

John Stuart Mill: On Liberty & What Utilitarianism I

Wednesday, March 25, 2015

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Chapter 1:

- Mill turns to an overview of the development of the concept of liberty. In ancient Greece, Rome and England, liberty implied "protection against the tyranny of political rulers," and rulers and subjects were often thought to have a necessarily antagonistic relationship.
- The leader did not govern by the will of his people, and while his power was seen as necessary, it was also considered dangerous.
- **Patriots tried to limit the leader's power in two ways:**
 - 1) They gained immunities called "political liberties or rights." The leader was thought to have a duty to respect these immunities, and there was a right of rebellion if these rights and liberties were infringed.
 - 2) Constitutional checks developed, under which the community or their representatives gained some power of consent over important acts of governance.
- Mill writes that eventually men progressed to a point where they wanted their leaders to be their servants, and to reflect their interests and will.
- However, when an actual democratic republic developed (The United States), it was realized that the people don't rule themselves.
- Rather, the people with power exercise it over those without power. In particular, a majority may consciously try to oppress a minority.
- Mill writes that this concept of a tyranny of the majority has come to be accepted by major thinkers. Mill, however, argues that society can also tyrannize without using political means.
- Rather, the power of *public opinion* can be more stifling to individuality and dissent than any law could be. Thus, he writes that there must also be protection for people against the prevailing public opinions, and the tendency of society to impose its values on others.
- The question, then, as Mill sees it, is where and how to limit public opinion's sway over individual independence. There has been very little consensus among nations about the answer to this question, and people tend to be very complacent about their own customs in dealing with dissent.
- People tend to believe that having strong feelings on a subject makes having reasons for that belief unnecessary, failing to realize that without reasons their beliefs are mere preferences, often reflecting self-interest.
- Furthermore, on the occasions when individuals do question the imposition of

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public opinion on social standards, they are usually questioning what things society should like or dislike, not the more general question of whether society's preferences should be imposed on others.

- Mill also notes that in England there is no recognized principle by which to judge legislative interference in private conduct.
- After laying out the major issues, Mill then turns to what he calls "the object of his essay." He writes that he will argue that the only time individuals or society as a whole can interfere with individual liberty is for self-protection.
- Mill states that the argument that a certain law or public opinion might be for an individual's own good or welfare does not suffice to justify that law or public opinion as a coercive force; coercion by the many toward the individual is only acceptable when an individual poses a threat to others.
- It is fine to argue with a person about his actions, but not to compel him. Mill writes, "Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign."
- Mill notes that the right of liberty does not apply to children, or to "backward" societies. It is only when people are capable of learning from discussion that liberty holds; otherwise the people must be taken care of.
- Mill also notes that he is not justifying the claim of liberty as an abstract right. Rather, he is grounding it in utility, on the permanent interests of mankind.
- Mill writes that if a person causes harm to others actively or inactively, it is appropriate for society to condemn him legally or through general disapprobation.
- Individuals can even be compelled to do good for other people, such as to save someone's life, because to do otherwise would be to cause evil to another person.
- In contrast, society only has an indirect interest in what a person does to himself or to other freely consenting people.
- Mill divides the appropriate sphere of human liberty falls into three categories, claiming that any free society must respect all three:
 - 1) There is the domain of the conscience, and liberty of individual thought and opinion.
 - 2) There is planning one's own life, and the liberty of tastes and pursuits.
 - 3) There is the liberty to unite with other consenting individuals for any purpose that does not harm others.
- These liberties reflect the idea that true freedom means pursuing one's own good in one's own way, as long as it does not prevent others from doing the same
- These ideas directly contradict society's increasing tendency to demand conformity, and unless moral conviction turns against this tendency, the demand for conformity will only increase.

Chapter 2:

- In Chapter 2, Mill turns to the issue of whether people, either through their government or on their own, should be allowed to coerce or limit anyone else's

government or church own, should be allowed to coerce or limit anyone else's expression of opinion.

- Mill emphatically says that such actions are illegitimate. Even if only one person held a particular opinion, mankind would not be justified in silencing him.
- Silencing these opinions, Mill says, is wrong because it robs "the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation." In particular, it robs those who *disagree* with these silenced opinions.
- Mill then turns to the reasons why humanity is hurt by silencing opinions. His first argument is that the suppressed opinion may be true.
- He writes that since human beings are not infallible, they have no authority to decide an issue for all people, and to keep others from coming up with their own judgments.
- Mill asserts that the reason why liberty of opinion is so often in danger is that in practice people tend to be confident in their own rightness, and excluding that, in the infallibility of the world they come in contact with.
- Mill contends that such confidence is not justified, and that all people are hurt by silencing potentially true ideas.
- After presenting his first argument, Mill looks at possible criticisms of his reasoning and responds to them.
- First, there is the criticism that even though people may be wrong, they still have a duty to act on their "conscientious conviction."
- When people are sure that they are right, they would be cowardly not to act on that belief and to allow doctrines to be expressed that they believe will hurt mankind.
- To this, Mill replies that the only way that a person can be confident that he is right is if there is complete liberty to contradict and disprove his beliefs.
- Humans have the capacity to correct their mistakes, but only through experience *and* discussion. Human judgment is valuable only in so far as people remain open to criticism.
- Thus, the only time a person can be sure he is right is if he is constantly open to differing opinions; there must be a standing invitation to try to disprove his beliefs.
- Second, there is the criticism that governments have a duty to uphold certain beliefs that are important to the well being of society. Only "bad" men would try to undermine these beliefs.
- Mill replies that this argument still relies on an assumption of infallibility—the usefulness of an opinion is still something up for debate, and it still requires discussion.
- Furthermore, the truth of a belief is integral to whether it is desirable for it to be believed.
- Mill observes that the assumption of infallibility about a certain question implies that one not only feels very sure about a belief, but also includes the attempt to

try to decide that question for other people.

- It is in stifling dissenting opinions in the name of social good that some of the most horrible mistakes in human history have been made.
- Mill writes about Socrates and Jesus Christ, two illustrious figures in history, who were put to death for blasphemy because their beliefs were radical for their times.
- Mill then considers whether society should be able to censor an opinion that rejects a common moral belief or the existence of God and a future state.
- He gives the example of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, a just and kind man who still persecuted Christianity, failing to see its value to society.
- Mill argues that if one is to accept the legitimacy of punishing irreligious opinions, one must also accept that if one felt, like Marcus Aurelius did, that Christianity was dangerous, one would also be justified in punishing Christianity.
- Third, Mill considers the criticism that truth *may* be justifiably persecuted, because persecution is something that truth should have to face, and it will always survive.
- Mill replies that such a sentiment is harshly unfair to those who actually are persecuted for holding true ideas.
- By discovering something true, these people have performed a great service to humanity. Supporting the persecution of such people suggests that their contributions are not truly being valued.
- Mill also contends that it is wrong to assume that "truth always triumphs over persecution." It may take centuries for truth to reemerge after it is suppressed.
- For example, Mill writes that the Reformation of the Catholic Church was put down twenty times before Martin Luther was successful.
- It is mere sentimentality to think that truth is stronger than error, although truth will tend to be rediscovered over time if it is extinguished.
- Fourth, Mill responds to the possible argument against him that since we do not actually put dissenters to death any more, no true opinion will ever be extinguished.
- Mill replies that legal persecution for opinions is still significant in society, for example in the case of blasphemy or atheism.
- There is also no guarantee, given general public opinion, that more extreme forms of legal persecution will not reemerge.
- In addition, there continues to be social intolerance of dissent. Mill argues that societal intolerance causes people to hide their views, and stifles intellectualism and independent thought.
- Stifling free thinking hurts truth, no matter whether a particular instance of free thinking leads to false conclusions.
- After explaining how popular opinions might be false, Mill makes three further arguments in favor of freedom of opinion.

- His second argument (after the argument discussed last section that the popular opinion could be false), is that even if the popular opinion is true, if it is not debated it will become "dead dogma."
- If truth is simply held as a prejudice, then people will not fully understand it, and will not understand how to refute objections to it. Dissent, even if it is false, keeps alive the truth against which it dissents.
- Mill then turns to two potential criticisms of his argument.
- First, one could say that people should be taught the grounds for their opinions, and that having been taught these grounds, they do not then merely hold prejudices but really understand the basis of their opinions.
- Mill replies that in cases where differing opinions are possible, understanding the truth requires dispelling arguments to the contrary.
- If a person cannot refute objections, then he cannot properly be said to understand his own opinion.
- Furthermore, he must hear these objections from people who actually believe them, because it is only these people who can show the full force of the arguments.
- Responding to objections is so important that if no dissenters exist, it is necessary to imagine them, and to come up with the most persuasive arguments that they could make.
- A second criticism might be that it is not necessary for mankind in general to be familiar with potential objections to their beliefs, but only for philosophers or theologians to be thus aware.
- Mill replies that this objection does not weaken his argument for free discussion, because dissenters still must be given a voice with which to object to opinions.
- Furthermore, while in the Catholic Church there is a clear distinction between common people and intellectuals, in Protestant countries like England, every person is considered responsible for his choices.
- Also, in modern times it is practically impossible to keep writings that are accessible to the intellectuals from the common people.
- Mill then presents a third argument for the value of liberty of thought and discussion. He writes that if a true opinion is not debated, the meaning of the opinion itself may be lost.
- This can be seen in the history of ethical and religious beliefs--when they stop being challenged, they lose their "living power." Mill says that Christianity faces such a situation, where people's beliefs are not reflected in their conduct.
- As a result, people do not truly understand the doctrines they hold dear, and their misunderstanding leads to serious mistakes.
- Mill presents one possible criticism of this view. He writes that it could be asked whether it is essential for "true knowledge" for some people to hold erroneous opinions.
- Mill replies that having an increasing number of uncontested opinions is both

Mill replies that having an increasing number of uncorrected opinions is both "inevitable and indispensable" in the process of human improvement.

- However, this does not mean that the loss of debate is not a drawback, and he encourages teachers to try to compensate for the loss of dissent.
- Mill then turns to a fourth argument for freedom of opinion. He writes that in the case of conflicting doctrines, perhaps the most common case is that instead of one being true and one false, the truth is somewhere between them.
- Progress usually only substitutes one partial truth for another, the newer truth more suited to the needs of the times.
- Dissenting or heretical opinions often reflect the partial truths not recognized in popular opinion, and are valuable for bringing attention to a "fragment of wisdom."
- This fact can be seen in politics, where differing opinions keep both sides reasonable. In any open question, the side that is least popular at the time is the side that should be most encouraged. This side reflects interests that are being neglected.
- Mill then looks at a criticism of this fourth argument. He says that it could be argued that some principles, such as those of Christianity, are the whole truth, and if somebody disagrees, he is completely wrong.
- Mill replies by saying that in many ways Christian morality is "incomplete and one-sided," and that some of the most important ethical ideas have been derived from Greek and Roman sources.
- He argues that Christ himself intended his message to be incomplete, and that it is a mistake to reject secular supplements to Christian morality.
- Most basically, human imperfection implies that a diversity of opinion would be required to understand truth.
- After looking at these four arguments for liberty, Mill briefly addresses the argument that free expression should be allowed, but only if it sticks to "fair discussion." He says that such a standard would be very hard to enforce from a practical perspective.
- Mill posits that it would likely only be dissenters who would be held to such a high standard of conduct.
- Ultimately, it is not law's place to restrict discussion in this way; public opinion must look at individual cases, and hold both sides to the same standard.

Chapter 3:

- Having already examined whether people should be allowed to hold and express unpopular beliefs, Mill looks at the question of whether people should be allowed to *act* on their opinions without facing legal punishment or social stigma.
- Mill observes that actions should not be as free as opinions, and reasserts that both must be limited when they would cause harm to others and be "a nuisance to other people."
- However, many of the reasons for respecting different opinions also apply to

respecting actions. Since humans are fallible, different "experiments of living" are valuable. The expression of individuality is essential for individual and social progress.

- Individuality is essential to the cultivation of the self. A basic problem that Mill sees with society is that individual spontaneity is not respected as having any good in itself, and is not seen as essential to well-being.
- Rather, the majority thinks that its ways should be good enough for everybody. Mill argues that while people should be trained as children in the accumulated knowledge of human experience, they should also have the freedom as adults to interpret that experience as they see fit.
- He places great moral emphasis on the process of making choices, and not simply accepting customs without questions: only people who make choices are using all of their human faculties.
- Mill then links the desires and impulses reflected in individuality with the development of character: "One whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam engine has character."
- Mill writes that in early stages of society, it is possible that there could be too much individuality. However, the danger now is rather the stifling of desires and impulses.
- He says that people become more valuable to themselves and also more able to be valuable to others when they develop their individuality.
- Mill then turns to the second part of his discussion, the ways in which people who exercise their liberty as individuals are valuable to others.
- Individuality is valuable because people might learn something from the nonconformists. Dissenters may discover new goods, and keep alive existing goods.
- While genius is rare, it is also true that "Genius can only breathe free in an *atmosphere* of freedom." Unoriginal people tend to not see the value of originality, and tend to shun genius for mediocrity.
- Mill argues against this tendency, saying that all people should value what originality brings to the world.
- Furthermore, Mill argues that the modern age (the 19th century), in contrast to the Middle Ages, tends to diminish the individual and encourage mediocrity, linking this tendency with the democratization of culture and government.
- A conscious effort needs to be made to counteract this trend.
- There is no one pattern for how to best live life. If a person is sufficiently developed, then his choices for how to live life are best precisely because they are his own.
- People require different atmospheres in order to develop and reach their potentials, and a healthy society must make it possible for people to follow more than one pattern.
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- Liberty and individuality are essential to individual and social progress. Seeing people's dissimilarities is key in learning about one's own weaknesses.
- Diversity also lets us see the potential of combining the positive traits of different people. Forced conformity, in contrast, keeps people from learning from each other.
- Mill writes that it is "despotism of custom" that prevents the improvement of England, and that it is Europe's relative diversity of lifestyles and paths that makes it more progressive than conformist China.
- However, Mill worries that Europe is progressing towards the Chinese ideal of "making all people alike," and will thus face stagnation.

Chapter 4:

- In this chapter, Mill attempts to delineate when the authority of society can rightly limit individuality and the "sovereignty of the individual over himself." Mill's answer is that society and the individual should each receive control over that part of human life that it is particularly interested in.
- While rejecting the idea of a social contract, Mill writes that since people receive the protection of society, they owe certain conduct in return. Individuals must not injure those interests of other people that should be considered rights.
- Individuals must fairly share the burden of defending society and its members from injury.
- Finally, individuals may be censured by opinion, though not by law, for harming others while not violating their rights. Thus, society has jurisdiction over any aspect of human behavior that "affects prejudicially the interests of others."
- However, society does not have an interest in those aspects of life that affect no one but the person acting, or only affects people by their consent.
- Mill writes that such behavior should be both legally permitted and socially accepted. People should encourage others to make full use of their faculties.
- They should not, however, try to keep a person from doing with his life what he wishes.
- Mill justifies this position by observing that anybody else's interests in or knowledge about a particular person's well being is "trifling" compared to the individual's own interest and knowledge.
- Mill says that he does not mean that people should not be allowed to point out what they see as faults in other people's behavior. In addition, he is not proscribing avoiding a person or warning others about that person.
- These "penalties" are acceptable because they are natural reactions to some behavior--they are not intended to punish a person.
- However, People *do not* have the right to express moral reprobation, and they should not try to make the person uncomfortable.
- He should not be treated with anger or resentment, or seen as an enemy if he engages in unpopular activities that only affect himself.
- Mill then addresses potential criticism of his argument. How "can any part of the

conduct of a member of society be a matter of indifference to the other members?"

- No human is fully isolated, and actions can create bad examples, hurt those who depend on the person and diminish community resources.
- Furthermore, why can't society interfere on behalf of mature people incapable of "self-government?"
- Mill replies that he agrees that some behavior may affect the "sympathies" and interests of others, and hurt the well-being of society at large.
- When an action violates a person's obligations then it does not only affect himself, and he can be properly face moral reprobation for breaking those obligations.
- Mill forwards the example of a person who is unable to pay debts because of extravagant living. He says that such behavior is subject to punishment because the person fails to fulfill a duty to his creditors.
- However, the person should not be punished for the extravagance itself--that is a personal decision that must be respected.
- In contrast, if an action only indirectly affects society without violating any fixed obligation, then "the inconvenience is one which society can afford to bear, for the sake of the greater good of human freedom."
- Society has a person's entire childhood to nurture values; if the person fails to accept those values, or remains immature, it is society's own fault.
- No further influence is necessary. Also, if an action is harmful then people will see its negative effects, and this should be enough of an example to them of why they should not act in such a way.
- Mill says the strongest argument against interference, though, is that when society does interfere, it will likely do so wrongly. He writes, "there is no parity between the feeling of a person for his own opinion, and the feeling of another who is offended at his holding it."
- Mill argues that there is a universal tendency of people to extend the bounds of "moral police" unjustly. He writes about how a Muslim majority might insist that pork not be eaten in their country, or that married clergy be punished in Spain.
- He writes, "we must beware of admitting a principle of which we should resent as a gross injustice the application to ourselves." If people want to be able to impose their morality, they must be willing to accept the imposition by others.
- Mill complains about unjust violations of freedom such as the banning of alcohol, the banning of recreation on the Sabbath, and the persecution of Mormons for polygamy.
- People can preach against such activities, and try to change people's minds, but they should not be coercive.

"What Utilitarianism Is":

- Mill attempts to reply to misconceptions about utilitarianism, and thereby delineate the theory. Mill observes that many people misunderstand utilitarianism by interpreting utility as in opposition to pleasure.
- In reality, utility is defined as pleasure itself, and the absence of pain. Thus another name for utility is the Greatest Happiness Principle.
- This principle holds that "actions are right in proportion 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." Pleasure and the absence of pain are, by this account, the only things desirable as ends in themselves, the only things inherently "good."
- Thus, any other circumstance, event, or experience is desirable only insofar as it is a source for such pleasure; actions are good when they lead to a higher level of general happiness, and bad when they decrease that level.
- The next criticism Mill takes on is the claim that it is base and demeaning to reduce the meaning of life to pleasure.
- To this Mill replies that human pleasures are much superior animalistic ones: once people are made aware of their higher faculties, they will never be happy to leave them uncultivated; thus happiness is a sign that we are exercising our higher faculties.
- It is true that some pleasures may be "base"; however, this does not mean that all of them are: rather, some are intrinsically more valuable than others.
- When making a moral judgment on an action, utilitarianism thus takes into account not just the quantity, but also the quality of the pleasures resulting from it.
- Mill delineates how to differentiate between higher- and lower-quality pleasures: A pleasure is of higher quality if people would choose it over a different pleasure even if it is accompanied by discomfort, and if they would not trade it for a greater amount of the other pleasure.
- Moreover, Mill contends, it is an "unquestionable fact" that, given equal access to all kinds of pleasures, people will prefer those that appeal to their "higher" faculties.
- A person will not choose to become an animal, an educated person will not choose to become ignorant, and so on.
- Even though a person who uses higher faculties often suffers more in life (hence the common dictum "ignorance is bliss"), he would never choose a lower existence, preferring instead to maintain his dignity.
- Another misconception about utilitarianism stems from a confusion of

- Another misconception about utilitarianism stems from a confusion of happiness with contentment. People who employ higher faculties are often less content, because they have a deeper sense of the limitations of the world.
- However, their pleasure is of a higher character than that of an animal or a base human. Mill writes, "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.
- And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their side of the question." Thus the people best qualified to judge a pleasure's quality are people who have experienced both the higher and the lower.
- Furthermore, Mill observes that even if the possession of a "noble character" brought less happiness to the individual, society would still benefit.
- Thus, because the greatest happiness principle considers the total amount of happiness, a noble character, even if it is less desirable for the individual, is still desirable by a utilitarian standard.
- Having responded to the objection that utilitarianism glorifies base pleasures, Mill spends the rest of this chapter presenting and responding to other criticisms of utilitarianism.
- One such objection is that happiness couldn't be the rational aim of human life, because it is unattainable.
- Furthermore, people can exist without happiness, and all virtuous people have become virtuous by renouncing happiness.
- First, Mill replies that it is an exaggeration to state that people cannot be happy. He contends that happiness, when defined as moments of rapture occurring in a life troubled by few pains, is indeed possible, and would be possible for almost everybody if educational and social arrangements were different.
- The major sources of unhappiness are selfishness and a lack of mental cultivation. Thus, it is fully within most people's capabilities to be happy, if their education nurtures the appropriate values.
- Furthermore, most of the evils of the world, including poverty and disease, can be alleviated by a wise and energetic society devoted to their elimination.
- Next, Mill addresses the argument that the most virtuous people in history are those who have renounced happiness. He admits this is true, and he admits that there are martyrs who give up their happiness.
- However, Mill argues that martyrs must sacrifice happiness for some greater end--and what else could this be but the happiness of other people? The sacrifice is made so that others will not have to make similar sacrifices; implicit in the sacrifice is the value of others' happiness.
- Mill admits that the willingness to sacrifice one's happiness for that of others is

the highest virtue.

- Furthermore, he says that to maintain an attitude of such willingness is actually the best chance of gaining happiness, because it will lead a person to be tranquil about his life and prospects.
- He specifies, however, that while utilitarians value sacrificing one's good for the good of others, they do not think that the sacrifice is in itself a good.
- It is a good insofar as it promotes happiness, but is not a good if it does not promote happiness.
- Mill observes that the utilitarian's standard for judging an act is the happiness of *all* people, not of the agent alone. Thus, a person must not value his own happiness over the happiness of others; and law and education help to instill this generosity in individuals.
- However, this does not mean that people's motives must only be to serve the greatest good; indeed, utilitarianism is not concerned with the motives behind an action; the morality of an action depends on the goodness of its result only.
- Moreover, in most aspects of everyday life, a person will not be affecting large numbers of other people, and thus need not consider his or her actions in relation to the good of all, but only to the good of those involved.
- It is only the people who work in the public sphere and affect many other people who must think about public utility on a regular basis.
- Another criticism of utilitarianism is that it leaves people "cold and unsympathizing," as it is concerned solely with the consequences of people's actions, and not on the individuals as moral or immoral in themselves. First, Mill replies that if the criticism is that utilitarianism does not let the rightness or wrongness of an action be affected by the kind of person who performs the action, then this is a criticism of all morality: All ethical standards judge actions in themselves, without considering the morality of those who performed them.
- However, he says that if the criticism is meant to imply that many utilitarians look on utilitarianism as an exclusive standard of morality, and fail to appreciate other desirable "beauties of character," then this is a valid critique of many utilitarians.
- He says that it is a mistake to only cultivate moral feelings, to the exclusion of the sympathies or artistic understandings, a mistake moralists of all persuasions often make.
- However, he does say that if there is to be a mistake of priorities, it is preferable to err on the side of moral thinking.
- Mill then presents a few more misunderstandings about utilitarian theory, which he declares are obviously wrong but which many people nonetheless

believe.

- First, utilitarianism is often called a godless doctrine, because its moral foundation is the human happiness, and not the will of God. Mill replies that the criticism depends on what we see to be the moral character of God; for if God desires the happiness of all His creatures, then utilitarianism is more religious than any other doctrine. A utilitarian believes that God's revealed truths about morality will fit with utilitarian principles. Furthermore, many moralists, not simply utilitarians, have believed that we need an ethical doctrine, carefully followed, in order to understand the will of God in the first place.
- Secondly, utilitarianism is often conflated with Expediency, and therefore considered immoral. However, "expedient" usually refers to acting against what is right for the sake of personal interest or short-term goals. Thus, instead of being useful, this meaning of expediency is actually harmful. Mill would argue that hurting society is not truly expedient, and that to act against society's interests is to be an enemy of morality.
- Many critics hold that prior to taking action, there is often not enough time to weigh its effects on general utility. Mill dismisses this, saying that such a claim is akin to saying that we can't guide our conduct by Christianity because we can't read the Bible every time we had to act. He asserts that we have had the entire history of human existence within which to learn the tendencies of actions to lead to particular results.
- There is a great deal of consensus about what is useful, and we have the capacity to impart this knowledge to children too. This is not to say that received ethics are always correct, and there is still much to learn about the effects of actions on general happiness.
- However, people need not reapply the first principles to an action each time they perform it. All rational people go through life with their minds made up on certain basic questions of right and wrong.
- Finally, utilitarianism is criticized as too allowing, as underestimating the immoral tendencies of human nature. For example, it is argued that a utilitarian will make his own case an exception to the rules, and will be tempted to justify breaking the rules by simply saying that a given action increases utility. However, Mill says this problem is not limited to utilitarian theories. All creeds must have exceptions, because the need for exceptions is part of the reality of human life. Having a standard of utility to invoke is better than having no standard at all.

