.
- a) a specific action is morally justified if it conforms to a justified moral rule
- b) a moral rule is justified if its inclusion into our moral code would create more utility than other possible rules.

- **Act utilitarianism**
- An act is morally right iff that particular act brings maximum happiness for maximum number of people.
 - Extreme utilitarianism
 - Test individual actions by their consequences.
 - **General rules are mere rules of thumb.**
 - Estimating the probable consequences of actions at every step.
 - On breaking the rule
- **Rule Utilitarianism**
 - Restricted utilitarianism /Modest form of utilitarianism
 - Moral rules are more than rules of thumb.
 - Rightness of an action and action falling under a certain rule.
 - The consequences of adopting the rule.
- Extreme utilitarianism and the rules of common sense morality.

If, however, the man drowning had been drowning in a river near Berchtesgaden in 1938, and if he had had the well known black forelock and moustache of Adolf Hitler, an extreme utilitarian would, if he had time, work out the probability of the man's being the villainous dictator, and if the probability were high enough he would, on extreme utilitarian grounds, leave him to drown.