Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. XV, No. 4
October, 1988

UTILITARIANISM: A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

Utilitarianism is obviously an ethical theory of a long historical standing. Even a casually prepared list of its exponents or opponents is sure to contain the names of some very eminent thinkers. But in what follows, instead of giving a historical, or developmental, account of it, I shall try to present a conceptual or thematic one. My objective will be to formulate the chief questions it tries to answer, state some of the answers it has given to them which have acquired respectability in the history of ethical theory, bring out some of the difficulties or problems these answers have given, or may give, rise to, and assess how best it can take care of them without changing its character. I shall sometimes have to mention the positions taken by some utilitarians or their critics. But my aim will always be only to clarify some conceptual issue or issues and not to illumine any unlighted, or inadequately lighted, corner of its history. Since the entire discussion has to be accommodated in the body of an essay, it has to be brief. But it is hoped that its bravity will not sacrifice its clarity, nor will make it superficial.

The theory derives its name from its emphasis on the concept, or rather the principle, of utility. According to it "the sole ultimate standard of right, wrong, and obligation is the *principle* of *utility* or *beneficence* which says quite strictly that the moral end to be sought in all that we do is *the greatest possible balance of good over evil* (or the least possible balance of evil over good)." [1] The basic claim of the principle of utility, is, therefore

Received : 22-6-88

that the highest moral end, value, or goal is the greatest possible balance of good over evil. Consequently, an action is right if and only if it is a means to the latter. We ought to do that, and only that, which produces or is likely to produce the greatest possible balance of good over evil. By 'good' in such contexts is generally meant 'intrinsically good.'

It may be asked why the theory states its criterion in terms of the greatest possible balance of good over evil instead of stating it in terms of the greatest possible good. The reason is two-fold: (1) Generally the consequences of our actions are of a mixed sort, some are good, some are bad, and some are neither. The latter need not be taken into account in assessing the total value of the consequences. Therefore, their net or total goodness can be only the balance of their goodness over their badness. (2) The concept of the balance of goodness over badness also takes care of such actions, if they happen to be done, which have only good consequences. Since they would not have any bad consequences, the aggregate of their goodness would also be the balance of their goodness over badness. Suppose an action has consequences a, b and c off which a and b are good and c is evil. Then the balance is in favour of the good which is $(a+b)-c$, of course, assuming that c is less than $(a+b)$. Suppose a, b, and c are all good. Then the aggregated goodness $(a+b+c)$ is also the balance of their goodness over badness. As the amount of badness is zero, we can say it is $(a+b+c)$ or $(a+b+c-o)$ because $(a+b+c) = (a+b+c-o)$.

Utilitarians do assume that we ought to promote what is good and prevent what is evil. Frankena calls this the principle of benevolence, and says that it is a presupposition of the principle of utility. It seems to me that it is a presupposition of all

teleological theories, whether utilitarian or non-utilitarian, i.e., of any theory which considers the concept of value as basic and that of obligation as its derivative.

It is thus a normative, substantive, ethical theory, and not a descriptive or scientific, nor even a meta-ethical, one. A scientific theory of morals aims at giving an authentic description of the moral ideas and ideals of a certain society and discovering and systematizing the reasons or causes for its having them. Quite often anthropological and sociological studies of morals attempt to give such descriptive and explanatory accounts. A meta-ethical study, on the other hand, aims at analyzing the logic of ethical concepts and of ethical reasoning. None of these is the principal aim of utilitarianism.

A normative moral theory tries to present, on the other hand, a set of moral principles by using which, or in the light of which, one may decide what he ought or ought not to do, a set of goals or values one should aim at and try to achieve. Its objective is to help one understand what constitutes a morally good life and cultivate it as best as he can. Therefore, its basic questions are normative and the answers it gives to them are also normative; they are supposed to function as guides to good moral living. A philosopher, being unaware of, or confused about, the distinction between the normative and the non-normative, may offer, or may think that he can justifiably offer, a non-normative answer to a normative question, or *vice versa*. But to accuse any one of the important utilitarians of this kind of blindness or dimsightedness will amount to unduly underrating their philosophical abilities. It should be noted, however, that when dealing with a normative question, one is not forbidden to enter into the territory of the non-normative. He may have to attend to and form his opinion about certain non-normative issues, i.e., certain questions of fact, for example, concerning

human desires and aspirations, or certain meta–ethical questions, for example, concerning the logical relationship between fatual and moral judgements. But he has to be always conscious of the fact that neither an answer to a normative question can be an answer to a non–normative one, nor a method of arriving at the former be a method of arriving at the latter.

Utilitarianism is primarily a theory of obligation, a theory about the criterion of moral rightness or wrongness of actions. The question of its chief concern is: What is it which makes a morally right action morally right (or a morally wrong action morally wrong)? It does not aim at answering the meta–ethical question 'What do we mean when we say of an action that it is morally right (or morally wrong)?,' nor the scientific one 'What kind of actions are *considered*, and why, to be right (or wrong) in this or that society?.' Even the normative question it tries to answer is a moral question which can relevantly be answered only by a statement giving the criterion of moral rightness. It is not a question about rightness in general; something may be right but not morally right. '4' is the right answer to the question 'what is the product of 2×2?' but it is not a moral answer, since the question is not a moral question. Similarly, the right thing for a thief to do may be to steal the gun of the houseowner whose house he is burgling, if he thinks he can properly protect himself only if he has his gun. But it is morally wrong since it is morally wrong to steal or enter a house with the intention of committing burglary.

It maintains that there is a property which all right and only right actions have; this obviously means that an action which does not have it is not right. It is thus concerned with actions which can be called morally right or wrong, obligatory or forbidden. Since only voluntary actions, and not all actions, can be called right or wrong, it is really concerned only with

voluntary actions. Such actions are voluntary which, as Moore puts it, "are under the control of our wills, in the sense that if, just before we began to do them, we had chosen not to do them, we should not have done them," [2] i. e, actions which we would have done if we had chosen to do. Therefore, what it offers as the criterion of rightness is to be applied not to all but only to voluntary actions. Actions in the doing of which the agent has no choice, which he is compelled or forced to do, which he does accidentally, or inadvertantly, not being voluntary, are not morally judgable and therefore are beyond the range of the utilitarian criterion.

Like any other moral theory utilitarianism also takes it to be an obvious truth that there are situations in human life in which there is more than one thing the agent can do if he chooses to. That is, it holds that it is a fact that we do sometimes choose to do x, or choose not to do y.

Moore thinks that all that utilitarianism, or perhaps any theory of the criterion of rightness and wrongness, admits is that "in many cases, there certainly are a considerable number of different actions, any one of which we could do, if we chose..... It assumes, that is to say, that in many cases if we had chosen differently, we should have acted differently; and this seems to be an unquestionable fact,... even if we hold that it is never the case that we could have chosen differently." It does not have to hold, according to him, "that we ever really could choose any other action than the one which in the end we do choose....." [3] It does not have to commit itself to the view that we can really choose to do something other than what in fact we do. Moore himself may be satisfied with such a hypothetical position, and perhaps some other ideal utilitarians also would be. But the others, specially those who are not ideal utilitarian, do not seem to agree with Moore in this regard. In fact, unless one assumes

that off the two alternative actions, x and y, available to an agent in a certain situation, he can really choose either one, there is not much point in saying that even though he really did x, he could have done y if he had chosen to do it. It seems to me that for any theory of the criterion of rightness and wrongness it is necessary to assume that at least in some situations one can really choose to do any one of the alternative actions available to him.

Choosing to do something can be conceived positively as well as negatively. I can choose to do x, or to refrain from doing x. Since, in a good sense of the term 'do', refraining from doing something is doing something, even in refraining one exercises his power to choose. If my choosing to do something is said to be the exhibition of my positive freedom, my choosing to refrain from doing it can, by the same logic, be said to be that of my negative freedom.

It has been said earlier that utilitarianism is a theory of obligation and also that it is a theory of the rightness (or wrongness) of actions. Some thinkers make a distinction between the concept of 'right' and that of 'duty' (or 'obligation'). For example, Moore would say that an action is a duty "which will cause more good to exist in the universe than any possible alternative", and it is right or morally permissible if it "will not cause less good than any possible alternative"[4] According to him, then, only one action can be in any situation a duty, whereas more than one can be right or morally permissible. Therefore, if only a theory of duty is to be called a theory of obligation, a theory of rightness cannot.

In this essay I shall not make any distinction between a theory of obligation (or duty) and a theory of rightness. A theory of rightness can quite fittingly be called a theory of obligation. If, for example, in a situation I find that both x and y are equally

right, I can express this fact equally correctly by saying either that it is my duty to do, or I am obligated to (i.e., I ought to) do, or it is right for me to do, either one of the two actions, x and y (of course assuming that there is no point in doing both of them). We can adopt a similar mode of speaking when we find x better than other alternatives. We can then, for example, say that doing x is a duty, or obligatory, or right. It seems then that we can say by means of the concept of right all that we want to say by means of the concept of duty or obligation. A theory of rightness is a theory of obligation also because to admit that it is right to do x in the situation is to admit that it is obligatory to do x in s. It is odvious that if in a situation both x and y are right, our judgement will assume a disjunctive form. This method of explication, as will be clear from what follows, is not only more elegant but also more appropriate for presenting a philosophical or conceptual account of utilitarianism.

As a theory of rightness, utilitarianism is obviously a form of consequentialism because, according to it, the ultimate, or final determinant of the rightness of all right actions is the intrinsic goodness, worth, or value of their consequences. Some utilitarians hold that the rightness of every right action, taken as a particular action, is determined by its consequences. Therefore, according to them the relationship between the rightness of a particular action and its consequences is direct. According to some others a particular action is right because it is in conformity with, or an exemplification of, a certain rule, but the validity or soundness of the rule itself is determined by the goodness of the consequences of its general adoption or implementation. A particular action is thus right, if it is right, because following the rule or practice prescribing the class of actions, to which it belongs, generally has worthwhile consequences. Therefore, even according to these thinkers, the final determinants of the rightness of right actions are their consequences.

The principle of utility, stated in the beginning of the essay, can also be stated as saying that an action is right if it has the maximum usefulness or utility. A right action is one which is a means to producing or attaining the greatest balance of good over evil, or maximum possible goodness. Therefore, it is useful, or has utility, or rather has the maximum utility. To be right it must produce, or is likely to produce, more good (i. e., a greater balance of good over evil) than any other available action, or at least as much good (i. e., as great a balance of good over evil) as any available action, produces, or is likely to produce. In a slightly imprecise manner, all this can be said by saying that what makes an action right is the sum-total of the intrinsic goodness of its consequences, or that utility of an action is the ground or criterion of its rightness, and disutility that of its wrongness. It is the utility of the action itself which makes it right when it is the only action to be done, and it is its comparative utility when, along with it, some alternative action is also available.

Utilitarians claim that the principle of utility holds good not only of actions but even of motives, attitudes, character traits, institutions, etc. To make clearly visible its comprehensiveness or generality, it can be stated as the principle according to which any morally assessable x (where x may be an action, a motive, attitude, character trait, rule, or an institution, etc.) is right if and only if it is optimific, i. e., if and only if it possesses maximum utility. In this form it can be said to be the basic principle of all types of utilitarianism. It is the only basic principle of obligation or rightness the theory admits and claims that all other principles are derivable from it. In this essay, however, we shall discuss the principle primarily as a principle of the rightness of actions and rules. Its application to other things can very easily be reconstructed in the light of this discussion.

Since utilitarianism admits no criterion other than the goodness of the consequences, it is, as a theory of rightness, a monistic theory. It is not that one action is right because of its consequences, while another is right because of something else. All right actions have to have a common property, the property of being optimific, i.e., of being productive, either directly or indirectly, of maximally good consequences. The rightness of a right action (or the wrongness of a wrong action) is, therefore, not an intrinsic but an extrinsic property of it. It is not by reflecting upon the nature of any action that we can decide whether it is right or wrong. We can do that only by ascertaining its consequences.

A theory which is directly opposed to utilitarianism in this regard is deontological intuitionism. For convenience in use I shall use the short from D–intuitionism for the term 'deontological intuitionism' and T–intuitionism for 'teleological intuitionism.' The distinction between the two is as follows: for T–intuitionism the concept of right (or ought) is secondary in the sense that it can be explicated or analyzed in terms of the concept of 'good', whereas for D–intuitionism it cannot be so analyzed or explicated. Moore is a T–intuitionist because for him the concept of right (or duty) is analyzable in terms of that of 'good', while Ross is a D–intuitionist because for him the concept of right is *sui generis,* as it cannot be analyzed in terms of the concept of 'good.' Both are intuitionists because for Moore the (intrinsic) goodness of a good thing is known by intution and so is for Ross the rightness of right action.

T–intuitionism need not be opposed to utilitarianism because both are teleological theories. Both hold that the criterion of rightness is the conduciveness of the right act to something intrinsically good. This is a rather too simplistic account of their position but it is not incorrect, though it has to be made more

precise. We have seen that for Moore an action is right if and only if it is a means to something good. Other, non–intuitionist, utilitarians also hold that its rightness is a function of its being productive of some such consequences which are intrinsically good Since all varieties of utilitarianism consider a set of the results or consequences of an action as constitutive of its rightness, Brandt calls them 'result' theories. [5] The two terms, 'result theory' and 'consequentialism' mean the same thing.

D–intuitionism is directly opposed to utilitarianism because according to it, the rightness of a right act, and therefore the wrongness of a wrong act, is an intrinsic, not an extrinsic, property of the act. If it is right to keep a promise it is so because it is what it is, i. e. because it is keeping a promise, and not because of its consequences.

As Ross puts it, the main issue between utilitarianism and non–utilitarianism, say, his own D–intuitionism, is whether or not there is one general property which makes all right acts right Utilitarianism is, on this issue, as I have already said, a monistic theory, for according to it, there is one general feature, i.e., optimificity, present in all right and only right actions. For a non–utilitarian like Ross, on the other hand, there is no such single character of right actions which can be said to be the ground of their rightness. Fulfilling a promise is right because it is fulfilling a promise, telling the truth is right because it is telling the truth, and there need not be anything common between them which makes both of them right. D–intuitionists are generally pluralist as regards the ground or criterion of rightness. [6]

Since utilitarianism makes the worth of the consequences of actions the only ground of their rightness and wrongness, it is a fully objectivist theory. The rightness of an action depends upon its results, upon what it causes or produces, and not on any-

body's liking for it, or his attitude of approval towards it, as is the case with subjectivist theories. The results of actions are objectively determinable or ascertainable. All (or almost all) utilitarians seem to have an empiricist, nontheological, attitude towards morals; they regard the consequences of actions as empirically ascertainable. Consequently, *ethical disagreement* does not present any serious problem to them. When two persons disagree about the rightness of an action (or a class of actions, or about the rightness of anything whatsoever which may be called right), the way to reach an agreement is to find out what are its consequences and how good or bad they are. The entire exercise would be an empirical examination of consequences, real or in imagination, and calculation of their worth

Because of its built-in objectivism, utilitarianism very confortably accepts what is nowadays called the generalizability or universalizability of ethical judgements or concepts. Roughly speaking, the principle of universalizability can be stated as follows : If it is right for a person P to do X in a situation S, it is right for any other person similar to P in a situation similar to S to do X. It has been maintained by many eminent, classical as well as modern, moral philosophers like Kant, Moore, R. M. Hare, M. C. Singer; etc., that the universalizability of ethical judgements is rooted in the very logic of ethical concepts. A subjectivist cannot accommodate this principle in his theory. For example, if it is right for P to do X because he likes doing it, is cannot be right for Q to do it, if he does not happen to like it, howsoever, in other respects, he may be similar to P and howsoever his situation may be similar to P's. The utilitarian faces no problem in accepting the universalizability principle.

The principle of universalizability can be stated also by generalizing or universalizing the action concerned, as Moore has done. Suppose the action x has its total effects represented by

A and is right because of the goodness of A. Then any other action whose total effects are precisely similar to A would also be right. Further, if x is to be preferred to y whose total effects are represented by B, then x is to be preferred to any action whose total effects are precisely similar to B. [7]

The effects or consequences of an action being objective phenomena, the utilitarian's grounding rightness and wrongness on their utility–disutility makes utilitarianism an impersonal theory, a theory not hooked to the personhood or individuality of the agent, the doer, of the actions judged to be right or wrong. If the total value of A, the total effects of x, has the balance of good over evil, then doing x is right, no matter who does it. The personality, individuality, or the social status, of the agent does not matter at all. " In judging an action there is no need to know who is doing what to whom so long as the impact of these actions–direct and indirect–on the impersonal sum of utilities is known. " [8] In ascertaining the rightness of any thing we need to have information only about the relevant utilities and about nothing else. This is a great informational constraint implied by consequentialism and therefore by utilitarianism.[9]

As a result of the informational constraint the utilitarian ethical reasoning becomes very simple in its structure or form. Its form will be : x is right because it has such and such consequences. This does not mean, however, that it becomes very easy to decide what is right, because, as we shall see, calculating the total utility or value of all the direct and indirect consequences of any action is in itself a very difficult task. It becomes still more complicated if we have to find out the comparative value of the consequences of one action by comparing it with the values of the consequences of all the other actions open to the agent.

An obvious corollary of limiting the range of information to the consequences of x in order to determine its rightness is

that the motive behind doing x (if x is an action, or following x if it is a rule, etc.) becomes irrelevant. We do not have to find out the agent 's motive in doing it. Whatever be his motive, if its consequences are good, it is right, and if they are bad, it is wrong.

For Kant, an extreme non-utilitarian, on the other hand, it is only the motive of an action which makes it morally right. And, it is not any sort of motive, but exclusively the motive of doing it for the sake of duty. That is, an action is morally right only if the sole motive of the agent in doing it is his realization that it is his duty to do it, or in Kantian terminology, his reverence for the moral law. Consequences of actions are not at all to be taken into account in ascertaining the rightness or wrongness of actions. Kant's criterion of moral rightness is, thus, the opposite of the utilitarian one. The only information relevant to the determination of the rightness of x, for the utilitarian, is that about the worth or utility of x's consequences, whereas for Kant that about the agent's motivation.

But to be fair to both, it should be noted that neither would Kant say that any consequence is as important or unimportant as any other, nor would the utilitarian that any motive is as honorable as any other. To state precisely, the Kantian position is that consequences of an action are not to be made in deciding whether or not it is morally right. The goodness (or badness) of consequences do not form even a part of the criterion or ground of moral rightness (or wrongness). Similarly, the utilitarian position is that though motives of actions are not morally unimportant or irrelevant, the value of a motive does not constitute even partly the criterion or ground of rightness (or wrongness).

Motives are taken into account, in our ordinary, common, transactions, while making moral evaluations. The utilitarian's

claim that motives are irrelevent to the determination of moral rightness, however, need not surprise us because even a non–utilitarian, as important as Ross, also holds a similar position. For Ross [10], to declare an action right is to say that it ought to be done, and to say that it is right because of a cerrain motive would amount to saying that one ought to have that motive. Since 'ought' implies 'can,' it must then mean that one can acquire that motive if he chooses to. But motives are not under the control of our will in the sense that it is not upto us to, acquire them whenever we want to. Therefore, we cannot make rightness of a right act depend on its motive, since then we cannot protect the obvious implication of declaring an action to be right that it ought to be done.

Moore [11], while agreeing with other utilitarians and Ross that the rightness of an action never depends upon the agent's motive, assigns to motives a prominent place in moral evaluationl According to him they are relevant to our judgements of mora. praise or blame passed on the conduct of an agent. Whether or not a man deserves moral praise or blame for a certain action of his, is very much determined by the motive he has in doing it. We praise a man for his good motives and blame him for the bad ones. A good motive is likely to lead to a right action and a bad one to a wrong action. The point of our praising him for having a good motive is to encourage him to have good motives and that of our blaming him for having a bad one to prevent or discourage him from having bad motives. Ross also seems to hold not a very different position from Moore's in this regard because he seems to maintain that the possession of a good motive is a constituent of what we mean by a morally good man, and to call one a morally good man is to praise him.

An utilitarian, who considers motives as morally assessable, may, in consistency with his general utilitarian position, say that

motives themselves can be graded in terms of their utilities. That is, if a motive leads to, or is likely to lead to, actions which have good consequences, then it is a good motive.[12] But against this view and even against Moore's it can be said that, if Ross is right and many would say that he is right, since the acquisition or possession of a motive is not under our control, since we cannot have a certain motive simply because we want or will to have it, motives cannot be the objects of moral assessment.[13]

Moral decisions are made by individuals in the pursuit of their personal goals and also by public bodies (including states) in pursuit of theirs. Utilitarians think that the principle of utillty, the utilitarian criterion of rightness, can be used, or rather ought to be used, in personal as well as public decision–making. As far as its role in personal decision-making is concerned, there is no doubt that it is used. In fact, it is considered as a mark of rationality to choose to do the actions one considers likely to produce consequences possessing maximum good. We may object to his conception of a worthwhile consequence or goal, i.e , his theory of value. But if we accept it, there is no reason to object to his utilitarian choice of actions as right actions. It may be, and I think it is the case, that in practice he also uses sometimes some other, non–utilitarian, criterion or criteria. But this does not mean that the normative claim that the utilitarian criterion is the correct criterion for all cases of moral decision–making is invalid. It may be the only correct criterion even when it is not in fact used by everyone in every decision. But from all this it also does not follow that it is the only correct criterion, or even one of the correct criteria.

Aa regards its use in public decision–making is concerned, the situation is the same, almost the same. It is used by public bodies, and it is not the only criterion used in all public deci-

sion-making. Public bodies not only sometimes use some non-utilitarian criteria; they sometimes take moral decisions, say, about how to ensure the welfare of divorced, indigent, women of a certain community, on political, non-moral, considerations. Anyway, it is clear that there is no *theoretical* bar against its use either in personal or public decision-making.

Sen and Williams think that utilitarianism assumes that in the case of public decision-making "there is or should be one sovereign decision centre to determine what is right".[14] That there should be a decision centre, or decision-maker, is a requirement or assumption of any theory of moral criterion, utilitarian or non-utilitarian, when applied to public choice. But excepting dictatorship, or the theory of the divine right of kingship, no theory requires an absolute sovereign decision-maker. The utilitarian criterion can be used without any self-inconsistency in a society in which decision-making is done at several levels, provided its constitution or administrative set-up contains, formal or informal, directions or instructions as to how to coordinate these decisions, how to conciliate between them when they conflict. This, again, is to be done to make workable the use of any criterion, utilitarian or non-utilitarian. The utilitarian will have, of course, to do one thing which others do not have to; he will have to give a utilitarian justification for the directions or instructions referred to above.

Being a consequentialist theory, utilitarianism has to take a clear stand about (a) the denotation of the concept of action and the method of computing the value of the consequences of actions, (b) the criterion (or criteria) of good (and bad) consequences, and (c) the beneficiary of the good, i.e., the domain of the class of persons in respect of whom the goodness (or badness) of the consequences has to be considered. Utilitarians are

aware of the importance of these issues and also of the fact that the viability of their position very much depends upon the viability of their position on these issues. Quite naturally, all of them do not say the same or similar things about all of them, and consequently utilitarianism assumes different forms.

(A) Actions

a) Let us first take up the question of the denotation of the concept of action. It is natural to ask ' Does the word ' action ', in the statement of the utilitarian criterion, denote a particular action, or a class or type of actions ' ? For some utilitarians it denotes a particular action, while for some others a class or type of actions, leading to two forms of utilitarianism which have been called in the philosophical tradition (1) Act-utilitarianism (abbreviated as AU) and (2) Rule–utilitarianism (abbreviated as RU). For AU the rightness (or wrongness) of every single, particular, action is determined by the goodness or badness of its consequences, while for RU it is the rightness (or wrongness) of classes or types of action which is so determined. I shall take up AU first and through a discussion of it show the reasons which motivated some utilitariens to propound RU.

(i) Act–Utilitarianism

Act–utilitarianism is a " normative doctrine which maintains that a particular act (as opposed to a type of act or a class of acts) is right if and only if its utility,–that is, its contribution towards instrinsically good states of affaiairs – is no less than that of some alternative."[15] According to it the consequentialist criterion is to be applied to each particular action singly. That is, whenever one has to choose between doing two actions. x or y, he should find out the comparative value of the consequences of each one of them and then do the one which is going to have

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the best consequences or whose consequences are not going to be less good than those of the other. Similarly, if a moral judge has to assess the rightness of x and y, if they already have been done, he has to find out how the consequences of the one compare with those of the other, and then he may conclude that both are right (if their consequences are equally good), or x is right if x's consequences are better than y's, or less bad than y's in case both have bad consequences. In fact, there could be several possibilities when one has to ascertain the rightness of x as a result of a comparative evaluation of the values of the consequences of x and y in case he is in a position to do either one if he chooses to.

As any action may have both good and bad consequences, in deciding to refrain from doing it, what makes the step taken right is the balance of good over evil and not just the goodness of its consequences. Whether an agent has to choose between doing x or refraining from doing x, or between doing x or doing y, he has to determine the rightness of the step to be taken by finding out the net good likely to be produced. In both the cases he has to compute the balance by comparing the values of the consequences of the alternatives available (i.e, doing x and refraining from doing x, or doing x and doing y).

Let us assume that his alternatives are doing x and doing y. Slightly modifying Moore 's analysis[16] of the various possibilities which may confront him, we can state them as follows. Moore presents his analysis assuming, of course, for the sake of argument, that it is the pleasantness of a consequence which makes it a good consequence. I shall not make this assumption and list the possibilities only in terms of the goodness or badness of consequences. What makes a consequence good or bad will be discussed later.

1) It may be that both x and y have only good consequences. In that case the one the total goodness of whose consequences is greater than the total goodness of the other would be the right action. If both have the same total goodness, then both would be equally right.

(2) If x has only good consequences and y has both good and bad consequences, then again we have to compare the total goodness of x's consequences with total goodness of y's consequences, and proceed as in (1). The total goodness of x can be determined by aggregating the individual goodness of each one of its consequences. The total goodness of y can be determined by aggregating the individual goodness of each of its good consequenccs, the individual badnesses of each of its bad consequences, and then subtracting the latter aggregate from the former. Suppose the aggregate of the goodnesses of y's consequences is A and that of their badnesses B. Then their total goodness would be A–B. Let us call it C. If the total goodness of x's consequences is D, then x alone would be the right action if D is greater C. If C and D are equal, then both x and y would be equally right.

(3) If both x and y have good and bad consequences, then again we have to find out the total goodness of each one and then decide as in (2).

(4) If it is found that there is a balance of badness over goodness in each case, then the action the total badness of whose consequences is less than that of the other's would be the right action. The total badness of the consequences of an action can be arrived at in a manner similar to that in which its total goodness can be arrived at, i.e , by subtracting the aggregate of the individual goodnesses of each one of its consequences from the aggregate of the individual badnesses of each one of them. It may also happen that the total badness is the same in both

the cases and the agent has to choose to do one of them. Some would say that this is not a real choice; while some others would say that there is some choice even here, but then it does not morally matter which course of action one adopts. Since AU offers, like any other brand of utilitarianism, only a moral criterion for choosing what to do, such a case would not show that its criterion is defective. It would only mean that it is not a case fit for its application.

(5) It may also happen that the total value in each case is neither good nor bad. In such a situation the actions x and y are neither right nor wrong. Every action does not have to be either right or wrong. According to any moral theory, or theory of action, some actions may be right, some wrong, some and neither.

Against the act–utilitarian thesis that an individual action is right in virtue of its causal properties, i.e., because of its conduciveness to an intrinsically good state of affairs, it may be urged that some action may be right because the *very doing of it* is an intrinsically good thing, and not because it *leads* to an intrinsic good. For example, if one holds that pleasure is intrinsically good, then any action which leads to it is certainly right. But one may also do something because he enjoys the very doing of it, and not because of its being a cause of or means to something else. A hedonist utilitarian cannot say that it is not a right action. But then the thesis that *all* right actions are right because of their causal properties would seem to be threatened.

Bernard Williams seems to suggest that the act–utilitarian can take care of this situation only by slightly modifying or widening his consequentialism. For example, he may say that an act is right if the doing of it either conduces to, or is constitutive of, something instrinsically good, better than which nothing else is accessible to the agent. That is, if one does A, and A leads to

P which is intrinsically the best thing accessible to the agent, then A is right; but doing A is also right if P is not the effect of A but is partly or wholely constituted by A. [17] But it seems to me that the act–utilitarian, who would adopt this line of defence, would have to give up his total consequentialism.

The act–utilitarian can take a more radical, or rather an aggressive, stand. He may say, for example, that the generally offered examples of right actions, not deriving their rightness from their consequences, are morally irrelevant because, in fact, all morally relevant actions derive their rightness from their consequences. For example, one may sing (or compose poetry) because he enjoys it and not because of any one of its effects. But then such an act of singing is morally irrelevant. It becomes morally relevant only when its effects, on the singer, or someone else, are taken into account. In fact, it is difficult to find out a morally relevant action without taking into account its actual or possible effects. This is so because morality is by its very nature a social phenomenon.

He may even say that in cases where we seem not to take the consequences into account, we do not really ignore them. For example, we may be vaguely, or unanalytically, aware of the effect of singing on the attitude of the singer towards his neighbours; we may find that be becomes quite affectionate towards them after he has sung undisturbed. And, we do become conscious of the effects if they become conspicuous; i. e., when he starts neglecting his invalid father, or the education of his children, because of his enjoying singing.

For utilitarianism in general and for AU in particular, whether the consequences which determine the rightness of an action are its actual, or anticipated or expected, consequences, is a very mportant question. Some utilitarians hold that it is the former,

while some hold that it is the latter, on which its rightness depends. The diffuculties with the first position are the following : (a) Since the actual consequences of only past actions are definitively known, and not of the actions which are yet to be done, only past actions can definitively be judged to be right or wrong, and not the actions to be done. (b) One of the most important problems of moral life is that of deciding what to do, i.e., making a decision about a future action. We should decide, if we accept AU, to do the action whose consequences would not be less good than those of any other available action. But we cannot say definitely what the actual consequences of an action are going to be. Therefore, we cannot decide what to do.

To avoid these difficulties, some utilitarians hold that the consequences to be taken into account in the case of future actions are not the actual but the expected or anticipated ones, and those which the agent has good reasons to anticipate or expect. That is, not any consequence which one expects to be brought about, but only that which the available evidence in his possession entitles him to expect. If this view is accepted, then AU will cover both past and future actions.

AU has been criticised very forcefully by many thinkers. (1) For example, it has been said that it will justify doing an action which our moral common sense considers to be wrong, e. g. punishing an innocent person, breaking a promise, etc. If the consequences of punishing an innocent person are going to be on the whole good, for example, if we are going thereby to preserve, law and order and ensure personal peace and social security for a pretty long time, why should we not do that ? The standard utilitarian reply is that this is not likely to happen, and the consequences of such actions are likely to be more evil than good. But a consistent utilitarian may even say that we should

go ahead if we are sure to produce more good than evil by breaking a promise, or by telling a lie.

(2) A common criticism of AU or of utilitarianism in general, is that it is very difficult, almost impossible, to find out the net comparative value of the consequences of any action. Any utilitarian theory requires, what Sen calls, sum–ranking, i.e, aggregating the values of the consequences of an action and comparing their total value with the tolal values of the consequences of all other available actions. Every action has numerous consequences some of which may be good, some bad, and some indifferent. To calculate the net goodness of the consequences of any action is extremely difficult, and to compare it with the net goodness of those of all other available actions would be all the more difficult. It is also very time–taking, and therefore the magnitude of the effort one needs to make in order to calculate and compare may become a handicap to his doing what is right, specially when he has to act very quickly. If one starts deliberating about the consequencces of taking a man with a fractured brain in a car–accident to hospital H or to hospital J in the utilitarian manner, he may take so much time that the patient dies while waiting to be hospitalised.

Utilitarians feel that this is exaggerating the difficulties of sum–ranking too much. Our past experience and common sense are good enough guides in helping us when to deliberate and for how long.

(3) Bales[18] thinks that the application of the act–utilitarian criterion leads to an infinite regress. His argument runs as follows : Suppose one has to choose between doing A and B. Then he has to calculate and compare the net value of A's and B's consequences. But the act of calculating and comparing their net values is also an act. Let us call it C. Therefore, he should also

calculate the value of the consequences of C. Now he has three alternatives A, B. and C, the values of whose consequences he has to calculate and compare in another act, say D. In this way the number will go on increasing indefinitely.

To get rid of these difficulties, some act–utilitarians come forward with the suggestion that our moral experience has thrown up certain rough guides, or rules of thumb, which minimize our task of calculating and comparing. [19] For example, finding that keeping a promise generally has better consequences, i.e., has more utility, than breaking it, we habituate ourselves to believe that we ought to keep promises. This belief, or the rule 'Keep your promises,' works as a rough guide or rule of thumb, with the result that when we have to keep a promise, we do not always need to calculate and compare the values of promise–keeping and promise–breaking. But the rightness of promise–keeping is still constituted by its consequences; the rule of thumb only reminds us that they are generally desirable, and thereby saves our time and labour.

By admitting the use and importance of rules of thumb, the act–utilitarian takes care of almost all of the objections mentioned above. If punishing the innocent has been found in our experience to have led to undesirable consequences, there is a good reason for not punishing one in the present situation. The act–utilitarian, thus, does admit the importance of moral rules. He only says that they are not inviolable, nor independent of the concequences of the actions they prescribe or proscribe.

The act–utailitrian's reference to rules also becomes visible when he uses what is called the method of utilitarian generalization. This method is used specifically to show that AU does not justify any obviously wrong action on consequentialist grounds. We have referred earlier to the example of justifying

punishing an innocent man in order to stop crimes. The method of utilitarian generalization consists in imagining the results which would occur if the practice of punishing the innocent is generalized. The act–utilitarian can argue as follows : Even if the results of punishing this innocent man in this case my be good, imagine what would happen if everyone started punishing some innocent individual in order to control some crime or crimes. Quite obviously the results would be too bad.

To make use of the generalization technique is to appeal to a rule. In the above case the rule implied is some such one as 'Punish an innocent person to stop crimes', and the thrust of the argument is that since its general adoption will lead to devastating consequences, it is wrong to punish an innocent person even in the present case.

Some utilitarian critics of AU see in the above AU's inherent incompleteness. They think that the move shows that by its inner logic it has been forced to give to rules a much more decisive role than what it assigned to them while giving to them the status of mere rules of thumb. In its use of the generalization technique, AU, it is said, leans towards making the conformity of an action with a rule, depending upon what kind of rule it is, the determinant of its rightness or wrongness. Punishing an innocent in a particular case, even if expected to be useful, is said to be wrong because the consequences of the general adoption of the rule with which it conforms (i.e., whose instantiation it is, or which has been obtained by generalizing it) are too bad.

But to determine rightness or wrongness in this way is to go beyond the logical boundary of AU, as it would supersede the act–utilitarian criterion of rightness

This line of thinking is further developed in RU.

(ii) Rule–utilitarianism (RU)

When the importance of moral rules is noticed, it is felt, as it has been already said, by some, that we cannot stay at the stage of AU. If we still admit that the rightness of each single act is be determined by its consequences and treat rules only as rules of thumb, then rules are to be used only if we are lazy, or do not have enough time to deliberate. In all such cases of acting under the guidance of rules we shall feel hesitant and unsure; we cannot say that we are doing the right thing because our guide is only a rough guide. Such a guide cannot justify our non-calculation and non-comparison of the values of consequences, or even cutting calculation and comparison short. Nor can it stop us from breaking a promise because we are not fully sure of the rule of promise-keeping itself. We can take advantage of the rules only if we do not treat them as mere rules of thumb and do not make the consequences of each single action the real determinant of its rightness (or wrongness.)

Rule-utilitarianism is a kind of indirect consequentialism, though it is utilitarian nonetheless. According to it, the rightness of types, or classes, of actions, and not that of each single action, is determined by their consequences. Suppose a person has to choose between doing A and B. If there is a rule prescribing the class (or type) of actions to which A belongs, and there is no rule prescribing the class of actions to which B belongs, then it is obligatory for him to do A. A rule of action prescribes or proscribes a class of actions, and not a single action. That is, an action is right if it is in accordance with a rule, and wrong if it is a violation of it.

Saving the life of a drowning man is right because it is prescribed by the rule : Do as much as you can to alleviate human suffering. But the rightness of a rule, RU holds, is determined by the consequences of its general adoption. If one has to decide which rule. R, or S, is a right rule, he has to find out the ne

value of the consequences of the general adoption of each one of the two rules and call that one right the consequences of whose general adoption have the greater of balance good over evil If the balance is equal in both the cases, then the two rules would be equally right.

Sometimes one has to choose not between following R or S, but between following or not following R, when only one rule is relevant to his situation. In such a situation R is to be called a right rule either if the results of its general adoption are shown to be good, or if the results of its general non–adoption are shown to be bad. Both are utilitarian methods.

The advantages of RU over AU are the following : (a) We do not have to ascertain every time we have to choose between two actions what are their consequences and which set of consequences has what sort of value. (b) We cannot also be confronted with the suggestion of considering a particular action right because of some expected good consequences even if doing it is revolting to our moral sense, e. g, the action wnich consists in punishing an innocent person if it is expected to stop crimes. The rule–utilitarian can say that it would be wrong because it would go against the accepted (or ideal) rule 'Never punish a person who has not been proved to be guilty.'

It may be the case that in a certain situation the consequences of punishing an innocent person are (most probably) going to be good but the consequences of violating the rule, 'Do not punish...,' which forbids it, are generally bad, or the consequences of the adoption of the rule are generally good. Therefore, says the rule–utilitarian, we should follow the rule even in this situation and refrain from punishing any innocent person. In this way, he thinks, we can protect (almost) all that our common–sense morality approves of, i. e., all that it has good reasons to approve of.

The rules for RU are not merely rough guides, or rules of thumb. They are not ad-hoc rules, or rules to be appealed to merely for minimizing inconveniences of decision-making, or to be used merely as time-saving devices. Rather, it is they which make particular right acts right, and they have to be followed unless the consequences of following them in general practice are found to lack utility.

A question arises here with regard to the status of these rules: Are they the rules actually in vogue, or some sort of ideal rules? S. E. Toulmin takes them to be actual rules and R. B. Brandt to be some sort of ideal rules which may not have been accepted in actual practice. Actual rules are the accepted, conventional, rules of a society. Such rules may be regional i. e., accepted by some and not by all societies, or universal, i.e., accepted by all societies. Ideal rules, on the other hand, are those which need not be conventional, or actually accepted, but those which if accepted would lead to good, desirable, consequences.

Critics of RU point out that it is too difficult to find a complete system of prescriptions or rules covering all possible types of actions. If the system we have is not complete, we may not have available to us a rule covering a particular action. Then we shall have no criterion to decide whether or not it would be right to do it. But rule-utilitarians say that normally our rules cover all important cases, and new rules keep coming up if the demands of life require them on utilitarian grounds.

But a more imporant question is this: What should we do when two rules, whose general adoption has been found in experience to be optimific, conflict? For example, suppose the rule 'Tell the truth and only the truth' requires a doctor to tell a patient of cancer that he is suffering from an incurable desease, thereby making him lose his will power to get cured, and the

rule of his professional ethics 'Always keep the morale of the patient high' requires him to conceal this piece of truth. A rule-utilitarian may suggest that there should be added to the list of rules some second-order rules deciding which rule has preference over which in case of conflict. But as Brandt points out,[20] even these second-order, preference, rules may conflict and then we may have to have third-order preference rules. But then the system of rules would become too complicated.

In fact, the only way to solve the conflict of rules would be to appeal to consequences of adopting the conflicting rules. Like any other brand of utilitarianism, RU will have ultimately to appeal to consequences. And, since it is difficult to claim that all the consequences of following a rule all the time for all persons concerned are going to have the balance of good over evil, rules are bound to remain at the most highly utilitarian, and never absolutely utilitarian. This means that they are likely to be at the most good rules of thumb, and not unfailing, inviolable, directives. But then the distinction between act and rule-utilitarianism starts evaporating. For example, it would be too much to claim that all the effects of truth-telling all the time are good, and therefore, what we can at the most say is that we should follow the rule except in those cases in which following it is non-optimific. This is what AU also says.

All types of utilitarian theories, AU and RU alike, have by some been criticised on the ground that it is practically impossible to take into account all the effects of any action or of the adoption of any rule. Some effects are direct, some are indirect, i.e., the effects of some effects; some take place when the action is being done or immediately after it has been done, while some in the remote future. If the direct as well as indirect, immediate as well as remote, all effects of any action have to be taken into account to determine its rightness, then it would be insuperably

difficult to do that since the effects would obviously be innumerable. In the case of a rule the task would be virtually impossible to perform. A rule covers a class of actions which are innumerable. Therefore, to compute the value of the effects of its general adoption is to compute the values of innumerable effects of innumerable actions falling under it.

Utilitarians are not insensitive to the difficulties mentioned above. But they handle them in the utilitarian manner; they claim that there is no utility in taking into account far-flung, indirect, effects, or effects which may happen in the too distant future. It is one of their assumption that very remote effects do not matter. Moreover, they also believe that our common moral experience, the experience of the race, helps us in deciding which effects to take into account and which not, of course, on utilitarian grounds.

(B) Good and Bad consequcnees

The utilitarian theory of the rightness and wrongness of actions cannot be complete unless it is accompanied with a intrinsic value which tells us what it is which makes a consequence a good consequence, or what sorts of consequences are intrinsically good. The utilitarian has to inform us of his conception of the good which it is our obligation to produce or promote.

It was noted earlier that the principle of benevolence, as Frankena has phrased it, is a presupposition of the principle of utility. J. J. C. Smart [21], an act–utilitarian, puts this point in a slightly different way when he says that the utilitarian appeals to the sentiment of generalized benevolence, the sentiment or attitude to seek good consequences. Utilitarianism assumes that we have an obligation to promote the good and prevent the evil, and therefrom derives support for the doctrine that the

right action is a means to the greatest good, or to the good which is not less than the good producible by another action available to the agent. Therefore, the utilitarian must tell us what he means by a good (and bad) consequence, i.e., he must give us his theory of value.

Some utilitarians hold a hedonistic theory of value according to which pleasure or happiness is the only intrinsic good Sometimes a distinction is made between pleasure and happiness, and 'hedonism' is reserved for the view which considers pleasure to be the only intrinsic value, while 'eudaemonism' is used as the name of the view which gives that status to happiness. In this essay we shall call both the views hedonistic

For all hedonistic utilitarians, like Bentham, Mill and Sidgwick, it is the pleasure or happiness present in the consequences which make them good, desirable, or worthwhile, and therefore an action (or rule) is right if and only if it produces at least as much pleasure or happiness as any other available one. There are some minor differences among hedonistic utilitarians. For example, Bentham does not make any difference of quality among pleasures whereas Mill does But they all agree about the criterion of rightness. The hedonistic utilitarian is thus monistic both in his theory of value (by holding that only one thing is intrinsically good, i.e., pleasure or happiness) and his theory of obligation (by holding that we ought to do only that whose consequences are not less good than those of any other available action).

Maximization of the intrinsic value(s) occupies perhaps the most prominent place in all utilitarian, hedonistic as well as non-hedonistic, theories of value. Exactly speaking, it is not just its conduciveness to the intrinsic good but conduciveness to the maximum possible intrinsic good in the circumstances, which makes an action right. Bentham and Mill extend the notion of

maximization in the direction of both the experience and the experiencer of happiness. Therefore, they declare that the highest value which everyone ought to aim at is the greatest possible happiness of the greatest possible number, i. e., the greatest possible amount of happiness experienced by the greatest possible number of persons concerned. A right action consequently is one which contributes to it.

Some other utilitarians, on the other hand, maintain a pluralistic theory of value. Among them Moore is the most prominent According to him there is not only one thing which is intrinsically good. He calls pleasure, knowledge, appreciation of beauty, etc. all intrinsically good. Therefore, any action, which is a means to at least as much pleasure, knowledge, or appreciation of beauty, etc., as any other available one, is right. Those who consider something other than pleasure also to be intrinsically good are called ideal utilitarians.

Hedonist and Ideal, both forms of utilitarianism, locate intrinsic value in some state or states of consciousness. It is the mental state of consciousness, the experience, of feeling pleased or happy, of being enlightened by the acquisition of knowledge, or of enjoying beauty, which is intrinsically good. It is not a state or object of the external world.

One may, however, locate the intrinsic value in something not exclusively constituted by a mental state. Suppose, for example, one says that the intrinsic good is the satisfaction of a desire by obtaining the object of the desire. Since the object of a desire can very well be, or generally is, an external object (like a position of power, wealth, etc.), here what would be intrinsically good would be satisfying the desire by getting the desired external object. Since desires may be either reasonable or unrea sonable, the theorist may lay down the condition that they

must be rational desires, i. e., desires based on a sound understanding of relevant facts and supported by logic. Some such position is maintained by Richard Brandt.[22]

The good may also be said to be constituted by the satisfaction of the basic needs of the person or persons concerned. A need is differnt from a desire in the sense that one may not desire what he needs, or desire what he does not need.[23] Some of the welfare states define the good in this way and follow a policy of providing means for the satisfaction of what they consider to be the basic needs of their citizens. As a result of education or public relations work one may start desiring the satisfaction of a need which he did not desire earlier. But whether an utilitarian considers a state of consciousness, a desire satisfied, or a need fulfilled, as intrinsically good, his theory of right will have the same form. Its content will differ in accordance with what he considers to be the good.

(C) The Beneficiary of the Good

Whatever is said to be intrinsically good, a natural question to ask would be : What is the relevant domain of persons who could be the beneficiary of good, i. e., with reference to whom the value of the consequences of a right action is to be calculated ? For the sake of convenience I shall discuss this issue with reference to only one intrinsic value, happiness, since the discussion will apply to all intrinsic value, may be with some minor adjustments.

Assuming that it is the net consequential happiness, the balance of happiness over unhappiness caused by an action, which makes it right, the question which we posed above can be rephrased so follows : Who should be considered to be the relevant beneficiary, or the enjoyer, of this balance of happiness,

or, whose happiness the action should cause to be called a right action ? If one answers this question by saying that it is the agent's, the doer's, happiness, then he is an egoist; if by saying that it is not the agent's but someone else's happiness, then he is an altruist, and if by saying that it is the happiness of all concerned, or of as many of them as possible, then he is a universalist. In point of logic, therefore, there could be three forms of utilitarianism, egoistic, altruistic, or universalistic. But generally, in recent philosophical literature, only the univeralistic form is called utilitarian. Thererefore, I shall limit my discussions only to it.

Every action which can be judged to be right or wrong is done in a context, in a certain social set-up [4], and the persons figuring in that context or set-up are the persons concerned, or relevant to the evaluation of the action as right or wrong. They constitute the domain of the class of persons in respect of whom the value of its consequences is to be considered. Let us imagine, to make our discussion neat and tidy, a context in which there are seven persons who are all hungry and to one of them some food–packets are given to be distributed among them. Let us also assume that feeding a hungry man is to make him happy. As Bentham and Mill would say, the utilitarian ideal here is the greatest happiness of the greatest number; even others would say that the distributor of the food–packets ought to make all concerned, i. e., all the seven including himself, or as many of them of possible, happy by distributing the food–packets among them. Utilitarianism is in this respect fair to the agent as well as to others, and therefore free from the one–sidedness of egoism and altruism.

For utilitarianism each person is equal to the other; none is more are less equal than anyone else. Therefore, the problem of distribution of the good is bound to arise. In this case, how

the happiness, which can be caused by feeding some or all of the hungry seven, has to be distributed among them ? According to the utilitarian criterion of rightness, an act of distribution would be right if the net happiness caused by it is not less than that which could have been caused by any other mode of distribution available to the distributor. Suppose the food–packets are not enough to satisfy completely the hunger of all the seven. Imagine one possible mode of distribution in which the distributor distributes all the packets only among a group of four consisting of himself and three others who are his cousins. He thereby causes in them the complete satisfaction of their hunger, but lets the remaining three continue to feel as hungry as before. Suppose we give 10 units to one complete satisfaction of hunger, and 4 to one existing state of hunger. Then the net happiness caused would be $(10\times4) = 40$ units. Imagine an alternative mode of distribution in which he distributes the food equally among all the seven and produces in each one only half satisfaction of his hunger. If we give 5 units to one half satisfaction, the net happiness would in this case be $(7\times5) = 35$ units. Therefore, on the utilitarian criterion of rightness, one would say, the first mode of distribution is right and the second wrong.

The utilitarian makes the net value or utility the sole decider of rightness and does not let the mode of distribution play an important role. He seems to treat each person's happiness (or unhappiness) as an isolable unit which can be aggregated with other such units or subtracted from relevant aggregates. And, in his scheme it is only the aggregate which matters; it does not matter how the aggregate has been achieved.

But the mode of distributing utilities cannot be ignored. It is when we start judging a mode of distribution to be right or wrong that we find ourselves using the concept of justice, or that of distributive justice. Any normative theory of value has

to opine about how a value has to be or ought to be distributed, and, therefore, it has to have a corresponding theory of justice. Utilitarians are not oblivious of the importance of the concept of justice. But for them it is a secondary, or derivative, concept in the sense that it is derivable from the concept or principle of utility. A just society, for them, is one which is so ordered and organised that it procures the maximum possible welfare of its members, no matter how this maximum is distributed among the members. For example, it may not matter if a few are conspicuously more benefited than some others. Perhaps the utilitarian assumes that the happinesses of some would compensate for the miseries of some others, letting the sum of all the happinesses of all the members remain the maximum possible in the circumstances. He may be doing so because, as Rawls says, "Utilitarianism does not take seriously the distinction between persons."[25] If the utilitarian method of aggregation, or sum-ranking, shows that the net sum of utilities is the maximum possible, the society deserves to be called just. But this may seem unfair to many. To many thinkers the utilitarian theory of justice goes against our ordinary, untutored but sound, moral intuitions about justice. It is a sound intuition, they would say, which judges a certain mode of distribution of utilities or advantages, e. g., the second in our example (of seven hungry men), to be more just than another, e. g, the first in the example, even though the net happiness caused by it is less than that caused by the other.

It may be suggested that the utilitarian can establish harmony with our intuitious by incorporating distributive justice as another value to be taken into account while determining the rightness of an action or of a mode of distribution. The concept of distributive justice refers to appropriate or sound distribution of relevant advantages and disadvantages by an individual

among the concerned persons, or by a society among its members, that is, among such persons among whom they can be relevantly distributed. David Loyns thinks that ideal utilitarians, since they consider more than one thing to be intrinsically good, can add distributive justice to their list of intrinsic goods. [26]

In case the above suggestion is implemented, a right action, involving distribution of utilities, to be right would have to be both optimific and just. But what to do when the two demands are not satisfiable at the same time ? Moreover, will the theory remain consequentialist or teleological, which it must be in order to remain utilitarian, if along with the maximization of the good it also considers distributive justice as an intrinsic value of equal status ?

To answer the above questions we shall have to discuss in detail the nature of distributive justice, or rather of justice. But this work cannot be taken up here as it deserves another full essay.

Opposite Stadium Main Gate,
Prem Chand Path,
Rajendra Nagar,
PATNA 800 016.

RAJENDRA PRASAD

NOTES

1. Frankena, William K., *Ethics*, (prentice – Hall, 1963), p. 29.
2. Moore, G. E, *Ethics*, pp. 10–11.
3. Moore, G. E. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
4. *Principia Ethica*, p. 148. Even Ross (*The Right and The Good*, pp. 3-4), who otherwise differs from Moore in his theory of the meaning of right, makes a distinction between ' right ' and ' duty ' or ' obligatory ' in very much the same manner as Moore does. Therefore the argument given here applies to his position as much as it applies to Moore's.

5. Brandt, R. B., *Ethical Theory* (Prentice-Hall, 1959), p. 380.
6. See Ross, W. D., *The Right and The Good,* Chapt. 2.
7. *Ethics,* pp. 84–85.
8. Sen, Amartya and Williams, Bernard (ed.) *Utilitarianism and Beyond* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 5.
9. *Loc. Cit.*
10. *The Right and The Good,* pp. 2–5.
11. *Ethics,* pp. 116–17.
12. Adams, R. M., " Motive utiltiarianism ". *Journal of Philosophy,* August, 1976.
13. Sen, Amartya, " Utilitarianism and Welfarism ", *Journal of Philosophy,* September, 1977.
14. Sen, Amarty & Williams, Bernard, *Ibid,* pp. 1–3.
15. Bales, R. Eugene. " Act-utilitarianism : Account of Right-Making Characteristics or Decision-Making Procedure ? ", *American Philosophical Quarterly,* 1971, p. 257.
16. *Ethics,* pp. 15–20.
17. Smart, J. J. C. and Williams, B., *Utilitarianism : For and Against* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 86–87.
18. Bales, R. Eugene, *Ibid.*
19. Smart, J. J. C. and Williams, B. *Ibid,* pp. 42–43.
20. Brandt, R. B., *Ethical Theory* (Prentice-Hall, 1959), p. 399.
21. Smart J. J. C. and Williams, B., *Ibid.,* p. 17.
22. See his *A Theory of the Good and the Right* (Oxford, 1979).
23. For a detailed but somewhat different treatment of these three ways of conceiving the good, see James Griffin's " Modern Utilitarianism, " *Revue Internationale De Pholosphie,* 1982, No. 141.
24. This set-up could be very small, e. g., a small family, or very large, e.g., the United Nations Organization whose members constitute almost the entire world, and it may include the present as well as future generation of human beings.
25. Rawls, John, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford, 1972), p. 27.
26. Loyns, David, *Forms and Limits of Utilitarianism* (Oxford. 1965) p. 5