Introduction to Moral Philosophy: Mill's *Utilitarianism*
Trinity Term 2010

Objectives

Our aim will be to cultivate an understanding of some of the central concepts in moral philosophy through the critical study of Mill's *Utilitarianism*. Concepts to be covered include: happiness, pleasure and well-being; various forms of utilitarianism; and justice. Depending on student interest, we may also cover the problems of alienation, demandingness or virtue, or Mill's liberalism.

In the process, we will learn to develop arguments in moral philosophy, and identify problems of justification and inconsistency.

Tutorials

Teaching will be delivered over the course of four tutorials, the precise details of which are to be arranged separately.

For each tutorial, students will be expected to prepare a short essay (5 pages) or a response to another student's essay (4 pages). Please be careful to reference appropriately and include a full bibliography. Essays should be submitted electronically at least 24 hours before the tutorial (send to: courtney.cox@philosophy.ox.ac.uk). A copy of the essay should also be sent to your tutorial partner. In the case of essays/responses, a copy of the essay should be submitted to your tutorial partner 72 hours before the tutorial.

Before each tutorial, please read your tutorial partner's essay. Come prepared to discuss whether you agree, whether you find their arguments convincing, and why (or why not).

A note about essays: Essays that argue forcibly for a position are invariably more interesting – and successful – than literature reviews. Be sure to state your position clearly. Do not shy away from objections: your argument will not be convincing if it is not clear that you understand the potential problems and trade-offs it involves.

Contact

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me: courtney.cox@philosophy.ox.ac.uk

Course Outline

Note that listed reading is required. 'Recommended reading' is just that – recommended, but not required.

Set Text:

Mill, J.S.   *Utilitarianism.* (ed. Roger Crisp, OUP 1998 recommended)

Tutorial 1: Happiness, Pleasure, & Well-being

Mill, J.S. *Utilitarianism* Ch. 1-2.

Crisp, Roger. *Mill on Utilitarianism*. (Routledge 1998) Ch. 2-3

Kagan, Shelly. *Normative Ethics*. p. 25-41

Recommended Reading:

Bentham, Jeremy. *Introduction to the Principles of Moral and Legislation.* Esp. Ch. 1, 4-5.

Mill, J.S. 'Bentham'. – available in many editions (e.g. *Utilitarianism and Other Essays,* ed. Alan Ryan)

Parfit, Derek. *Reasons & Persons*. Appendix I

Tutorial 2: Forms of Utilitarianism - Rule vs. Act

Mill, J.S. *Utilitarianism*.

Crisp, Roger. *Mill on Utilitarianism*. (Routledge 1998) Ch. 5

Kagan, Shelly. *Normative Ethics*. p. 59-69; 212-239.

Sidgwick, Henry. *The Methods of Ethics*. Book IV Ch. 1, 3-5.

Recommended Reading:

Hare, R.M. *Moral Thinking: its Levels, Method and Point*. (1981) Ch. 1-3

Mackie, J.L. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. (1977) Ch. 6.

Parfit, Derek. *Reasons and Persons*. Part I Ch. 1-5; Part IV.

Rawls, John. 'Two Concepts of Rules', in *Philosophical Review*, 1955. Vol. 64.

Singer, Peter. 'Is act-utilitarianism self-defeating?', in *Philosophical Review*, 1972. Vol. 81.

Tutorial 3: Utilitarianism & Justice

Mill, J.S. *Utilitarianism*. esp. Ch. 5

Crisp, Roger. *Mill on Utilitarianism*. Ch. 7

Nozick, Robert. 'Side Constraints', in *Consequentialism and its Critics*, ed. Samuel Scheffler, OUP 1988. p. 134-141.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. (OUP, 1972) p. 22-27.

Williams, Bernard. 'Consequentialism and Integrity', in *Consequentialism and its Critics*, ed. Samuel Scheffler (OUP 1988). p. 20-50.

Recommended Reading:

Hare, R.M. *Moral Thinking*. Ch. 9.

Scanlon, T.M. 'Rights, Goals, and Fairness', in *Consequentialism and its Critics*.

Sidgwick, Henry. *The Method of Ethics*. Book III, Ch. 5-6.

Tutorial 4: TBD

Further Reading:

In addition to the reading required/suggested for each tutorial, the following might be found useful:

Kagan, Shelly. *Normative Ethics.* (Westview 1998). A good overview of the major factors and divisions within moral philosophy.

Scheffler, Samuel (ed.). *Consequentialism and its Critics*. (OUP 1988). An excellent selection of articles.

Williams, Bernard. *Morality*. (Cambridge 1993). A good introduction to moral philosophy.

The Philosophy Faculty has also provided a reading list for Moral Philosophy (Mill), covering the above and other topics, available on weblearn.