

**MORAL OBLIGATION: DIFFERENT
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Introduction

Ethics, branches of philosophy of human conducts. It has both theoretical and practical aspects. The theoretical part of ethics theorises the rightness or wrongness of an action, purity of intention, and quality of character and so on. Whereas the practical aspect of ethics focuses on the application of the theories in our voluntary actions. It instructs us how to follow a moral path in a practical life situation. Task of normative ethics is to prescribe do-s and do not-s and evaluate human voluntary actions on the basis of prescribed rules, principles, and by the norms of the society. Ethics is called normative study as it deals with the norms about what should be done in our practical life. In my dissertation, I have discussed on the conception of moral obligation. Here I would like to point out the importance of the concept in modern and contemporary. As per my opinion society is the realm where without adjustment and cooperation with people could not live a peaceful life. It is mandatory for every citizen following the norms of a particular society. Basically civilised people always try to cooperate with their co- citizens. To maintain a just society they have to accept some obligations towards the norms of the society. So, the obligations are such that people obey it as a criterion to live a good life. Obligations may be social, legal or moral. Here I will discuss only on moral obligation only. Legal norms are the laws and regulations, violation of which is punishable offence. On the other hand social norms a help person to live a social life. It teaches how to cooperate with other persons of the society. social and legal norms are obligatory as there are some external factors involved here, which compel the person to accept the norms. But moral obligation is different from other obligations. Violation of moral obligation may not be punishable in the previous sense; but it affects the human life

intentionally. People who try not to violate such norms as violation make them sad. People feel guilt or shame if they do not keep their moral obligations. Moral obligation comes as an internal urge of agent. But my question is why does a person want to be moral? Why do we feel happy after keeping promise? Why does immorality make people shameful? That is because morality brings a gratification. People try to be moral, otherwise they repent. If we study the history of western philosophy we see that from the Greek period to the modern period most of the discussions of ethics give emphasises on reason and consider reason as the only right instrument in the ethical realm. Many of them, no doubt, have incorporated emotion in ethics, but they also have placed emotion in a secondary position. Role of reason is primary in ethics. The attitude of philosopher insists me to understand the relation between reason and emotion.- are they totally different ? Is it totally impossible to place them side by side? Is it totally impossible to connect them in the area of ethics? All these questions encouraged me to revisit the philosophical thought of modern philosophers. I decided to work on moral obligation because if we feel the obligation to act morally then we obviously accept that our emotions are involved here as this obligation generates from our inner soul. This field of philosophy where reason and emotion try to overlap each other. This ethical discussion expounds how the psychological factor is instructed by reason based brain factor and vice versa.

I know that in this short time span it is impossible to discuss about this issue as discussion on the concept of obligation involves many other important issues in ethics so I have confined my discussion mainly within the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. These two philosophers placed this concept at the root of their theories. In contemporary period Bernard Williams has suggested an alternative view of obligation which have discussed here. His philosophical framework is different

from the above mentioned two philosophers as like them Williams is not prescribing any legalistic theory. So I have included his approach here. I will just elicit three vital views on the concept of moral obligation where I will try to show up how a person develop his moral life concentrating on the benevolence of society and as well as on his own satisfaction.

My dissertation “Moral Obligation: Different Modern Approaches” is a short review on the modern interpretations on moral obligation. I have discussed the whole dissertation under following chapters-

Introduction

Chapter 1.

Duty and Moral obligation by Immanuel Kant.

Chapter 2.

Feeling of Moral obligation by John Stuart Mill

Chapter 3.

An Alternative Concept of Moral Obligation by Bernard Williams

Conclusion

1st chapter-

Duty and Moral obligation by Immanuel Kant : My first chapter is on Kant where I will convey the rational approach of Kant’s notion. He conveys to follow moral ought objectively as they comes from apriori reason of the agent. Immanuel Kant is

the pioneer of reason based moral theory. According to Kant moral judgements are categorical imperatives, which are unconditional and necessarily true.. The main keystone of his morality is that you must follow that imperative which must be followed by others also. Whatever you want to do that is your subjective maxim, and as an agent it is your duty to objectify your maxim so that it turns to a law. Kant advises that if you act on the basis of such maxim which you do not want that everyone should follow it then it cannot be considered as a moral action. So it is an obligation of a rational being to perform actions according to that law which can be universalised. in the context of autonomy Kant argues that morality is the domain of rational being where an agent performs morality with his own rational will. When an action is chosen by a moral agent as a moral action then he does not focus on its good consequence but he does it as the action it-self is a good one. Telling lie may produce a good consequence in a particular situation. But Kant never accepts this as right action because he claims that although telling lie is good in a particular situation, but it cannot be universalised, So cannot be treated as law He gives priority on the intention of the action, not the end. Kant claims to establish objectivity and so obligation plays a vital role in his thought. Necessity of following the norm denotes a kind of obligation in his moral realm

2nd chapter-

Feeling of Moral obligation by John Stuart Mill : My second chapter is on John Stuart Mill's view on moral obligation. here I will emphasise on the concept of moral obligation which comes corollary of Mill's principle based theory.. Mill's utilitarian principle though guided by reason, but not based on apriori reason like Kant. Apart from reason Mill's theory copes up the role of experience. In this chapter

I will convey about the necessity of the first principle of Mill which demands for maximization of happiness. Though happiness is the prime notion yet Mill argues for qualitative approach which is different from Bentham's utilitarian approach. This qualitative notion gives a greater dignity to Mill's theory. To promote qualitative happiness Mill mentions internal sanction which is a kind of feeling of duty guided by experienced reason. And for fulfilling the duty Mill prescribes virtue as a means to maximize happiness. Mill thinks following the virtuous means to promote qualitative happiness is the real obligation to the people.

3rd chapter-

An Alternative Concept of Moral Obligation by Bernard Williams:

My 3rd chapter is on Bernard Williams. Bernard Williams is one of the leading philosophers of twentieth century. In the very beginning of his philosophy he raises question against both the most popular pillars of ethics. One is Kantianism and another one is utilitarianism. He opposes any theoretical standardisation in ethics, because he thinks that ethics is an application which is determined totally by the ability of the agent.

In this chapter I would like to discuss Williams' objections against Kant and Utilitarianism. Williams argues that Kant does not focus on the differences of characters and personalities. He has also neglected the particularities of situation. Kant's view about objectivity ignores the individuality of man. Against Utilitarianism also he has raised many objections. Williams thinks that a result of an action cannot be the object of evaluation as many other factors may enter here.

After criticising the narrowness of Kantianism and Utilitarianism, I will emphasise on Williams' own view on obligation.

As per my thinking Williams is very much concerned about human's psychological and physical conditions. That's why he wants to turn his theory from any kind of standardisation. He suggests that the term ought has different meanings. Every use of ought does not imply moral obligation. There are some ought which are called general ought. We determine the ought by its context. When I claim that as a human being I ought to help my parents in their sufferings, then it should be a moral obligation as it refers the obligation of a ward to his or her parents. But this obligation is not just an overall prescription. The concept of obligation must be fitted with my capacity also. That means I morally obligated to do that kind of things which are physically and psychologically fitted with my capacity. I cannot be obligated to do an action which is beyond my capacity. Williams decides moral obligation in relation to the particular agent situated in a particular spatio- temporal condition. Morality is the scope of practical application. here we need a practical outlook. Williams is giving a unique interpretation of Kant's 'ought implies can'. An agent is morally obligated to that thing which is judged by his internal reason, which he can do physically and intentionally. Williams also turns his theory to relativism as he thinks ought may vary according to the requirement of the situation and subject. But at the same time he admits a different kind of objectivity which is founded on the concept of agreement. Williams founded morality on reason; he does not want to set any paradigm. He emphasises on the notion "can" because to him morality is a voluntary scheme where an agent performs voluntarily and whatever he can do with his own internal reason that is only counted obligatory to him.

Conclusion: This is a brief research on moral obligation. Here, I have tried to project how reason directs on our voluntariness to make our decision ethical.

Basically ethics is an application where we try to balance our emotional feelings, our inclinations with our reasons. Human being is a combined phenomenon of reason and emotion so there is no chance to restrict the interference of any one. I have seen that though reason insists us to be morally obligated to the norms, but at the same time we have to admit that without emotions we cannot be truly obligated to other people. Thus obligation is not only founded on objective principles, but subject's own attitude also initiates the sense of obligation in our mind.

1st chapter

Duty and Moral obligation by Immanuel Kant

One of the most important tasks of ethics is to evaluate human conduct. An act of evaluation always follows a standard which should be widely accepted by an ideal society. Most of the philosophers agree to accept a standard for the purpose of evaluation, though they may differ regarding the nature of the standard. Some may think that an act can be marked as right if it is performed for the sake of a rational universal law, some other think to judge an action on the basis of the result of the action. At the same time philosophers disagree with one another about the object of evaluation. In modern western concept of morality discrete action without reference to the character must be judged, whereas in Greek period the character of the agent was placed at the centre stage. In Greek philosophy, especially in Aristotle, we find a concern for good living. Their main question is how to live a good life? Greek thinkers emphasized on the acquiring virtues in our characters as their main aim was to be an *Eudaimon* or to flourish. Flourishment means “living well and doing well”¹. As living virtuous life is their standard morality, they evaluate the character of the person, not the discrete actions performed by an agent. As their goal of morality is to maintain a peaceful psyche they try to judge the whole life of a person. But in modern period, we find, a revolutionary change occurs in the history of western ethics as philosophers shifted their focus from character to action and they started to evaluate the rightness or goodness of particular actions. In this respect we must mention about two theories which have dominated the history of western ethical thought in modern period. These two theories are teleological theory and deontological theory. Teleological theory is concerned about the consequence of an action. On the other

¹ (Aristotle 1984, 8)

hand, deontological theory is concerned about performance of duty according to moral and rational motivation of the agent. Though, both of these two theories focus on the evaluation of discrete action, their approaches are entirely different from one another. Both of these two theories are emphasizing on action but teleological theory decides the good as the action has the good consequence whereas the deontological theorist evaluates the motive of the agent to judge the rightness of action. As both of the theories evaluate an action on the basis of moral law, however, both of them are considered as principle-based theory. They opine that there must be a general principle to guide our action.

Goal of teleological theory is to bring maximum utility or happiness for the maximum number of people. Jeremy Bentham introduced the view of Utilitarianism. He establishes the principle of the highest good as the single principle as in his view the end of human life is attainment of pleasure and refrain from suffering. But this Utilitarian theory is hugely refuted by rationalist philosopher as in the view of pleasure or utility cannot be treated as the ultimate goal of ethics. On the other hand, deontologists' concern is to judge the motivation of the agent. As they give priority on reason so according to these rational philosophers, ethics is the rational discipline and should aim to higher goal. That's why deontological theory is founded on the concept of duty and develops an entirely reason-based approach which dismisses every kind of subjective interference from the arena of ethics. But in the scope of ethics we cannot refute the teleological approach and cannot consider it degradable. Because Mill's utilitarianism is one of the unforgettable which is also principle based. So, this teleological approach should not be underestimated as it is also presupposes the concept of obligation. It is noticed that Mill gives priority on reason than feelings. Both the ethical theories principle-based and emphasizes on necessity. Both focus on

our rationality and their target is to establish universality in the arena of ethics. As a result concept of obligation prominently present in both of these two theories .In this chapter my aim is to discuss first Kant’s moral theory to understand the necessity and relevance of his concept of obligation. In the second chapter, I shall explain John Stuart Mill’s reason based moral interpretation to explore of his concept of moral obligation.

Before entering in the discussion of Kant’s moral philosophy we must clarify his epistemological notion.

Kant’s theory: Kant believes that knowledge can be acquired both by reason and experience. Our senses give the empirical knowledge or the aposteriori knowledge, which is gained from or after experience. On the other hand knowledge, which is gained through reason, is called apriori knowledge. Apriori knowledge is that which is originating in an apriori way and does not involve experience but helps to make experience possible. Apriori knowledge of two kinds one is pure and another is mixed. The pure apriori knowledge considers only forms of understanding and the universal laws of thought in general. Here reason is the only faculty which is used to gain knowledge. This pure philosophy is called logic. Regarding mixed apriori knowledge Kant says, “Mixed apriori knowledge contains not only the form given by reason but also “matter,” that is, concepts referring to objects encountered in experience, whether empirical or moral.”² This mixed apriori knowledges are of two types – 1. Physics and 2. Ethics. Physics is the natural philosophy and ethics deals with the moral action. Logical knowledge is not dependent on experience but both physics and ethics gather knowledge from practical world. Physical objects are

² (Kant 1996,Introduction)

regulated according to natural law. On the other hand moral philosophy deals with moral law which gives us the instruction what ought to be acted. So, the basic difference between logic and physics or ethics is that logic encompasses only abstract, pure apriori thoughts. In that sense logic is a kind of pure philosophy. But physics and moral philosophy have their rational part as well as empirical part. These two are called metaphysics by Kant. According to Kant metaphysics retains apriori element but confines it to objects of sense-experience³. Physics is metaphysics of nature and ethics is metaphysics of morals. The empirical part of ethics is the practical anthropology and the rational part is defined as moral law. This moral law is guide by reason. This reason guided moral law is applied in perceptual situation. Kant defines morality as the discipline where perceptual situation is judged by reason. As the practical situation is regulated by the rational law it is clear that Kant gives priority on reason. But at the same time he does not discard the role of experience. So, to him knowledge about moral action incorporates both rational, necessary moral law and as well as it is perceptual and relative it is both apriori and aposteriori. Moral action would be mixed apriori because the means of moral actions are rational and necessary whereas the end is aposteriori that means it is perceptual and relative.⁴

To avoid our practical attitude towards other, Kant is emphasizing on the highest faculty of reason. He is very much aware about the emotional biasness of common people and this fact insists him to deny any kind of subjective interference in decision making procedure. His aim to establish a normative theory. Kant considers the moral value as objective and universal. So, Kant believes on legalistic ethical approach which suggests to follow universal moral law necessarily. His theory thus presupposes the concept of obligation. Now, I would like to discuss the prime ethical

³ (Kant 1788,chapter 1)

⁴ (Kant 1788,chapter 1)

notions of Kant's moral philosophy to express the need and relevance of the notion of moral obligation in his theory.

Will: Kant is the protagonist of deontological ethics. The term '*deon*' means duty⁵. He advocates the notion of duty. According to Kant, morality means acting from duty and the duty means which is deduced from universal, objective moral law. The notion of emotions, desires, and feelings are hostile to Kant's theory. Emotion is the cause of relativity and partiality. And as Kant promotes the notion of universality he makes morality free from anything relativity. Kant starts his moral philosophy with the concept of will. And an agent or subject must be guided by his own will, which is purely rational. His concept of will is very important in his ethics as he accepts freedom of will as the postulate of morality and at the same time he emphasizes on the goodness of will which is helpful to perform moral act. His concept of good will indicates the rational capacity of the will. A good will is capable to decide the rightness of action in harmony with a moral law and also motivated to act rightly from the sense of duty. Nature of will actually decides the nature of the action. This good will must be good in itself and should be guided by reason only. Kant mentions that power, wealth these are no doubt good and produce happiness but without good will they invite unhappiness. It means that these are not intrinsically good. Only good will is pure and rational. Kant demands that in the realm of morality he is not concerned with the consequence or result of an action rather motivate of the action is important than the result. Kant compares good will with jewel, which shines because of its own sake. Thus if it does not produce at all or because of worldly twist, it fails to produce the good, it does not lose its goodness. Thus, good will has its own value, it has full value in itself. Good will is the base of morality which is the only good without any

⁵(Augustyn 2019)

condition. And Kant claims that if our means is determined by this good will then it must be good in itself. The immanent good of good will is certain. So Kant admits good will as the base of morality. Kant's specification of moral will is not a mere wish but enforce of every means. A will that necessarily acts from good principles is called good will. And Kant says that only the good will is not failed because it is a pure immanent function of human rationality. So, it is an ultimate pre-eminent good which is termed as ineluctable by Kant. And ineluctable means the sense of reasonable. He calls this reasonable or righteous will as the absolute will. He describes the notion of good will as the notion of rational action and so it is an inevitably-praise worthy action. "Will for Kant is practical reason- that is, it is the faculty of principles that recognizes laws, adopts maxims, and derives action from them."⁶

As the will comes from the reason it is able to work on principle. Kant demands that if we refute our all natural desires in the scope of determining moral decision then our rationality can help us to act on moral principle and this action must be a moral action done by good will. According to Kant good will has moral worth and sole thing in this world that is good without limitation⁷. As good will is free from any kind of subjective desire or inclinations. Such rational will is the source of duty. "Under human conditions, where we have to struggle against unruly impulses and desires, a good will is manifested in acting for the sake of duty".⁸ Kant gives more attention on duty than natural inclination. A duty has an inner rational approach to act from principle. Kant gives two senses of duties, some duties are narrow and some are wide. In the wide sense duty must be done with the motive of duty.⁹ He strongly

⁶(Kant 1964, 4:412)

⁷ (Wood 2008)

⁸ (Kant 1964,8)

⁹ (Wood 2008)

believes that moral act must follow the moral principle, ignoring all kinds of inclinations and desires. He clearly states that an act of desire may be harmonious to a duty but cannot be considered as duty proper as it is not performed by according to moral law. Such view indicates the importance of law in his theory. So, Kant's moral theory based on duty appreciates rational principle, rather than inclination. So, from here it is clear that his tendency is on rationality, he is to some extent a reason guided philosopher, this one-sided theory of Kant becomes a most controversial, in the scope of ethics.

Maxim: According to Kant, moral worth of an action does not depend on the result of an action. Good result does not justify an action as a moral action. Kant illustrates that actions may be directed by inclination or duty. When the action is guided by inclination then even if it produces a good result it is not considered as a moral action. Suppose, a person saves another one's life because of his affection towards him. Here he does a good action, but it will not be a duty proper and this action has no moral worth as not done from the sense of proper duty. But if a person saves one's life out of sense of his duty then the action has a moral worth. Thus moral worth of an action is related with the motive of the action. Motive of the duty is regulated by the good will of the agent. Good will of the agent resists him to perform duty from his immediate inclination and encourage him to act according to universal rational principle. But the query comes that what is a principle. According to Kant a principle means to universalise the subjective maxim. In his view "a maxim means the subjective principle of volition"¹⁰ And when we can universalise our subjective maxims then they will be objectives and universals and termed as laws, moral laws. Kant clarifies it with an example of a shopkeeper. When a shopkeeper sales goods in

¹⁰ (Kant 1964,66)

genuine price for maintaining his good will in the market for his future profit then he does it for his self-interest. Kant claims that though he (shopkeeper) is doing a good job but it is not considered as morally good as the shopkeeper does not guided by the sense of duty. It is not possible to universalise this maxim because here self-inclination takes place and when our action is guided by own interest then the maxim cannot be universalised because self-interest varies person to person. Such subjective maxim cannot be a moral law. But when our subjective maxim is guided by our rational will which is good in itself and motivated only to perform duty then the subjective maxim would be upgraded objectivise. Only an objective maxim becomes a law

Kant says that faculty of reason is a common faculty like faculty of understanding to everyone. Thus the law will be universalised because this law is guided by the reason based principle. He explains a clear method of objective universalise law from a subjective maxim. Kant defines the moral maxim as “I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law”¹¹ When I do anything then I must be aware that every moral action of mine should be followed universally so I never do anything just for own interest. Thus, suicide cannot be considered as a moral action as being a rational agent I cannot justify that everyone should follow it. Thus suicide is never treated as a moral action as it is not law governed. Kant’s intention is to follow universal law proves that he is aware about the moral worth and dignity of every person. He is aware that we all are not possessing divine will and naturally act for the sake of duty. When we act from our inclination, for our self-loves then we may treat other people as mere means, but in moarality we should treat others always as ends . For treating, everyone as ends it is necessary to follow the universal law.

¹¹ (Kant 1964,67)

Sometimes we act rightly, we help other people in their needs, and we provide service to the physically unfit person. But we do that for our own interest, may be for reward or our own satisfaction. I help my friend honestly as I love him, I provide assistance to my parent as I love them and I have some gratitude towards them. But doing action from such position is not a proof of good will. Here we are not acting disinterestedly, for the sake of duty. It means in other cases where I am not connected with other passionately, I will be indifferent. Kant thinks, moral actions cannot be contingent. So he suggests following law for the sake of the law and not because of fulfilment of my desires. When we perform an action from our affection, it is not be a moral action because we do it from our natural impulse. We are getting pleasure to do so as our emotion is satisfied by doing such actions. That action may be harmony with a moral action but is not a moral act as not followed by a universal law. Here we are doing action not because of our duty but because our sense dictates to do this. In a sense we are using loving one as the means to get pleasure. ? But when a person does the same action just for sake of duty without any mental attachment is defined as a moral action having moral worth. You cannot use any one as a weapon to get pleasure. When you do not pursue an action from reason and your action is guided by your affection then your action has no moral worth. Natural inclination is the cause of biasness whereas reason based duty treats every one equally, because here the agent motivated by his good will. Just as Kant has established that a rational agent, as a possessor of good will we cannot will something which cannot be practised universally, he also emphasizes on how we should treat ourselves as well as other persons. His aim to treat everyone as ends indicate that he believes in equality, he accepts that all are intrinsically valuable and not to be treated only as instrument to produce pleasure for others. He suggests “Always treat humanity weather in your own person or that of

another, never simplify as a means but always at the same time as an end”.¹² It is clear that Kant does not judge any action by its result but by the intention of agent. If a person do an action just for the sake of duty then it has the moral worth otherwise an action will not be moral one. Now a query comes why we think to follow the moral law. To answer this question Kant introduces his notion reverence for law.

Reverence For The law: Kant suggests to as the member of kingdom of ends “Kingdom of Ends” which is an ideal state in which all members obey the moral law. Each member of that state is autonomously controlled by his internal rational law. This rational law is universal. The notion of maxim implies Kant’s view of moral obligation. In Kant’s *Ground Work* it is said that the formula of the kingdom of ends infers from formula of autonomy. It conveys that the principle of every human will is a universal law. The formula of autonomy mentions that I ought to act only on maxim which can be recognized as universally consistent law. The formula of the kingdom of ends thus extends this first-person singular concern with universality to the first-person plural. Kant thinks that we are to see ourselves as responsible for constructing the legal system of moral realm, on the model of a legal system of nature. If in the scope of ethics we are to be allowed to pursue our private ends, then we are all responsible for the conflicts which are the results of self-limitation. That is what it means to be autonomous: imposing a restrictive law upon oneself.¹³ But Kant is emphasising on the autonomy of every person. Autonomy means self-rule. As a person we decide our own life and as a rational person we must follow universal moral principle to overcome all our subjective limitations.

Kant says that our will is immediately determined by a moral law and this determination is just for reverence. Reverence is a proper awareness of moral value

¹²(Paton 1947,186)

¹³(Paton 1947)

which demolishes our self-love. Reverence is a kind of law which we impose on ourselves, forgetting any self-interest. A rational person follows this law because of his reverence and sense of reverence springs from his rational faculty. Kant thinks that in acting from duty we are not motivated by some other feature; this is performed just because reverence for law. Reverence totally excludes from desires. And every moral law is performed intelligibly that it accords with others. This sense of respect creates a constrain of individual for limiting the fulfilment of personal desires and not to transgress the universal moral law decided by reason. Moral law has a power to reflect the right independent of individuals and rational agent cannot avoid this power of rightness. As a result the moral agent imposes the law on himself without any doubt. As the moral law is not imposed on the agent himself, has developed his maxim to a moral universal law, the agent is very much involved with the process and has the knowledge about the nature of moral law. In this sense moral law is an awareness of the agent, everything is transparent to the agent. Agent is involved in the process and as a result realizes the need to follow the law at the time of execution of the decision. He feels obligated to follow it as he himself decides it as the only right alley to perform action. This respect for the law causes a sense of obligation in agent's mind to follow the law. For Kant the reason is divided in two types first is theoretical and second is practical. Theoretical reason is that one which acts on the faculty of knowledge and which is the cause of illusionary metaphysical views of God and world, in *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant says about the limitation of theoretical reason also. As theoretical reason does not include experience and views about practical world, it fails to explain the situation. Sometimes it leads to uncertainly self-contradiction. In ethical judgement making Kant suggests to involve practical reason as his goal is to establish objectivity in ethics. He also aims to rationalize the moral

requirements. These moral requirements are agent neutral as do not vary according to the particular self-centred desires of the agent. Rather moral requirements are considered as rational to all the agents equally without thinking of the fulfilment of their own desires. Thus Kant considers moral laws as necessary, as binding to all rational agents. But as rational agents are autonomous, self-governed, has the freedom of will so they take their decisions freely according to their choice. An agent is free means he is free from all practical purposes. Kant admits that freedom of agent cannot be explained and accepted by scientific or theoretical reason. Theoretical and practical reason have separate realms and theoretical reason cannot be justified by experience. So the freedom of the agent can be work properly through practical reason. In ethics Kant talks about the practical reason which is common to all and which helps people to do action unconditionally. The account of practical reason is the weapon of Kant's moral philosophy. And he sketches his moral theory with this unique notion of reason. As this reason factor is common to all that's why every rational agent has the practical reason to do unconditionally, reverence for law only.¹⁴ Because only the unconditional action has the moral worth as it refrains from self-interest. So, there is an obligation to every agent that he does not do anything guided by impulsion because may be an emotional mean produce a good result, but the mean is not good in itself. In this case the mean would not be a moral maxim which should be followed emotionally. And every followed law or maxim must have a type of universality, if it follows from practical reason. Because practical reason is unconditional and as it has a common to every rational being it also has a universal notion. From here Kant's theory gets its universal unconditional form and Kant claims

¹⁴(Timmerman 2002,124)

an unconditional imperative. This unconditional imperative is expressed as categorical imperative, the proposed moral law, the base line of Kant's moral philosophy.

Imperatives for Action: According to Kant a maxim is a subjective principle and must be distinguished from objective law- namely a practical law, a law which is an objective principle valid for every rational agent, and it is that kind of principle on which every rational agent ought to act. These objective principles of practical reason, which are always principles of some kind of goodness, appear to us as principle of obligation and so as commands or imperative, categorical imperative¹⁵. Kant says that rationality is the baseline of morality. Reason is the monitor of our action. However, agents also have subjective impulses—desires and inclinations that may contradict with the dictates of reason. But in the realm of ethics as reason is the prime notion that's why the claim of reason is an obligation that we act in a determined way, or by an imperative. This imperative is called command. All imperatives are either of hypothetical or categorical.

In the realm of moral philosophy Kant discusses about categorical imperatives, which he called *apodictic imperative*. Categorical imperative takes its general form: 'Every rational agent ought to will an action good in itself'¹⁶. Hypothetical imperative claims the practical means which helps to attain anyone what he wills. Hypothetical imperative has not any virtue and Kant mentions that hypothetical imperative is one of the conditional imperative whereas categorical imperative is unconditioned one and having the virtue of universalizability of practical reason which makes us oblige to do it. Principle of universalizability, the practical reason of any rational being develops the notion of categorical imperative which is one of the important maxims of Kant's moral philosophy. That means, each

¹⁵ (Paton 1947,113)

¹⁶ (Paton 1947,115)

individual acts according to this universal principal, categorical imperative. Kant says that a person would be moral person because he acts on a principle which is not only applicable to him but also others. Like you borrowed money from your friend in financial crisis and after that you do not back it. Kant says this action is immoral because here the principle “keeping promise” is violated. As a moral being we cannot demand that this would be followed by others because if everyone starts to do this then I shall be victim in one day. And as a rational agent I do not want that my humanity will be humiliated. So, I never want that violating promise will be a universal law and if I do not want to universalize it then I cannot follow it. Kant’s notion is what you want to make as a universal law, only that you will perform. A categorical imperative does not confirm any necessity except the universality of the law and this is enough to assert it to be necessary. The notion of categorical imperative is that it is unconditioned. Unlike hypothetical imperative it is free from any impulsion. Impulsion means a subjective ground of desire. And the effect of this inclination is relative, has not universal value. All the objects of inclination only have the conditioned value. If the inclination needs the object then it has value otherwise it is value less. But a rational being is a person which is an objective end itself however never be a means. “This is the difference between objects of inclination and a person. Persons, therefore, are not merely subjective ends whose existence as an object of our action has a value for us: they are objective ends – that is, things whose existence is in itself an end....”¹⁷ And this demand of Kant makes it necessary as the end of every rational agent as it is the end of itself. Thus the nature of rationality exists as the end of itself. This explicit view of Kant helps him to draw the notion of humanity.

¹⁷(Kant 1788,91)

If we observe minutely then we can notice that Kant's entire moral theory is based on the formula of categorical imperatives. Though I have already discussed them in scattered way but in this context it is necessary a lucid explanation of them.

The Formulation of Categorical Imperative:

The Formula of Universal Law.- *'Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.'*¹⁸ This is the canon of moral appreciation of the action. Here Kant is assuming that there is a rational agent who is conveying that the principle of moral action must be same for every rational agent. No rational agent is arbitrarily exceptional to moral law in favour of his own expectation. That means every moral law is universal objective and impersonal. And therefore that cannot be judged by our desires. This moral law is impersonal from one person to another. This principle of universality has often been compared by Golden mean but Kant signifies it as categorical imperative. Kant gives several examples of this imperative They are: Help others in distress, Do not commit suicide, and Work to develop your abilities and so on.

Formula of The Law of Nature-*"Act as if the maxim of your action were to through your will a universal law of nature."*¹⁹ This formula has shown just as the repetition of formula one but this formula basically confirms the universal law of nature. It conveys the notion of rational will which is accorded with universal law of nature.

Formula the End in Itself- *"So act to humanity, both in your own person and in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end, never simply as a*

¹⁸ (Kant 1964,4.402)

¹⁹ (Kant 1964,4.422)

means”²⁰ Kant is like an artist who draws a picture of moral philosophy. The concept of duty is the base line of his thought. And to maintain a rational philosophy he refrains his categorical imperative or moral law from any impulse. He sets the person or rational agent as the end in itself. He describes the notion of humanity by using other as an end not as means. Like a person loves you and you also, so when you do anything for him from your affection then that action will not be a moral action because you do it from your natural impulse and you are getting pleasure to do so because you love that one. Here you are doing morality not because of your duty but you do so just your sense dictates you to do this, here you use your loving one as the means to get pleasure but when you do the same action just for duty although you do not enjoy it then it will be defined as a moral action having moral worth. You never use any one as a weapon to get pleasure. When you do not pursue an action from reason and your action is guided by your affection then your action has not any moral worth. Basically the problem of natural inclination is it will be the cause of biasness whereas reason based duty never will be biased because it has the good will to act objectively. Kant represents the view of humanity and he wants to value every being.

Formula of Autonomy-“*So act that your will can regard itself at the same time as making universal law through its maxim.*”²¹ Autonomy is the basis of dignity. Autonomy of the will is the property that the will has of being a law to itself. The notion of autonomy may seem as the repetition of the first formula but the formula 4 confirms that categorical imperative instruct us not merely follow the universal law, but to follow the universal law which we ourselves particularize through our universal maxims. This is the acceptance of the ground that the rational principle which bounds us to perform the duty is not beyond our will. This rational will must be the product of

²⁰(Paton 1947,170)

²¹(Paton 1947,180)

our own will. From this notion it is easy to derive that the idea of will of every rational agent is the idea of law of universality. Kant says "...it is precisely the fitness of his maxims to make universal law that marks him out as an end in himself." If a rational agent is truly an end in itself and he is bound to follow the law which is created by himself then we must accept the autonomy of will.

Formula of the Kingdom of Ends –*‘So act as if through your maxims a law-making member in a universal kingdom of ends.’*²² It is an ideal state in which all members obey the moral law. Each member of that state is autonomously controlled by his internal rational law. In Kant’s *Ground Work* it is said that the formula of the kingdom of ends infers from formula of autonomy. The formula of autonomy mentions that I ought to act only on maxims which can be recognized legislate as universally consistent laws. The formula of the kingdom of ends extends first-person singular concern with universality of the first-person plural. It says that with our maxims we ought, together, to legislate universally and thus that we are to see ourselves as responsible for constructing the moral system. If in the scope of ethics we are to be allowed to pursue our private ends, then we are all responsible for the conflicts which are the results of self-limitation. That means imposing a restrictive law upon oneself. Kingdom is a systematic state, the approach of members of kingdom Kant wants to establish a consistent society of rational agents who are treat others as the end in itself. And the interesting point is that Kant mentions that this law is made by the autonomous will of the rational agent so, here the law maker is the follower of the law thus we cannot claim that the agent follow the law force fully. “Thus morality consists in the relation of all action to the making of laws whereby alone a kingdom of ends is possible. This making of laws must be found in every

²²

(Paton 1947,185)

rational being himself and must be able to spring from his will.”²³. Thus the notion of freedom takes place in Kant’s theory.

Human Freedom: Kant argues that freedom is the presupposed property of a rational being. According to Kant the notion of freedom is related to the notion of autonomy. Autonomy of the will as the supreme principle of morality. Freedom of will is one of the postulate of Kant’s ethics. This freedom springs from the rational nature of the agent. In his, philosophy Kant says that moral law is kind of law where person considers himself as a free person. His own Practical reason makes a law for deciding the righteous action. This freedom to decide the law actually also motivates the agent to act rightly. As the agent himself is the law maker he does not obey the law just because it is his duty, but he follows the law as his reason instructs him to do this. Here lies the autonomy of the agent to act morally. The capacity of humans to act autonomously is a special dignity of humans which is not present in animals. Respecting this dignity requires us to treat others not as means to an end, but as ends in themselves. Kant claims that some time we have another possibility, that of acting according to laws other than the laws of moral principle but my reason guides me to do accordingly such laws, which our reasons give us, that is the notion freedom in morality. This reason, "pure practical reason", legislates a priori - regardless of all empirical ends. So reason is the only guiding factor of freedom in Kant’s moral system. Basically Kant denies the desires or impulses in the realm of moral philosophy. And Kant says this is the power of reason for which man can distinguish between sensible world and intellectual world. For reason man also counts himself as belonging to the intellectual world because of his rational faculty. And just because of his this capacity he can free from heteronomy or the laws of nature, he is only under

²³ Kant 1788,96

law which is not natural but reason based. As man is a member of the intelligible world so he never accepts the causality of will except the idea of freedom. The idea of freedom is inseparably attached with the idea of autonomy. In the case of moral action we decide the moral law and act according to our own choice which means our will is free. As the will of a rational agent is reason guided, his freedom also springs from his rational capacity.

Briefly to say that Kant's deontological theory is a wide ranged theory which influences the ethical domain. Kant emphasises on treating every person as an end and on the moral responsibility of each person is a matter of fundamental importance. We may say Kant's explanation about morality proves that the concept of obligation is part of his theory. Kant though discusses about the virtues of our character, but virtues are regarded as derivative concepts of his theory. In his opinion the person who performs right action, follows the path of reason is accepted as a virtuous person. His main concern is to evaluate the actions, performance of duty, not to develop a virtuous character of the agent. So that he can refuse to fulfil his impulses and be able to follow the reason. So he emphasised on the concept of duty as it is in his duty, as it is decided by his freedom of will. Thus a person can enjoy his act or may not enjoy his duty then he spontaneously feels obligatory towards the rational universal moral principle. But even he does not enjoy doing his reason; he has to control his impulses. In such a case also he does his duty as he feels it obligatory to follow moral law. So the impact of obligation may differ, but its presence in the mind of a moral, rational person is absolutely necessary.

My next chapter is on John Stuart Mill's concept of moral obligation which will light on an alternative notion of moral obligation, based on Mill's principle of Utility.

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Chapter 2

Feeling of Moral Obligation by John Stuart Mill

In the first chapter we have discussed that Kant's ethical thought accepts the notion of obligation as an essential condition of moral action. His duty based ethics focuses on the intention of the action. His deontological view considers it obligatory to follow universal moral law unconditionally. But Kant was criticized because of his biasness towards objectivity. Kant as supporter of objectivity thinks that moral feeling is also solely attached to the sense of duty. Moral feeling is defined by as "the susceptibility to pleasure or displeasure merely from the consciousness of the agreement or disagreement of our action with the law of duty."¹ It means there is a feeling of duty in our mind which cultivates moral obligation in us. Feeling of duty is prior to our consciousness of obligation.

Another action based theory which has a tremendous influence on the history of western ethics is Utilitarianism. This theory also aims to judge human actions, but it concentrates on the evaluation of the result of the action. After Kant, John Stuart Mill also proposes the principle based theory in ethics and he also suggests a particular type of moral obligation though he included subjectivity in his framework of morality. Thus, John Stuart Mill also represents another alternative theory of moral obligation. In this chapter my intention is to understand the concept of obligation as used by John Stuart Mill in his theory of Utilitarianism. He has linked his concept of moral obligation with his first principle which claims that morality means promotion of maximum happiness for the greatest number of people. In this chapter I would like to interpret Mill's view to

¹ Kant 1962, 15

understand the difference between these two principle dependent actions based moral views.

Though Utilitarianism is advocated by a long list of thinkers but in this short span I will only include the discussion of John Stuart Mill who shapes this theory from a new angle. John Stuart Mill writes his moral treatise, *Utilitarianism*, in a period of intellectual philosophy dominated by Kantian deontology. The book *Utilitarianism* explains Mill's justification in favour of utility. Mill is known as a hedonist philosopher, who accepts pleasure as the standard of moral evaluation. The word 'Hedonism' comes from the ancient Greek term 'pleasure'. Hedonism is broadly classified under two heads Psychological Hedonism and Ethical Hedonism. Psychological Hedonism is the view that humans are psychologically constructed in such a way that because of their nature they always desire pleasure. This theory claims that only pleasure or displeasure motivates us. According to Ethical Hedonism our fundamental moral obligation is to promote pleasure or happiness. Ethical Hedonism is the claim that all and only pleasure has positive importance and only pain or displeasure has negative importance.² Ethical Hedonism is again divided under two heads Egoistic Hedonism and Universalistic Hedonism. Universalistic Hedonism, which is more commonly known as Utilitarianism³. Egoistic Hedonism is an ancient form of Hedonism which provides egocentric approach and confined to the pleasure of the agent only. It claims that the moral duty of an agent is only to get the greatest amount of pleasantness for him. The Greek Cyrenaic and Epicureans is Egoist Hedonist. On the other hand, the Universalistic Hedonism demands the maximum pleasure for all human beings. Eighteenth century moralists like Butler, Shaftsbury, John Stuart Mill are known as Universalistic Hedonists. Mill a prominent figure of

² (Moore 2018)

³ (Lillie 1967,166)

modern ethical thought, talked about the happiness of all beings. Egocentric view can be rejected on the ground that it fails to fulfil the essence of ethics. Ethics is always concerned about others. But egoism insists to produce happiness only for oneself and ignores about other people. So, we can claim that this theory does not help people to progress, as it has no altruistic aspect. Many thinkers consider this theory as pessimistic as it is limited within the boundary of agent's pleasure.

But Mill's view is presenting an optimistic view as it is more concerned about the pleasure of all. Thus the trend of self-centeredness is dismissed in modern period. Mill's open minded attitude fully acknowledges the self-sacrifice as the highest virtue, overcoming the narrowness and egoism. Open minded Mill provides a normative ethics which has greater value than the ancient egocentric thought. Due to his attitude pessimism, of an egocentric limitation, turns to an altruistic form of Ethical Hedonism. Modern Hedonism is formed in the period of scientific evolution which is totally different from the Greek era and Middle age. In Greek period morality is concerned on style of living, whereas in middle age morality is equivalent to divinity. On the other hand modern period is one of the analytic periods when before accepting any thing theorists starts to scientifically analyse that. A method of scientific evaluation affects the field of ethics also just like natural science Mill thinks to find out a first principle of ethics. In this section, I will divide the whole chapter under several sections. In the first section, I shall discuss Mill's First principle of utility which is considered as the foundation of his ethics. According to general principle of utility we must perform that kind of action as which produce maximum amount of happiness for maximum number of people. When a moralist fixes a specific goal of morality and advises to follow it then the theory arises a kind of moral obligation. Immanuel Kant

and John Stuart Mill both mention a fixed goal of morality that's why their theories are considered as morally obligated theory.

Principle of Utility: Universalistic Hedonism or Utilitarianism is teleological in its orientation as it targets to produce a particular type of result. Secondly, it is a consequentialist theory because it judges the consequence of an action. We perform many actions in our day to day life which have neutral value. In such cases question of obligation does not arise. But if the consequence of such an action affects people then that consequence is considered as normally right or wrong. Suppose, make a suicide barrier is neither good nor bad till it helps to save the life of a person. But if erection of suicide barrier on a bridge has overall a better consequence than not doing so, then that is what must be done. According to these theorists we ought to consider and evaluate the possible consequences of the actions. Then we have to choose the best which can provide overall good for maximum number of people. So, firstly this theory judges the consequence; secondly this consequence targets to provide maximum benefit. Basic moral principle of Utilitarianism is “The Greatest Happiness Principle” which prescribes the greatest utility where utility is defined in terms of happiness and pleasure. Utilitarians sometimes refer happiness as *hedon* and refer pain as *dolor*. *Hedon* comes from a Greek word which means “pleasure”, whereas *dolor* comes from a Latin word which means pain.⁴ According to Utilitarianism we ought to do that which produces greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. The classical formulation of utilitarianism is popularized influential with the writings of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. John Stuart Mill’s philosophy is one of the reviewed versions of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill’s moral philosophy. Jeremy Bentham defines utility in terms of pleasure and pain. He claims that we should act in such a way

⁴ (MacKinnon 2009)

as to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. This position is called Hedonistic Utilitarianism. Hedonistic Utilitarianism recommends maximizing the overall amount of pleasure and minimizing the overall number of pain. He writes in his book *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* that “Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain*, and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do”⁵

His Hedonistic theory asserts both aspects of Hedonism psychological and ethical as he claims that as our nature prefers to get pleasure, it is our duty have it. Bentham is one of the renowned ethical reformer who used the notion of utility in the scope of ethics. From the period of Bentham terms “utility’ is used in ethics to measure the pleasure or happiness. Before that this term was used in economics to model the value or worth. Bentham says that the fundamental doctrine of his philosophy is to measure right or wrong through the principle of greatest happiness for greatest number. He mentions that happiness is like a property, that property which tends to produce benefit, advantage and prevents unhappiness.⁶ John Stuart Mill, disciple of Jeremy Bentham, continues the legacy of Bentham and defines utilitarianism as a theory. In his view “actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness”⁷. John Stuart Mill in his book *Utilitarianism* first of all justifies the need of accepting the principle of utility provided by Bentham as a single general principle. He thinks that in this respect ethics is different from science. In scientific investigation, we arrive at the first principle after a long investigation of particular cases. But in ethics we need the principle first to analyse particular case. This is because ethics deals with an ideal- we try to decide here what we ought to do and not

⁵ (Bentham 1823,1)

⁶ (Bentham 1823)

⁷ (Mill 1910, 37)

what it is in the world. Task of ethics is evaluative, not descriptive. This principle helps us to decide the *Summum Bonum*. So in science, experiments can be conducted without any first principle because in science particular truth precedes the general theory but in morality the case is just opposite. Rules of action judge the consequences or ends of the actions and so principle is prior to action as principle gives the precise conception of what we are doing. Principle helps to decide what is right and what is not. Mill refutes the possibility of having a natural faculty in us which informs us about the end of action, because there is not proof of having such moral sense in man. Moreover, Mill is not ready to reduce morality to a mere sense or instinct, rather morality is a branch of our reason and so there must be a science of morals, i.e, morality must be deduced from principles.

But, unlike intuitive and inductive school Mill opines to accept a single general principle. If we accept several apriori principle without giving any effort to reduce them to a common ground of obligation then, he thinks, conflict is obvious. Intuitionists' approach to decide first principle by using our intuition is also rejected by Mill as different people may have different intuitions. As intuition is not reason we cannot hope to get a fixed choice. Attempt of applying the method of generalisation is also not fruitful to Mill as generality ignores the particularities of the situations, needs of individuals. So, we need a single principle which can handle the conflict between several other principles. Mill thinks this principle ought to be self-evident. Without accepting an ultimate standard we cannot structure our believes system with certainty. The consistency and steadiness which we experience is our thought process due to recognising such a principle as the fundamental principle off morality and as the source of moral obligation. After justifying the need to accept a single principle Mill also justifies as happiness is our target, principle of utility must be that principle to which

we all are morally obliged. Many thinkers may object to accept happiness as our goal of morality, but Mill thinks in our life we always favour those things which create happiness and reject those things which bring pain in our life. So we cannot avoid the effect of happiness. It means the principle of utility is indispensable in our life and must be considered as the source of moral obligation. Mill thinks something can be good either as means to attain another good or the thing can be good in itself, good as an end. Health or music is good as the means because they produce happiness. But happiness is good as goal and so it is good without proof. In the popular or ordinary meaning of the term proof, we cannot prove something as good or its own sake. Thus our intellect gives some rational ground for accepting or rejecting the utilitarian formula. This standard of Utilitarianism is not like customary morality. It suggests promoting the happiness of others by sacrificing our own interest. It is different from 'Do not tell the lies' or 'Do not steal other's belongings'. We consider these dictates as obligatory because our education and opinion consider this as good. This actually suggests following a standard going against our nature basically we always feel happy by satisfying our own interest. Basically we always feel happy by satisfying our own interest. Customary morality is taken as obligatory for its own sake; it is in itself obligatory. But this customary principle are derived and supported by some general principles about which we are not at all aware. The corollaries of seem to have more binding force than the general theorem. We agree that we should not lie to others, but we do not normally admit that it is our responsibility and obligation to promote happiness to other people. So we have to change our attitude towards the general theorem. We have to develop our moral sense. This moral sense will bring a sense of moral obligation in our mind towards the general theory. We should feel that the standard prescribed by the utilitarianism is also itself obligatory, just as we feel that its

corollaries are in itself obligatory. Thus Mill proves that the principle of utility must be obligatory to us. Just as Kant's legalistic notion of morality based on the concept of moral obligation, Mill's theory is also founded on the same concept though there are huge differences between their theories.

Meaning of Happiness: Though Bentham and Mill both of them aimed to promote happiness but Mill's approach differs from Bentham's view regarding the nature of pleasure. Mill thinks to promote the mental pleasure whereas Bentham emphasizes on bodily or sensual pleasures. Mill proposes that the view utilitarianism should be defined in terms of happiness rather than pleasure. Mill advised for higher standard of happiness than mere pleasure. This higher standard of happiness is called *Eudaimonistic* Utilitarianis.⁸ To explain this another type of happiness I would like to discuss the differences between 'pleasure' and 'happiness'. Pleasure belongs to body or senses, but happiness is related to mind and spirit. Pleasure exists for a short duration but happiness is more lengthy than pleasure. Many psychologist thinks that pleasure is momentary. A person can experience pleasure for a while just after achieving his goal. On the other hand, happiness itself is the goal or aim of one's life. It is not momentary like pleasure. Pleasure is what we feel. A thirsty man feels pleasure when he gets a glass of cold waters. But happiness is quite different; it seems to lie in the realization of certain goals and success. Mill defines such happiness as the standard of his utilitarian theory. It is called *Eudaimonistic* as it has the greater value than hedonism.⁹ In Greek thought *Eudaimonism* denotes happiness which we can get achieve by living a good life, through the flourishing of our character. So, happiness is not just a feeling of fulfilment it is one kind of spiritual peace which one can achieve through patience. Mill's notion of happiness demands some internal sanctions which helps to make his

⁸ (MacKinnon 2009, 137)

⁹ MacKinnon 2009)

philosophy superior than Bentham. Thus both of their approaches appeal to judge the consequences of action according to the standard of *hedon*, but the meaning of *hedon* differs in their views. Bentham considers only quantity of pleasure, but Mill considers both quantity and quality of pleasure. Bentham accounts on maximize happiness quantitatively, whereas Mill believes in qualitative happiness because Mill defines happiness in broader sense. Bentham mentions only sensual happiness whereas Mill talks about not sensual but also the upper level of happiness like freedom, love, wisdom etc. As the quality factors are different so, Mill's theory becomes more valuable and civilised than Bentham. Bentham's theory holds that the ultimate resumes of value are occurrence of pleasure and only ultimate bearers of disvalue are pain. His theory assumes that the dichotomy of morality is to emphasise on the quantity of pleasure. All that matters in matters as terms of value is represent quantity of pleasure in Bentham. He never thinks about the qualitative approach of ethics. That's why he does not make any distinction between the pushpin and poetry. But such quantities concept of value lights on the degrading aspect of human intelligence and a kind of self- centred notion also peeps here. But the modern age is one of the rational and intelligent eras in philosophy which deals with highly intellectual ideas, so obviously thinker like Mill objects this degrading conception of value. Mill defines that it is absurd to ask for only quantity solely, as when we are in the domain of morality quantity is important as quality. Mill rejects the claim that value correlates to quantity of pleasure. "Mill modifies that some experiences are more valuable on the basis that the pleasure involved is of higher quality"¹⁰. Mills theory confirms that if there are two kinds of pleasure P1 and P2. These both pleasures have

¹⁰ Timmerman 2017,436.

the same quantity whereas the quality of P1 is greater than P2 then the agent must choose P1.

It is sometime thought that as Mill register for quantitative value in pleasure so his theory is abandons hedonism as theory of value. In this case Mill interprets that denial quantity in the domain of value does not infer rejection of Hedonism, rather it is a kind of an alternative notion of Hedonism where pleasure is judged through quality. And this is also true that Mill's theory is not totally opposite to Bentham, as like Bentham Mill's theory is also founded on the principle of greatest happiness. John Stuart Mill one of the stalwarts of modern moral philosophy has seen Bentham's principle of utility from a different dimension. To him utility which is the means happiness, which lies in our attitude of self-sacrifice for the sake of bringing happiness for all. This sense of self-sacrifice arises in the minds of rational the help of people with imposing some external and internal sanction. Internal and external sanctions help to maintain various attitudes in us. Bentham in his theory focuses on qualitative theory only, whereas Mill emphasizes on qualitative good also. For this qualitative good Mill suggests to develop virtuous attitude in us. For this development Mill thinks it is obligatory to follow the principle which prescribes to bring highest good for the highest number of people without considering our own inclination valuable.

Though Mill is trained from his childhood to carry on the utilitarianism advocated by Jeremy Bentham, but Auguste Comte's positive philosophy helped Mill to reject Bentham. The greatest happiness principle advocated by Bentham is-

“Actions are right in proposition as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness are intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure.”¹¹ To the first part

¹¹ Bentham 1823,9

Mill does not differ from Bentham. But he adds many conditions with the second part. The second part is all important part of Bentham's theory. Because his theory is based on a psychological assumption. In Bentham's view pleasure or relief from pain is the only possible desire or will. We will naturally desire pleasure. It implies that there is no sense to say we ought to desire pleasure. Everyone as a psychological necessity willfully acts on that way which will give him pleasure. This means there is no scope of obligation in Bentham's theory as naturally we rush to achieve that which we ought to do. Bentham's such interpretation also indicates that pleasure is calculable. It means that all pleasure is qualitatively same. Because pleasure of different qualities cannot be summed. It indicates another assumption that as pleasure is an object of desire then we have to agree that we can get pleasure in complete abstraction from the objects which produce pleasure. In this sense poetry is as good as game. But such assumptions are not true as we desire for the objects, not for pleasure. We feel pleasure when we achieve that object. Pleasure is not separable from the object which brings it. So pleasure cannot be of similar quality. We have to admit the qualitative difference between pleasures. To rescue the principle utility Mill thinks to explain properly the meaning of the term "happiness". He clearly establishes that we cannot identify the happiness of human beings with the pleasure of animals because human beings has rational faculty which is higher than animal's appetite. He thinks happiness of human beings include gratification of higher faculty, i.e., reason. This is possible when the agent is conscious about his higher faculties. Mill supports Epicurean theory of life understands pleasure as pleasure of intellect, of feelings, imagination and of sentiments. This means Mill has placed mind over body and considers mental pleasure a superior to bodily pleasure. As mental pleasure is permanent, safe and not harmful, mental pleasure is preferable than bodily pleasure. At the time of selecting one pleasure over another, Mill is taking the

help of experience. He thinks that if all or almost all prefer one among two pleasures as more pleasurable or desirable than that is considered as more valuable. It means that the decision comes as a result of experience and in that case question of moral compulsion or moral obligation does not arise. The people who are capable to appreciate this kind of good and enjoy higher pleasure will choose the same. No conscientious and intelligent person will decide the lower pleasure as no such person prefers to be a fool because of the sense of dignity we prefer to sacrifice.

Discussion on Sanctions: In another important context Bentham and Stuart Mill differ from one another. Both of them have mentioned about the notion of sanctions in their theories but Bentham asks for external sanctions on the other hand apart from external sanction Mill puts more emphasis on internal sanctions. Now the question comes “what is sanction?” What are the motives to obey the principle? Why do we feel obligated to obey the sanctions? In the first chapter of *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Bentham mentions about the four external sanctions. These are physical, political, moral and religious sanctions. Physical sanction means to limit oneself from such physical action which may create harms in human life. Thus one may change his habit of drinking as his health does not permit it. Political sanction is involved with law and punishment. As penalties are attached with this kind of action people dare to do this. Driving in drunk is a punishable offence. So person try not to do this to avoid punishment. Moral sanction, according to Bentham, involves in public opinion. We avoid such action which are publicly disapproved. Drinking in street and making public nuisance goes against public opinion. The last one is religious sanction which is directed by divine spirit or God If God commands that drinking will take me

in hell then I must stop it. These four sanctions are for promoting general happiness.¹² Sidwig, in his book *The Methods of Ethics*, has said that though Bentham is recommending general happiness as the right and proper end of conduct, he still regards it as natural and normal for all the agents to aim at their own individual happiness through these sanctions. As Bentham is a psychological hedonist he argues that as motive of every action is to bring happiness for one self. These sanctions are treated as duties to every person which are obeyed for their own benefits. These sanctions help to bring happiness, either by using physical, legal, moral or religious sanctions. Bentham's view we all desire to get pleasure for our own sake. But these sanctions help us to think about of other people too. Because of legal moral, physical or religious ground we resist us to perform such an action that may hamper the life of other people too.

On the other hand, Mill suggests for both external and internal sanction. Internal sanction is that which comes from one's conscience; this sanctions is a kind of obligatory feelings of agent's mind that creates discomfort when one violates his duty. This feeling can influence an agent for doing actions, If one's moral nature is sufficiently cultivated, he is educated and aware about the qualitative value of an action then he feels an obligation to perform such kind of action that produces qualitative pleasure as a consequence. In third chapter of *Utilitarianism* Mill writes, "In regard to any supposed moral standard—what is its sanction? What are the motives to obey it? Or more specifically, what is the source of its obligation?"¹³

Mill, here, clearly demands for two sources of motivation for action, they are external and internal sanctions. Both of these, he argues, support utilitarianism. According to Mill a "sanction" is a source of pleasure or pain. Mill thinks that the goal

¹² (Harisson 2001)

¹³ (Mill 1992,26)

of any action is pleasure, and the absence of pain. It is the desire that ultimately determines one's actions. If a thing is associated with the feeling of pleasure, it is considered as desirable either because of the thing itself or as a means to achieve the pleasurable thing. Money is an example of desirable object which is not in itself valuable, but it is valuable only because it helps to gain the things which are part of pleasure. Money is simply an object with no inherent value, but it helps to fulfil our basic needs and desire. That is becomes desirable to us. Things which are desired as a means to happiness become desired so strongly that they turns an ingredient in happiness. This is possible because of both internal and external sanctions of utilitarianism. Let us explain this with an example. Suppose a chain smoker stops smoking as because of his religious belief he accepts that God commands him to stop smoking as it is injurious to health and also has a bad effect on the society. Thus religious sanction helps to produce happiness because smoking is really harmful to society. These sanctions work behind the motivate people and produce a feeling of obligation to perform duty.

Mill thinks that external sanctions are actually approval or disapproval of other members of the groups. These sanctions directly affect our feelings and not our action. We are affected by these external sanctions when we experience sympathy to others. Through external sanction people can learn how their actions affect others. Mill writes that, the good of others becomes our pleasure, and this we learn through our daily life experiences. External sanctions act as motivational force in fulfilment of desires other people ignoring one's own. Fear of God's disapproval motivates one to act without self-love. Thus people start to think for others' happiness as they think that God approves this as good job and can reward him also. So, the whole force of external reward and punishment which is coming from either man or God or society or law

develops the moral motivation in man. In this context Mill introduces the notion of education also Education helps to cultivate this motivation in us. Therefore the general improvement of humanity depends on people's responses to these external sanctions which are the means to pay attention towards others and sympathetic to others. For Mill, fellow feeling occurs in our mind through education. Education helps to grow in us the feeling of unity with our fellow-creatures.

On the other hand, Mill discusses on internal sanction that it is the "feeling of duty." Duty is profound internal responsibility, a non-negotiable demand that an agent feels at the time of performing an action. Internal sanction is also called "the essence of Conscience," which is more powerful than any external sanction. As such, Mill claims it to be the ultimate sanction of the principle of utility.¹⁴ Mill suggests that internal sanction is one of the parts of the motivation, as it helps to avoid the negative feelings like guilt or remorse which may arise when we fail to fulfil our duty. Guilt and remorse are painful mental feelings, so people naturally want to avoid them. According to Mill, the feeling of duty is not innate, but acquired through experience. This does not mean, however, that they aren't natural. Like other "acquired faculties," they are "a natural outgrowth," cultivated through education. It means people do not bear with a feeling of duty rather it is an acquired faculty which flourishes through observation and learning. Here I want to mention another moral philosopher's name who also mentions about the internal sanction as the duty or obligation. He is none other than Immanuel Kant. The concept of duty may be most hugely discussed by Kant. For Kant, morality is generated by reason. Thus the moral principles are *a priori*—free from experience. But difference between Mill and Kant is that, Mill, the empiricist, does not accept rationality as the only origin of morality. Instead, he accepts the role of experience in

¹⁴(Mill 1992,26)

morality. He thinks experience generates a feeling of obligation in us. Mill has asserted that we naturally desire pleasure or happiness. But the sanctions motivate to select the pleasure and pain. So, Mill thinks that external and internal sanctions support the general principle of utility (maximize happiness) because as social animal, human happiness must be in harmony with the feeling of duty. In this point of view Kant and Mill differ from one another because Mill calls the internal sanction as the subjective feeling. Whereas Kant defines it as objective feeling of duty. Mill's most innovative aim in his moral philosophy is to describe how one can be guided by his subjective feeling of internal sanction and enforces himself to commit overall good for society. In Mill's view, however, "this sanction has no binding efficacy on those who do not possess the feelings it appeals to"¹⁵ If a person has no sense of duty, then this kind of internal sanction will not work.

Mill thinks obligation to the internal sanction, the feeling of duty or voice of conscience, makes individuals better human beings as they would learn to focus on all and not to those Only who are close to him. This sort of motivation requires the cultivation of impartiality, so that we can treat any other person as ourselves. Mill argues that human beings are naturally social animals whose desire is to be live on life in harmony with others. This feeling is a utilitarian morality. For this interpretation of Mill it is clear that internal sanctions are more powerful than any external sanction. Because, external sanctions are imposed by external factors like hegemony of God or law. But on the other hand internal sanctions are the result of internal feelings of duty or obligation. This internal sanction develops in a rational person through his own feelings of morality. Thus morality is the production of one's own internal sanction there is no external force like law and legislation or God which force him to perform

¹⁵ (Mill 1992, 26)

morality. So, morality is the result of person's own choice. There is no reason to think that they can't be cultivated to support utilitarian principles as the aim of utilitarianism is to promote greatest amount of happiness for greatest number of people. Person own choice or own limitation is restructured according to the dictate of internal and external sanctions. Recognition of general happiness as the ethical standard provides the firm foundation for a social morality that reflects "the desire to be in unity with fellow creatures."¹⁶ This desire, Mill claims, is a powerful principle in human nature because sociability is part of human nature. The utilitarian standard of morality is more naturally cultivated in the adoption of the feeling of duty. Cultivating this sense of duty is the most obligatory way to promote the greatest happiness.

Thus, Mill argues that once general happiness becomes recognized as the moral standard, natural sentiment will nurture feelings that promote utilitarianism. Mill argues that utilitarianism has its root in the social nature of human beings--in their desire to be in unity with other humans, and their fear of other people's disapproval. Mill argues that society could and should nourish this natural sentiment through education and law. He asserts that there is no reason to think that the feeling of social unity is taught in the same way religion is taught. It is not implanted in us as an internal sanction. In that case utilitarianism would be a binding force to influence our behaviour. But these sanctions are based on natural human sentiments, which developed by the system of education and nurtured willfully by the agents.

Virtue in Mill's ethics: Through the notion of sanction Mill shifts his moral theory of egoism to altruism. Altruism includes the happiness of others; it considers the happiness of other people as desirable as my own happiness. Mill

¹⁶ (Mill 1992, 25)

considers self- sacrifice as a virtue. Presence of this virtue restated the notion of describing in the agent's mind. Because of this virtue we consider the happiness of maximum as the happiness of mine. In the context on discussion about virtue the utilitarian approach of Mill fixes two goals, one is happiness and other one is virtue. Now let me discuss the connection between happiness and virtue in this theory.

As all of our evidence proves that psychologically people desire for happiness, the utilitarian doctrine provides the notion of happiness as desirable phenomena. This is a fact, that each person's goal is to achieve his own happiness, and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons. Happiness is the end of conduct, and consequently one of the criterion of morality. But it cannot, be the sole criterion. Mill strongly claims that like happiness, virtue, and the absence of vices is also desirable. The opponents of the utilitarian standard may object that as Mill thinks there are other ends of human action besides happiness, happiness cannot be the standard of approbation and disapprobation. But does the utilitarian doctrine deny that people desire virtue, or maintain that virtue is not a thing to be desired? According to Mill, utilitarianism maintains that virtue is to be desired. Utilitarian moralists believe that actions and dispositions should be virtuous so that can they promote good. Virtuous actions are the means to produce the ultimate end. Utility could not be the state to conduce the general happiness, unless people love to do virtuous activity of producing happiness of others. Thus, as the means to produce happiness virtue is accepted in Mill's theory. This is why Mill is not considered as virtue theorist. The central theme of virtue ethics is virtuous character traits . But Mill's entire interest is to produce happiness for all. The mean of morality becomes as a thing desirable end in itself. Even sometimes if virtuous means does not produce the personal happiness for the individual agent yet it is treated as a virtuous if it is good for the mass. As a social

being people could not be able to be satisfied with his own happiness. He is forced to demand others' happiness because of his rational faculty and caring nature. Again the happiness of others forces an rational individual to perform the virtuous action repeatedly and these repetitions develop a feeling in the individual to accept virtue as the end of his own action. This explanation is not dismissing the Happiness principle because Mill explains virtue as the ingredients of happiness. The ingredients of happiness are very various and versatile, and each of them is desirable in itself. In the Chapter 4 of *Utilitarianism* Mill begins his argument by stating that virtue can be an end to human action beside happiness. Mill agrees that it is possible to perform action according to virtue and absence of vice instead of the pleasure and the absence of pain. But an actual problem arises here that if Mill accepts virtue as an end of action then what would be said about Mill's inductive proof of Utility, which hinges on the observation that happiness is desired and therefore desirable. If there are people who genuinely value virtue as the criterion of right and wrong action, of how one should act, then, happiness cannot be granted as the only first principle, i.e. a doubt arises against utilitarianistic claim.

Mill states that opponents are mistaken in believing that utility is incompatible with virtue. Mill holds that virtue is not only valuable as a means to pleasure, but in fact as an end in itself. Different between virtue and happiness is superficial. Mill shows that virtue can be a part of pleasure. One can value virtue as an end for its own sake because the parts of happiness is not a single, rather it contains several components. If one lives in a society where each individual is acting according to virtue, then the happiness of that individual will be greater and as well as the happiness of the society will be greater. Basically it is a dogmatic thinking that is not following the principle of happiness if the consequence of his action is virtuous.

According to Mill virtue is an example of high quality pleasure as virtue is a part of pleasure. Mill compares the relationship of pleasure and virtue with the relationship between pleasure and money. Money is an example of an end which is not in itself valuable to bringing about pleasure. It is valuable only because it helps to gain the things which bring pleasure. Money is simply an object with no inherent value. Those things which are desired originally as a means to happiness can be desired so strongly that they become an ingredient in happiness. As further evidence, Mill argues that for any given source of pleasure like music and health, one desires them as the means to utility and also as part of the end. Similarly virtue is also the end which is not itself valuable, but considered as the ingredient of pleasure as it helps to produce pleasure. So, virtue is the paradigm of happiness in Mill's theory.

But there is a genuine problem in Mill's theory. In our society everybody desires his own happiness, then Mill's argument will fail as it says totality of pleasure. It is true that any honest introspection will reveal that one does actually value one's own happiness. So, how can Mill explain that morality means to produce the highest amount of good for the highest number of people? To provide solution and justify his view free from the claim of egoism Mill defines that people value their own happiness, and this implies that they also value the happiness of others because people's happiness lies in the happiness of others. This is necessary for Mill's theory because it is the notion by which he escapes from Ethical Egoism, which he finds to be a disagreeable theory. Ethical Egoism is the only theory which Mill finds incompatible with utilitarianism because in ethical egoism, it is demanded that one should value his own happiness. But Mill argues that if everyone wants his own happiness then a conflict must take place and no one will be happy. He claims that everyone should value his or her happiness by producing happiness of others. Thus, Mill emphasises that everyone must be virtuous to

produce maximum amount of happiness. This shift from own happiness to the happiness of all becomes possible because of cultivated mind which is capable to exercise its all faculties and ready to acquire knowledge. Such mind express interest in all the issues comes in his way. It means no one can be indifferent towards other people. He should possess a genuine private affection and sincere interest in public good. Mill with an example is explaining how we can reduce our own sufferings by cultivating reduce our own suffering by cultivating our mind with knowledge and feelings. Poverty gives us suffering. But we can reduce it if we are able to understand the suffering of other people. This knowledge, Mill thinks, is combined with good sense and providence of individuals. Moral education helps us to overcome influence of evils. The person's self-sacrifice is necessary. Because there is noble life without happiness, i.e., without our own happiness. Self-sacrifice is no doubt a virtue and better than happiness. But self-sacrifice is treated as virtue as we earn happiness for others with their quality. Utility is a standard which is appropriate to resolve moral disagreements. Utility is a standard which takes an unbiased stand. According to Mill utilitarianism is a holistic view. And this holistic view as it decides the goal with the means to achieve it. It is a complete theory. Mill's approach is an improved version of utilitarianism as it claims to follow virtuous path to attain the goal. As it accepts virtue as the means, it accepts the concept of obligation also. Because when you fix the means then the agent has the obligation to follow that. As Mill fixes virtue as the means so a feeling of obligation also takes place in his theory. In Utilitarianism's view the agent must be strictly impartial, disinterested, benevolent spectator at the time of choosing happiness for himself and for others. The standard is the golden rule of Jesus. This is the rule which comes from Jesus's teaching of 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. So a feeling of obligation is part and parcel of Mill's theory also.

We have to remember that at first virtue is considered as the mean to the end. Virtue is desirable to us as it helps to get happiness. But ultimately it turns to component of happiness. It is then desirable for its own sake, it is then considered as good in itself. This is possible because of its association with happiness. When people understand that virtue leads to happiness then they realize that virtue is also desirable. Mill has explained this with examples. To get desirable objects we need money. So, money is desirable as means. But when all the needs become fulfilled a person tries to accumulate money for its own sake. Money is not using as means, but treated as end. Same is true about power. Power is desirable to us as power helps to get desired objects. But ultimately when power is proved as good, we desire power for its own sake. Power helps to the attainment of our other wishes; thus it has the strong association with our objects of desire. In these cases the means turn to a part of the end. What was once desired as an instrument for the attainment of happiness, considered as desired for its own sake. In being desired for its own sake desired as part of happiness. Virtue, according to the utilitarian conception, is a good just because it is a weapon to be happy. This is not originally desired of it. It is conducive to pleasure, and reduces pain. But because of it's the association with the end, it is felt as good in itself. Thus we intensely desire it just as we desire other goods.

This explanation proves that other than happiness nothing is desired. We desire virtue as virtue is treated equivalent to happiness. Who choses virtue as a mean of his action, desires it either because it is a pleasure, or because living without it is a painful experience. This interpretation actually strengthens Mill's claim of utilitarianism. Mill claims that human nature is so constituted that naturally human beings always desire the thing which is either a part of happiness or a means to attain happiness (virtue). So happiness is the only thing which is used as the standard to

evaluate action. If so, happiness is the sole end of human action, then it necessarily follows that it must be the criterion of morality.

Here we must clarify the relation between will and desire. These two are not always identical. Will, the active phenomenon, is a different thing from desire, the state of passive sensibility. In many cases we desire something because we will to have it. It happens because of habitual purpose. Here desire is related with will. When we acquire virtues in our character and the virtues are reflected in our habitual actions then we spontaneously desire the willed objects. But in many cases we act indifferently, as a result of our habit, though we are not conscious about those things in such cases the end is not passionately desired. Mill thinks happiness is measured by feeling and experience. Feeling and experience consider some goal as pleasurable for the higher faculty and never focus on the quantity. Capacity for the nobler feelings is a tender thing in Utilitarianism. He is comparing it with a plant which can be damaged because of hostile influences and lack of proper care. So the society must arrange the proper arrangement to nurture the higher faculty of human being presence of which distinguishes man from lower animals. The rational will cannot desire happiness either because –

1. The lower pleasures are the only pleasures which are accessible to this people.
No other options are open to him.

Or

2. These pleasures are the only pleasures which this people are capable to enjoy.

But Mill clearly states that a person who is capable to enjoy both kinds of pleasure cannot prefer the lower one willingly and knowingly.

So it is clear that our desire accompanies with our will when we act consciously with full knowledge of the situation. So we can say that a noble

person always takes the right decision both from his rational will and his right feeling. His will and desire thus go hand in hand. Here we find a difference between Mill and Kant because in Kant's view our will and desire may contradict in a situation, but we have to follow the rational will which is motivated to act according to a universal law. But suppression of desire is not accepted in Mill's method. He clearly declares that pleasure of happiness is an object of desire. If we do not desire it whole heartedly then we cannot achieve pleasure. Happiness is a feeling which should touch our inner soul. Because in Mill's opinion if we feel tranquillity in our life then we can live a satisfied life. Fellow feeling, care towards collective interest makes life interesting to us. To gain this tranquillity in life we have to resist all kinds of conflict in life. I think our rational will and desire must be in harmony if we want to live a good life. Though Mill is not considered as a virtue theorists, his explanation coincide with Aristotle's view at least in some respect. No doubt unlike Aristotle Mill is suggesting to follow a general single principle and in focusing on evaluation of actions, not the character, on evaluation of actions, not the character, but like Aristotle Mill is also emphasising on the nobleness of the agent. Aristotle has never mentioned about moral obligation in his theory because he was more concerned about the flourishing of character. If the dispositions of agent are virtuous, in Aristotle's opinion, agent in practical situation will spontaneously act virtuously. But as Mill is suggesting following a principle as obligatory, he is giving lots of importance on the feeling and virtues of agent. He thinks that a noble person from his inner heart will feel the obligation to follow the rule. His concept of internal sanction also proves that he is not recommending any

forceful imposition of obligation, rather thinks that a moral person will feel obligated to follow the moral law.

After summarising Mill's notion of moral obligation we can say that Mill is advising for both internal and external sanctions to perform and maintain the virtuous mean. Actually the internal sanction which inspires the agent to perform action for the maximization of utility. It means him conscious about our social obligation. Mill's theory is a nobler theory than Bentham as it encompasses the pleasure of other people. Bentham's egoistic theory has no need to accept the concept of obligation, because Bentham thinks our goal is to get pleasure for our own sake But Mill thinks that our goal should be the happiness of other people. Common people normally do not try to do that and so concept of obligation is very much important in Mill's Utilitarianism. In his moral theory Mill has correctly understands man as a rational entity. Because of his rational faculty man is different from the animals and capable to choose. The qualitative pleasure and not count the quantity of pleasure. So, morality means not only producing happiness but also a greater or superior qualitative happiness which must be attained through proper devotion of human selves. It means not the happiness of animals but the happiness of sensitive self, educated self should be the goal of morality. Bentham's hedonistic view which gives importance to the self-satisfactory pleasure is not the right one. Mill moves away from egoistic hedonism and the stresses on achieving pleasure as a social kind being which considers the pleasure of other people. Notion of obligation however is not a necessary part of Bentham's view, but it is a fundamental or primary notion in Mill's theory. Because when a moral agent has to oblige to produce maximum happiness for the maximum number of people following the general principle then there must be an obligatory factor which works behind the moral action or decision of the agent

But he never suggests to follow the rule blindly because that would be a foolish task if we try to follow the rule obediently. Lying is bad – this rule cannot be followed without observing the particularities of the circumstances. If lying helps to prevent a more painful consequence then one should be allowed to tell the false. Here we can make a rule that lying is wrong except in the above circumstances. Any special circumstance can then be incorporated into the rule. Mill gives this freedom to the agent as he trusts on the rational nature and attitude of fellow feeling of the agent. This attitude makes the agent a responsible agent who feels obligated to adopt a uniform attitude towards all.

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Chapter 3

An Alternative Concept of Moral Obligation by Bernard Williams

Bernard Williams is one of the leading philosophers of twentieth century. He is an important contributor of moral psychology and has a strong, and distinct opinion on personal identity, equality and emotion. In the very beginning of his philosophy he hits to the two most popular pillars of ethics- one is Kant's Deontological ethics and another one is Utilitarianism. Williams attacks these two because he thinks that the scope of ethics is not so distinctively mapped that we can explain the issues of ethics so easily. He opposes any theoretical standardisation in ethics, because he thinks that ethics is an application which is determined totally by the ability of the agent. According to him ethics has a vast range that's why we cannot explain it so easily, we cannot make any simple implication about ethics as this kind of implication makes it narrow and passive. Our limited thinking cannot capture the broad area of ethics. In *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (1972), he writes that the discussion of moral philosophy, from the past to present era is entirely empty and boring, just because it follows the trend of standardisation. The study of morality, he argues, should be vital and compelling. He wants to find a moral philosophy that is accountable to psychology, history, politics, and culture. That means he demands for an ethical notion which reminds the background or history of mankind, analyses the present political situation, realises the cultural feeling and then feels the psychology of the human being. That is why in his book *Moral Luck* he shows various uses of the word

‘ought’.¹ He strongly claims that this kind of word has different applications. We cannot capture the meaning of such term in a fixed or specific manner.

In this chapter I would like to highlight the view of Williams’s moral obligation. Before entering in the discussion of his philosophy. I will mention the objections raised by Williams on Kantianism and Utilitarianism.

Against Universality: Kant in his moral doctrine, has restricted the indulgence of subjective feeling According to Kant, the moral point of view must be impartial and indifferent to any particular. For Kant moral thought is a rational application of impartial principle. But Williams thinks that every person has their own character. Kantian impartial, principle based view that ignores the interference of character which is the distinctive feature of an agent. An agent is identified by his character. One person can be differentiated from others on the basis of his character. It gives individuality to every person. Williams is very much concerned about the individuality of every person and opines that individuality should be reflected in the procedure of decision making. He criticises Kantianism as it dismisses the role of character just to mention impartiality. “Kantians’ omission of character is a condition of their ultimate insistence on the demands of impartial morality...”² But according to Williams differences of character directly play a vital role in moral decision. Differences in character establish that individuals are not inter-substitutable. Here, I suppose that Bernard Williams, by the notion of different characters of human being has tried to hit Kant’s notion of obligation. We know that Kant is famous for his notion of universality. He is the profounder of reason based universal principle in morality. Concept of obligation enters in Kant’s moral scenario as an essential corollary of universality. Kant claims that rational agent must have an obligation, to

¹ (Williams 1982)

² (Williams 1982,14)

follow an objective principle which can be universalised without any hesitation. But Williams thinks this notion of universality opposes the individuality. Because when you are prescribed to universalise your subjective maxim then it is accepted to follow the path of impartiality in the scope of morality. Williams considers this attitude as quite narrow.

Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Groundwork for Metaphysic of the Morals* expounded a moral system based on what he called the Categorical Imperative. The best known version of categorical imperative is: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become, by an act of will, a universal law of nature."³ Categorical imperative is unconditioned one and having the virtue of universalizability of practical reason which makes us oblige to do it. Principle of universalizability, the practical reason of any rational being develops the notion of categorical imperative which is one of the important maxims of Kant's moral philosophy. Kantian moral point of view is characterised as impartial and indifferent to any particular person. The moral thought or decision which is the outcome of any particular circumstance and particular characteristic of an agent must have a universal feature so that it could be followed by all in similar situation. Kantianism talks about the rational motivation of a moral agent which is only guided by an impartial principle. But Williams his book *Moral luck* demands that a moral agent act selflessly. Our value system, commitments and desires make a difference about how we see the world and how we act. So we have to count the particular feature of the individual which reflect on the humanity. Williams' insistence that morality is about people and their real lives, makes his theory unique.

³ (Paton1947, 110)

Moral Dilemma: By rejecting the individuality, Kant is actually resisting the interference of psychological aspect of an individual in the sphere of morality. Kant's duty based theory is founded on his concept of good will which is good in itself and is capable to make the action good. Kant talks about a kind of moral obligation to follow the principle, which the agent creates by universalizing his own maxim. But in book *Problems of the Self*, Bernard Williams argues that dilemma cannot be resolved if we try to follow universal principle. Though Kant thinks about obligations which cannot conflict but with concrete examples, Williams argues that in our practical life situations it is very common to face dilemmas which are impossible to resolve by any universal standard. In a dilemmatic situation the agent feels obligation to fulfil to such duties which are either incompatible or it is practically impossible for the agent to fulfil both of them. But Kant wants to make the moral domain free from any conflict. For Kant our moral obligation is only to universalize our subjective maxim into an objective one. According to Kant, a moral agent should follow the moral law, the categorical imperative, which instructs to act according to that maxim which you expect all other rational people would also follow.⁴ Kant understands moral worth to be the sort of thing that is free from any chance factor. Thus he does not believe in any chance factor or bad luck of being caught in a tragic dilemma. In Kant's view we neglect our duties only because of our bad intention. But we have to acknowledge, Williams argues, that the circumstances can sometimes force a person of good will to act in a way that is ethically heinous and violates a genuine obligation.⁵ The feeling of remorse which arises in the mind of the agent when he fails to fulfil his obligation, justifies the genuinity of moral dilemma.

⁴ (Kant 1788)

⁵ (Nusbaum 2008)

This emotion appropriately arises in the mind of the agent when the person could not fulfil the predicament. So, Kant's concept of moral obligation fails to solve practical problems and cannot dismiss the alternative possibilities of bad luck.

Emotion: Kant emphasises mostly on reason based duty. But man is not a subject who is only performing duty without his emotion. Williams argued that, Kant has neglected the variety of commitments that involves in a human life. Williams thinks of Kant's ethics is in many respect narrow and unsympathetic, and ignores virtue. Normally in the practical life we apply both our reason and emotion at the time of making decision. Basically when a person takes a decision then his reason and emotion both are active. And he is guided by these two also. Emotion means to say feelings play a major role in most of the ethical decisions people make. That's why some philosophers also mention about internal reasons apart from external reason. Internalism and externalism are two opposing ways of explaining various subjects in several areas of philosophy. Internal reason includes human motivation, knowledge, justification, meaning, and truth. 'Internalism' refers to the belief that an explanation can be given by pointing the things which are within the scope of the agent's interest. Conversely, externalism holds that it is things about the world which motivate us, justify our beliefs, determine meaning etc. That means in internalism the motivation comes from internal belief. Internalism is derived from the Epistemic view that every belief is immediately comes from a person's consciousness without having any external factors, or at least that these things are cognitively accessible to a person's thought.⁶ In externalism the motivation comes from external world. Basically distinguishable factors of these two reasons are the point of priority. Externalist gives priority on external world whereas the internalist gives priority on internal factor. In

⁶ (Williams 1982)

internalism it is claimed that a person must focus on his desires at the time of fixing the goal. When someone desires something then he has a motive to get that thing. Having motive means he also has a reason to desire that thing. On the other hand according to externalist a person has a justification to perform an action even he has no desire to do that. Moral reason, proposed by Kant, is one kind of externalist reasons. That's why his theory is very much one sided. Kant detached his view from internal view point. His theory thus fails to describe how much our emotions direct our moral choices. Bernard Williams thinks it is impossible to make any important moral judgments without emotion. So we can judge him as an internalist. According to Williams the internal reason is motivating reason. He believes some reasons depend on desires of the agent. But he thinks that, if we aim to restrict the ethical notion within the intellectual deliberation then the scope of ethics will be narrow down. The main problem lies in the attempt to make a distinction between reason and emotion. We think that these two are entirely opposites and cannot act jointly. But the great Greek Philosopher thinks that a virtuous person can apply both of these faculties harmoniously because in his case emotion always to listen reason. So, his emotion does not pull him against reason. In *Nicomachea Ethics* Aristotle clearly says that ethical virtue or the virtue of character concern the part of the soul that has feelings and which can listen to reason.⁷ As we are responsible for our character traits, so we are responsible for our emotions also; the responsibility for our emotions may even be greater, since it is easier to manipulate them. We have to remember the emotions of a responsible individual cannot be biased and character traits are not raw

⁷ (Aristotle 2005)

impulses but socialized modes of responses. ⁸ Agent's feeling of obligation resists him to fulfil his emotions ruthlessly.

Williams opposes Kant's view and admits the thought of, Aristotle and Hume who have also accepted role of emotion in morality. As Aristotle, William also accepts emotion as another aspect of character. He thinks as morality is the reflection of our character. So we cannot accept morality without emotion. William refutes Kant's view as it is a theory that places moral obligation at the centre, but neglects the contribution of the agent's life of personal relationships. Kant is very much concerned about of what is duty and not gives much attention on how one should live. In a prosperous society it is also important to know how we could develop internally. Kant's philosophy fails to give answers to various practical problems of human life. Williams criticises it as in many respects it is narrow and unsympathetic towards others. Kant ignores emotions and emphasises only on formal explanation of duty

Against Utilitarianism:

Like Kantianism Williams also opposes Utilitarianism as it is also attempting to systematize moral system. According to Williams, Utilitarianism is in trouble because it is concerned only about the good consequences. Only consequence cannot be the subject of evaluation. It offers an account of happiness. But the notion of consequence is very obscure.

Consequentialism is basically indifferent rather concerned about the effect or result of any action. So, here what is done by an individual has no importance, the basic aim of this theory is consequence. They draw a causal relation between the action and its consequence and imposes the responsibility on the agent to produce the

⁸(Roberts 1989, 293-306)

consequence. But sometimes the agent fails to produce the expected result because of some unseen conditions. To clarify the agent's failure to produce the expected result Williams claims that as morality is a practical realm and situation is not under the control of the agent always. So, though an agent tries to produce the desired result, situation may betray. But is the agent responsible for this failure? If he is not responsible then we cannot criticise him for the produced consequence. The responsibility for producing happiness is not always under agent's control. "...if I am ever responsible for any things, then I must be just as much responsible for things that I allow or fail to prevent, as I am for things that I myself, in the more everyday restricted sense, bring about."⁹ Basically utilitarian is an overall view which talks about the consequence and sets the consequence as the paradigm of any action. They entirely focus on the result of the action and totally ignore the agent who is producing the result. Though individual is the cause of the action, at the time of evaluation of this theory does not link the agent with the result of the action. Agent is not accountable but agent is actually deliberately performing the action after comparing the alternatives and analysing the whole situation. In this theory the agent can be replaced by another agent if the consequence is same. Role of the agent is totally ignored here. A law can be universal but when we apply it in practical situation then the individual do it practically with his own individuality by using his wisdom. And it is a misconception that morality is judged by the result of an action only. Action is done through our own reason. That means every person has their own agency which is different from others. As the guiding reason of every individual is different choice of action may vary. My action is totally derived from my action guiding reason. On the other hand other people's action is the result of his reasons. There is a real and crucial

⁹(Smart, William 1973,95)

distinction that is closely related with the actions of different peoples. This is a central objection to utilitarianism that it ignores this distinction. The distinction, which utilitarian ignores by being impersonal, is the distinction between my agency and the agency of other people. Individuality, particularities of individual which affects the internal reason of the agent has a great impact in ethical thought of Williams. So, Williams is raising the integrity objection against Utilitarianism.

According to the integrity objection, agency is always the agency of a particular person. So we cannot draw any impartial conclusion in moral realm. There is no such thing like impartial agency, because as a particular being. One is involved in the decision of action. So, Utilitarianist concept of impartiality is treated to be null and void. The objection is that utilitarianism neglects the fact that practical deliberation is in every case first-personal, and the first person is not derivative or cannot be replaced by *anyone*. Hence agents are not just machines of the universal satisfaction system. This theory actually demoralises the impact of agency.

It is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity. An agent is identified with agent's actions as the action flows from his own project or attitude which he takes seriously and deeply. It is absurd to demand of such a man, that who just steps aside from his own project and decision and acknowledges the decision which utilitarian calculation requires. It is to alienate him in a real sense from his actions.

Williams view on moral obligation: After criticising the narrowness of Kantianism and Utilitarianism Bernard Williams focuses on his own approach to moral obligation. Before entering on the discussion of obligation he reviews on different meanings of 'ought' sentences. According to Williams 'ought' sentences do not always imply obligation. Sometimes 'ought' sentences are mentioned as a propositional operator

also. So, mere presence of the term 'ought', in a sentence does not imply that this sentence is expressing moral obligations.

1. Jones ought to treat Smith,
2. Smith ought to be treated by Johns.

Here the term 'ought' is used twice. But the use is not same for each. For second time it is used as Smith 'ought' to be treated by Jones, Here Smith has no force to go and to be treated. Smith is only advised for going with Jones. But in the first sentence Jones is in an obligation to treat Smith. Bernard Williams represents here the view of G. Herman, who attempts to distinguish between the logical properties of these two sentences as the second sentence express a property of state of affairs only, whereas the first sentence represents a relation between an agent and a possible course of action. Therefore first sentence expresses a course of action which is like a command or force to a person. Whereas, the second sentence is just a state of affairs, which is not obligatory. In first sentence we mention a property of a person like when we say that- Someone ought to sweep the room. Here 'ought' is used like a property of an agent. But in the second sentence- Smith ought to be treated by Johns, 'ought' acts as an operator of a proposition symbolise as $O(p)$.¹⁰ Though this representation can be applied in such sentence like- This room is ought to be swept. Here, in the no. 3 sentence 'Someone ought to sweet the room'- we express an 'ought' not just as $O(p)$ or operator of proposition. We determine here a kind of property, basically an obligatory property. This kind of obligation is different from an operator of proposition. Bernard Williams confirms that "there is no reason to regard the ought of moral obligation as anything but a propositional operator."¹¹ Moral obligation is that which announces that someone that as is competent for doing a specific thing. When I

¹⁰ (Williams 1982)

¹¹ (Williams 1982,115)

say that “John ought to help the old lady” then it means that John is under an obligation to help that lady. This obligation of John must be supported by some reasons; like John stays in a striking distance from that old lady or John is the nephew of that lady. That’s why he is competent for that responsibility. So the mentioned ‘ought’, which is used in obligatory sense, is not just an operator of proposition, it is beyond of that, as it has some reasons which support the obligatory factor. Bernard Williams’ claims that any ‘ought’ sentence is based on a special kind of reason, due to which we consider that this ‘ought’ should be performed by the agent necessarily. For justifying his claim Williams gives the example of promise keeping. He states that when A promises to do X, then A puts himself under an obligation to do X. Here it is notable that according to Williams when A decides to do X then he decides it not just for a feeling of duty or responsibility. A has also a special kind of intention to do X. And this intention of A is the internal reason of A. This internal reason supports A to do X. In this point of view, Williams’ approach is different from Kant. Kant regards that A ought to do X, not just for his personal intention, but must do X from a specific motive, namely from the feeling of obligation to fulfil duty. According to Williams it is a fact that when a person promises to do something then he ought to do that as he has the intention to do this. Basically Kant refers to a broad area obligation. He considers external reasoning as important to fulfil the duty. But we sometimes cannot reach the original source of external reason. It is difficult to justify the external reason from a particular position because the external reason copes up various factors of external world and totally decoupled from the subject attitudes. Like, why should we not kill any one- the possible answer of this question will be that it will go against the universal principle of saving lives of other peoples. Such answer evokes the question: why should we follow universal principle. So, the series of questions continues if we

refer the formal factors and refute the role of natural inclination for selecting moral action. But in the case of Williams it is very much easy to justify why we do an action. Here our desire, intention and our physical ability all are involved in performing a volunteer action.

Williams' view is very much open and simple than the other thinkers. Williams calls the moral obligation as the practical ought. As per Williams, practical ought is different from general propositional ought. Practical ought is actual ought which is governed by reality, whereas the general propositional ought is adapted by the agent with his own whim. Therefore the use of ought is not same everywhere, although these two kinds of 'ought' do not in itself deliver a distinction in logical forms. According to Williams 'A ought to do X' will entail 'A has a reason to do X'. And this reason is called internal reason. Williams mentions, that "A ought to do X" is a practical aspect of an agent's aim, choice or project. So it may vary from agent to agent. Practical deliberation has a notion of relative application. Williams defines practical ought is not separate from a moral ought or obligation. Both practical ought and moral 'ought' follow the dictum "ought implies can". In the context of moral obligation the agent can do anything which suits his situation. As the 'ought' directs the person to do that very action which is considered by the agent himself to be necessarily, he is under the obligation to do that. So when the agent is under an obligation to do something then he ought to do that, until any other obligation contradicts with that. Basically the agent at the time of selecting the 'ought' is using his internal reason and so the agent himself considers it as obligatory. This internal reason helps us to choose the right 'ought', with respect to the situation in which the agent is situated. According to Williams, everyone has their own specific character which is different from other. He considers that everyone states their own model of

reasoning by their own choice. 'I must do a certain thing' –this is mainly a discovery – a discovery about oneself, about one's natural inclination. There are various alternatives present in front of the agent but the agent chooses one from all. In this respect Williams says that either the other alternatives are vastly more costly or excluded from moral constraint. Only one alternative is suited with his course of action, which he decides to do. Williams confirms that we select one alternative as "must" because we prefer or favour that course of action. When a person selects an alternative then there are various notions which help him to prefer it. These determining factors may be for the impossibility of the other alternatives or the incapacity of agent. In the case of deliberation, agent's capacity must be judged. According to Williams 'ought' implies 'can' that means obligation implies possibility. The agent may have several options to fulfil. But among them the agent selects only one and rejects all the other possibilities. He may reject them either because those options do not go in harmony with his plan of life or he is not capable to address them. He selects one alternative which he decides as justified. He chooses the option as it is capable to satisfy his purpose. So he considers the option as an obligatory. It means obligation is not independent of the agent, or we may say obligation here is an agent related obligation. In modern normative ethics we normally impose the obligations on an agent for which he is not at all fit or it is beyond his capacity to fulfil. And that's why the agent fails to perform it. Williams argues that if it is foreseeable that what an agent can do then the extreme expectation which the agent cannot fulfil does not take place. Williams says, that if an agent has that kind of incapacity to do X then he is unable to do X. So, when I say I must do it that means other possibilities could not be done physically or intentionally. The central feature is that if an agent is right in thinking that he cannot do a certain thing then it is not

obligatory to perform it. Here the situation is involved in decision making procedure and concept of necessity does not work blindly. When I have three alternatives X, Y, Z and I decide to do X as it is the one alternative that which I attach overwhelming importance. Then as a consequence I must do X and I must not do the other alternatives Y and Z. this possibility to importance decides the priority. Basically what an agent can do or cannot do depend on his own reason. In particular, the class of things that an agent cannot do these are excluded from his internal reason. In the case “I must do it” is that kind of action which an agent practically performs. But why this “cannot” term comes in the scope of moral aspects? Williams describes that ‘here someone will reach for the weapon of distinguishing senses and will speak about two or more senses of “cannot”, that which signifies whatever rejection is embodied in the agent’s deliberation, and which express what one “literally” cannot do.’¹² Thus when an agent thinks in practical sense that he must do X then he will do X just because people generally do what they notice as a reason for doing. So, an agent performs an action not because it is a mere ought, more precisely an action is performed as it is reasonable for him. When an adviser advises A to do X, then A may not do that as this kind of ought does not seem reasonable to A. The agent does only that thing which practically seems necessary to him. Williams refers that morality is controlled by the practical necessity which is determined by our internal reason. And that’s why morality rejects the formal necessity of moral action.

Although Williams argues for the situation based ethics, yet his theory considers a kind of objectivity. He mentions that situation is one of the regulator of ethical actions. Every person’s performance in a particular situation is remaining same. If person A follows a particular obligation in a particular situation then that

¹² (Williams 1982,127)

would followed by person B, C, D and others also, if they belongs in the same situation and position. Williams confirms that there are general obligations in our society which are prescribed by moralists. These are the 'ought' which are placed for taking moral decision. But what kind of general ought would be chosen in the particular situation that is confirmed by the agent only. What kind of general ought would be followed by the agent depends on situation and capacity of the agent but if all determining situation is same to all then the followed obligation is same to everyone. Thus Williams confirmed objectivity in ethics.

Williams accepts objectivity in obligation from a different dimension. Suppose A decides to do X and B decides to do Y. Both of their choices are justified as they have chosen the alternative by rationally evaluating their set of desires, plan of life and their own capacity. So both of them expect that other people will accept their decisions and will provide them freedom to fulfil ought. A may not accept B's obligation as necessary for A as belongs to a different situation than B. The same is true in case of B. But if A and B both are able to justify their choices then both of them will agree to the decision of other person. A will accept that B ought to do Y and B will agree that A ought to do X. Thus, Williams, thinks objectivity of 'ought' maintains as nobody disagrees with the decision of other one as both of them have followed a deliberative root at the time of deciding what they ought to do.

As per my thinking Williams is very much concerned about the human's psychological and physical incapacibilities. That's why he wants to turn his theory from any kind of standardisation. The concept of obligation, which is the main issue of my dissertation, is not just a notion which is prescribed to me formally. The concept of obligation must be fitted with my capacity also. That means I morally obligated to do that kind of things which matches with my physical and psychological capacity. I

cannot be obligated to do an action which is beyond my capacity. Williams opines to decide moral obligation in relation to the particular agent situated in a particular spatio-temporal condition. We only perform that kind of thing which we can do intentionally. It is my duty to help a drowning child but I do not know swimming then cannot save the child, even if I have a good intention to do it. So intention is not sufficient. Morality is the scope of practical application. That's why Williams considers that 'ought' must imply can. "Ought implies can" is uniquely interpreted in his philosophy. An agent is morally obligated to that thing which is judged by his internal reason, which he can do physically and intentionally. An agent is a human being who lives in a practical world. In practical life nothing is static; everything is relative, though he talks about a situational objectivity. Williams has founded morality on reason; he does not want to set any paradigm, however he admits that if all of the determiners are same then the followed obligation is same to every person. He emphasises on the notion "can", whatever is under agent's control only that is selected by the agent on the basis of his own reason.

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Conclusion

In all the chapters I have focused on different views on moral obligations. I decided to discuss about three such views which are very different from each other as they have focused on the issue from their own pre-suppositional framework. Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill and Bernard Williams all of them accepted moral obligation but from a different stand point.

Moral obligation marks an action as a duty which one owes, which is considered as necessary to perform, in spite of having no legal compulsion. The very concept of moral obligation is present in western society mainly from the middle age and is associated with Christianity. Before middle age the ethics of Greek period concentrated on the lifestyle of people and never mentioned about any such obligation. Greek ethicists are supposed to be the first who are discussing about morality. Greek philosopher Socrates is the first one, who focuses on virtue as the principle of knowledge. So, the journey of ethics is supposed to be started from Socrates. And the much known Greek thinkers advocate their theories with the help of virtue which is introduced by Socrates. This discussion of virtue is character oriented interpretation of ethics. Greek period totally tends its discussion on virtue. Here the fundamental notion of discussion is flourishing of character. After Socrates, Plato and Aristotle considered virtue as the paradigm of moral life. Aristotle is the first philosopher who formulates ethics as a separate discipline. He gives a formal shape to ethics. He thinks that good of ethics is to seek how to live a good life. He suggests that to live a virtuous life is the right way to live a good life. He emphasizes mostly on upbringing of character. Any kind of law or principle is not objectively prescribed to follow then. But the ethical notion of middle age is quite different than ancient Greek

period. A great impact of divine law is noticed in this era. Divine laws are considered as supreme as these are prescribed by the divine transcendental authority and because of His supremacy these are treated as obligatory, necessary to follow. And from this point of this thinking of divinity an objective approach flourishes in the scope of ethics. In the middle age concept of objectivity was based on the concept of divinity. Philosophers of this period argue that the divine theory provides an objective metaphysical foundation for morality. Divine theory has an advantage that it also gives us a good answer to the question, why be moral? According to theism we are held accountable for our actions to God. Those who do evil must be punished and who live morally must be rewarded by God. Good, in the end triumphs over evils. Self-sacrifice is most desirable in theistic view. It is most accepted to sacrifice one's own interest for the sake of others interest. Philosophers like Augustine, Aquinas who gives accounts for divine morality. Most renowned admirers of divine approach, are Ralph Cudworth and William of Ockham.

Ralph Cudworth was an English philosopher and theologian. He was a Platonist. Like Plato, he claims that knowledge is a permanent and intellectual entity. Motivated by this epistemological viewpoint Cudworth claims about the eternal and immutable ideas of morality. And he admits that the moral ideas exist in God's mind. As the moral ideas are the ideas of God's mind they are objective and equal to all. So, moral actions are also God's command. According to Cudworth the sense of moral obligation, which comes from a divine command, is objective and unchangeable. Ockham is also a supporter of objective divinity. Ockham believes that the concept of the whole morality depends upon God's will. Things are obligatory, permitted or forbidden simply because God commands so. Ockham mentions three features of

morality-1. Freedom, 2. Prudence and 3. Practical reason. He claims these three are purely intermediaries between God's will and God's law.

Ockham accepts morality not only as God's command; he talks about reason also although this reason is given by God to understand the divine commands. For an act to be fully good, says Ockham, it must not be only founded on right reason, but be willed solely because dictated by right reason or obligation. This formulation is followed by the modern theorist. Immanuel Kant is formulating his concept of categorical imperative.¹

The modern theorist have replaced God with reason and in place of divine law, they have introduced the concept of moral law. In modern period, people are advised following moral laws which are the prescription of our own reason. The modern period which is the period of reason and moral system is structured without any influence of religion. But still concept of moral obligation is prominently present in the domain of morality. After modern period, the postmodern period has come. Post-modernist thinkers try to make the agent free from extreme rationality. Post-modernism emotion and reason. So, the notion of obligation takes a different shape in the thought of post-modernist viewer like Foucault or Zimmerman. These philosophers of contemporary period are against the legalistic notion of morality and they favor to judge things on the basis of particular situation. They prefer to depend on individual's moral sense and think to reject the concept of obligation as it has no importance if there is no conflict between reason and desires. Like Greek Philosophers, post-modernists are also emphasizing on the development of character and evaluate the agent, not the action. They think that obligation does not carry any kind of compulsion on the agent as decision springs from a virtuous character. In their

¹ (AUGUSTYN,2018)

view reason and emotion harmoniously act together. But other group of philosophers, especially the followers of Kantian tradition believes that to maintain the sanctity of moral concept of moral obligation must be accepted in its full vigor. And the extreme rigorist approach is the main drawback of modern age.

Kant, the philosopher of modern period is fully emphasizing on the notion of objectivity, though he is replacing God by reason and Divine law by moral law. His notion of objectivity proves the importance of the general ought or moral rules which is imposed on us as mandatory. In my first chapter, I have discussed on Immanuel Kant's notion of obligation. Basically, discussion on moral obligation will be incomplete if we do not mention about Kant. Immanuel Kant, which has been emphasized on the rational, will of man and that's why he demands an objective necessity in moral scope. For Kant moral obligation is one of the rigorous factors to every human being which demands a universal necessity for every situation. As a deontologist Kant valued the notion of duty which is universally valid and mandatory to perform. Kant believed that there is a supreme principle of morality, and he referred it as Categorical Imperative. A categorical imperative unconditionally demands the performance of an action for its own sake

It is true, that there are some similarities in the approaches of Immanuel Kant and J.S. Mill as both of them highlighted the action of the agent. Both Kant and Mill are prescribing a legalistic view which insists to ignore situational particularities and particularities of the subject. But there are also differences among their views as unlike Kant Mill is emphasising on individual's also apart from the role of reason in morality. Kant, a hardcore rationalist, prescribe to follow categorical imperative which is actually a universal law acts objectively and unconditionally in every situation. Though Kant is taking about good will which is good in itself, but this

goodness is reflected in the process of turning subjective principle or maxim to a universal objective law. It means without law even a good person cannot act rightly. Kant's legalistic view does not focus on the development of the attitude of the agent. He thinks that the 'ought' to perform duty. If the agent's will is contaminated by his selfish desires then he has to follow the path of morality ignoring or suppressing his selfish attitude. Development of the agent is not very important in his theory and so the agent is obligated to follow the law to perform his duty; but he is not obligated to develop his own attitude. He is not against the development of virtuous attitude obviously, he admits that divine will spontaneously acts rightly. But he thinks virtuous help us to follow the law. Thus concept of virtue is a derivative concept of his theory. Kant's concept of objectivity also ignores the particularities of the agent who is only abiding by the law. Here the question arises about the status of the agent. If the agent's responsibility is only to follow the universal law unconditionally then there is no scope to count the particularities of the agent. As a result the agent can be replaced by anyone. Agent, in Kant's theory, is a faceless entity and turns to a machine or robot that has no freedom to choose otherwise. Issue of agent's freedom is shaking here. Another doubt arises about Kant's dictum "ought implies can". Kant thinks that it is always within the capacities of the agent to fulfil his ought. Thus the agent is always capable to perform his duty. But Kant is actually here overlooking the practical life problems which he cannot ignore. Kant expects that the universal law is objectively valid and everyone is obligated to follow the law. But in several occasions we find ourselves in perplexed situation where we are tossed between two 'oughts'. In such situations we find two actions as obligatory, but because of some situational twist we fail to fulfil both of the obligations. Such situations are considered as dilemmatic situations where the agent realizes that he is failing to fulfil his duty, but

cannot perform both the duties. It proves all 'oughts' cannot be considered as obligatory in every situation. Beside this we can claim that the term 'ought' has different significance and the agent has to understand that first. Unconditionally we cannot announce that 'ought implies can'. But Kant is very critical to include subjective conditions in moral domain and to maintain purity in morality he is accepting objectivity as the primary condition of ethics. On the other hand, Mill as a utilitarianist asks for promoting happiness for maximum amount. This proposed notion of Mill also claims for a universal moral principle. However, though Mill demands for a universal principle of utility, yet there is a basic difference between Mill and Kant. Mill is concerned about subjective feeling also apart from reason. As he constitutes happiness as the paradigm of his theory he is focusing on the natural inclination of human beings. Therefore, though Mill's theory focuses on reason based principle, this reason is guided by observed psychological necessity. Kant's reason is apriori reason which judges the action only. As Kant's approach is a the deontological view, he gives priority on the duty. He places apriori reason as the regulator of performing action which is a duty itself. On the other hand, Mill gives priority on experienced based reason which is generated in an agent through lived experience and education. At the same time Mill opines that we should develop a moral sense in us which insists us of finding happiness in the happiness of other people. Development of virtue in us is important in his philosophy as providing more emphasises on internal sanction. He is no doubt taking moral obligation to follow a general law, but at the same time he is trying to incorporate the choice of the individual in moral decision making process. But as he is also providing a law based theory, he is denying the particularities of the agent. Needs and requirements of the agent must be decoupled from the domain of morality as his utilitarianism teaches to follow the path

of self- sacrifice. But if we always ignore our interests then how should we be motivated to act morally? If the reasons behind our actions are universal objective reasons then that is not sufficient to encourage the agent to follow the right way. We need to rethink about the role of the agent .that will also help us to redefine obligation from a new angle. Ethics is a notion or an indicator of voluntary life which depends on the environment where we live in. Therefore as ethics depends on our environment, on our socio economic position that's why it is very much difficult to bind every life in one principle.

In the third chapter I have discussed the view of Bernard Williams. My intention is to show the difference of his thought from other two philosophers. Williams is also advocating an objective scheme but his objectivity is conditioned by agent's perspective. Williams dismisses the uniformity in the sense 'ought' and tries to make a situation based ethics. He is very much against any kind of standarization in ethics. Williams opposes the impartial view of moral theories. He projects every moral agent as a particular entity who takes his decision with his own internal reason. His internal reason springs from his set of desire, projects of life. He conveys that as we all have our own integrity, we must demand our own freedom. All have the freedom to decide what is good for the person himself. But if everyone demands his own freedom and restricts his duty within his own periphery. Then a conflict will arise obviously. As we are rational we cannot allow this type of conflict. But, Williams is dismissing this possibility. As a rational being we all decide our actions following a deliberative root. Internal reason does not mean self-centred reason. The agent as a social being is liable to justify his decision. So, his decision must be reason based. Williams criticises the impartial conservation in ethics. He talks about an opaque context where people can freely decide his duty. He defines obligation as the

'ought' to do which is under the control of the agent. However, Williams judge morality from the agent's perspective. He believes that as the agent takes the decision from his position, decisions of two persons may differ. In this sense it is relative as all we are not bound to do the same action. But as the agent is justifying his position so it is objective as all are agreeing with the agent. He is a defender of an objective moral aspect as he mentions that in a particular situation if all the conditions are same then what is accepted by the agent A1 as 'ought' that 'ought' is also accepted by the agent A2. So, if all determining conditions are same then the moral decisions are same to everyone. Therefore Williams also demands objectivity in the domain of morality. But his concept of obligation also includes the notion of freedom, the agent is constructing the reason on the basis of his internal set of desires. He spontaneously thinks to follow the 'ought' as his own perspective justifies it as mandatory. He is thus obligated to that ought which he himself considers as good and necessary to follow.

According to me among these three, we could not choose any one as a standard notion of moral obligation as these three are not completely adequate. Each and every notion has their own deformities. To maintain the notion of obligation, Kant is over ambitious and giving too much emphasis on the rationality of human beings. But reason is not the only faculty which guides us in our day to day life. In maximum cases we fail to hear the call of reason and such cases are not included in the scope of his ethics. Kant is too much formal and ignores empirical conditions from ethics. On the other hand though Mill tries to reduce Kantian formality, yet he is not flawless, as he also draws a hypothetical notion where he demands happiness for maximum amount which is also practically a utopian criterion. His attempt to ignore the interest of the agent makes us confused. Mill's theory is very much hypothetical. He thinks to maximize happiness, but as happiness is a kind of natural inclination, we

cannot maximize happiness easily. It is very difficult to cultivate it in practical domain. On the other hand it is true that ethical thought of Bernard Williams is very new and seems very practical as it considers the practical situation of the agent. But Williams is against standardization and I think, ethics, as a method of maintaining justice in our social life, should follow uniformity. If we do not fix a standard then people may justify any thing as essential for his own life project. But he is saying that the internal reason must be accepted by other people, but actually it is very tough to estimate other's reason by understanding their point of view. Though there are several difficulties in Williams theory we have to accept that he is giving a scope to the agent to reflect in own perspective. Thus the agent feels the obligation from his inner soul as he himself considers an action as duty to him.

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This is to certify that Smt. Nabanita Deb participated in the one day state level seminar, titled **PHILOSOPHY: THEN AND NOW** held on the occasion of World Philosophy Day on 21st December 2018 at Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University and presented a paper on Moral Obligation: Now and Then.

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