

## John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism

### Review Questions:

1. **State and explain the Principle of Utility. Show how it could be used to justify actions that are conventionally viewed as wrong, such as lying and stealing.**

The Principle of Utility or the greatest happiness principle affirms the actions are right in proportion as they tend to encourage happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. As a result of happiness are intended pleasures and the absence of pain while by unhappiness, pain and privation of pleasures.

The Principle of Utility could be used to justify actions that are conventionally viewed as wrong by for example deceitful could be a cause for someone to be unhappy. His conscience could harm himself because he would be bothered about his deceitfulness.

2. **How does Mill reply to the objection the Epicureanism is a doctrine worthy only of swine?**

Mill said that the objection that Epicureanism is a doctrine worthy only of swine is disregarding precisely because the beast's pleasure does not satisfy human beings' conceptions of happiness.

3. **How does Mill distinguish between higher and lower pleasures?**

Mill distinguishes the two pleasures as the higher pleasure is the one that all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feelings of moral obligation to prefer it. While the lower pleasure is when those who are competently acquainted with both, place so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasures which their nature is capable of.

4. **According to Mill, whose happiness must be considered?**

According to Mill, those who are in greater in number or the majority should be considered in happiness.

Mill describes "happiness" to be both intellectual and sensual pleasure. He disagrees that man has a sense of dignity that makes a person prefer intellectual pleasures to sensual ones. He also states that the principle of utility involves evaluating an action's consequences, and not the motives or personality traits of the agent. Mill argues that the principle of utility should be seen as a means for creating secondary moral principles, which promote universal happiness. As a consequence most of our actions will be judged according to these secondary principles. He believes that man should appeal directly to the principle of utility itself only when faced with an amoral dilemma between two secondary principles.

5. **Carefully reconstruct Mill's proof of the principle of utility.**

Things done by people will only be right if it will promote happiness. According to the utilitarian conception, there was no unusual desire of it, or motive to it, save its conduciveness to pleasure, and mainly to protection from pain. On the contrary, through the association thus formed, it may be felt a good in itself, and desired as such with a great intensity as any other

good; and with this difference between it and the love of money, of power, or of fame, that all of these may, and often do, cause the individual harmful to the other members of the society to which a person belongs, whereas there is nothing which makes him so much a blessing to them as the cultivation of the disinterested love of virtue.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

**1. Is happiness nothing more than pleasure, and the absence of pain? What do you think?**

Yes, I believe that happiness is different from pleasure and the absence of pain because when you are totally at peace with yourself nothing can shake you. Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.

**2. Does Mill convince you that the so-called higher pleasures are better than the lower ones?**

Yes, I am certainly sure that higher pleasures are better than the lower ones because in higher pleasures, you should be ready for anything or you should be superior in anything. Since, the person who experience lower pleasure will experience lower consequences.

**3. Mill says, "In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility". Is this true or not?**

Yes it is true because a man should do something for the majority and not for one's self alone. Make a move that ensures that the majority will be happy as you are. Also, a man must act in whatever way every other man should act when in that situation.

**4. Many commentators have thought that Mill's proof of the Principles of Utility is defective. Do you agree? If so, then what mistake or mistakes does he make? Is there any way to reformulate the proof so that it is not defective?**

In my point of view, he did not consider the individuality of a person. Mill disregarded the aspects that utility is not to be applied as a whole.