



## Compatibility or Incompatibility of Bentham's Utilitarianism with the Quran's Doctrine

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Received: 2021-05-31

Accepted: 2021-10-03

### Abstract

Moral utilitarianism is one of the most significant and common theories in normative ethics, which gained prominence with the utilitarian utterance of Bentham's crime, and different interpretations of it have always been presented with various modifications. Some Muslim thinkers, familiar with Bentham's theory of utilitarianism, have tried to make it compatible with Quranic teachings by adding a clause or constraint. In addition, they have considered Quranic verses to support Bentham's seven criteria. The basic objection of such thinkers to Bentham is that he has limited profit to pleasure only, and that is worldly pleasure, while from the point of view of religion, profit and pleasure are both worldly benefits, pleasures and include the pleasures of the Hereafter. The important point is that before we look for the verses that confirm Bentham's utilitarian theory and his seven criteria, we must see whether there is any possibility of a new interpretation of utilitarianism based on the verses of the Quran. Therefore, in this article, in addition to reviewing and criticizing this view, the impossibility of a new interpretation of utilitarianism based on the verses of the Quran is explained.

### Keywords

The Quran, Moral Utilitarianism, Moral Theories, Bentham's Seven Criteria

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\* Aalebouye, A. R. (2021). Compatibility or Incompatibility of Bentham's Utilitarianism with the Quran's Doctrine. Journal of *Theosophia Islamica*, 1(2), pp. 48-74. Doi: 10.22081/JTI.2022.63049.1025

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## **Introduction**

Consequentialist theories, especially moral utilitarianism, are among the normative moral theories in Western moral philosophy that Muslim thinkers have welcomed. Although the origins of consequentialist theories go back to ancient Greece and Epicurus, Aristotle and his disciples, Jeremy Bentham found himself lost in the reading of Prestley's essay on government and the phrase "best for most people" saying "I found, I found" (Palmer, 1995), he tried to interpret his moral theory based on what became known as moral utilitarianism, because his theory is based on the principle of profit.

There are three major theoretical, normative ethics theories: virtue ethics, teleology, and conscientiousness. The standard moral theory in Islamic ethics texts is the theory of moral ethics that started from Aristotle, and Islamic ethicists in their works have usually offered a version of it that is compatible with religious teachings, including Abu Ali al-Miskawayh in the *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, Khajeh Nasir in *Nasirean Ethics*, Mullah Ahmad and Mullah Mehdi Naraqī in the *Jami' al-Sa'ada* and the *Mi'raj al-sa'ada*. Of course, the inherent goodness and ugliness of the intellect on the one hand, and the divine goodness and ugliness of the Shari'a on the other, although in theological discussions on the occasion of the inclusion of God's action in goodness and ugliness became a famous conflict between the Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites. It has a moral philosophy interpreted as the theory of the divine. Although this debate was later followed to some extent among Muslim philosophers and scholars of principles, including Ibn Sina, Mulla Sadra, Muhaqiq Isfahani, and Akhund Khorasani, it was not seriously discussed in ethical matters, except in recent decades when the Ayatollah Sobhani has also dealt with it from a moral point of view (Sobhani, 1998).

On the other hand, in recent decades, some Muslim thinkers, familiar with the teleological theories in the philosophy of ethics, have tried to give a consequentialist interpretation of Islamic ethics. Hence, some have interpreted the theory of Islamic ethics as consequential, without explicitly specifying its type, such as Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi (Mesbah Yazdi, 1995; Mesbah Yazdi, 2005). Some have offered selfish narratives of it, such as Ali Shirvani (Shirvani, 1999). Considering the acceptance of Bentham's utilitarianism and adding a clause or restriction based on Quranic teachings, he considered the theory of Islamic ethics utilitarian, and Sobhaniniya tried to interpret verses from the Quran that confirm Bentham's seven criteria. The verses referring to Bentham's seven criteria have added other conditions to Bentham's utilitarianism, including Bentham considers profit to be limited to material and worldly profit. However, Sobhaniniya, according to the verses referring to the afterlife, profits including material profit, and The world knows. In addition to examining and criticizing this view, this article proves the impossibility of a utilitarian interpretation of the theory of Islamic ethics.

### **Ethical Utilitarianism**

One of the critical issues in the philosophy of ethics is the criterion of moral value. Some moral philosophers determine the moral value of actions according to the consequences, which is known as moral consequentialism. According to practical teleology, it is morally good to have good consequences, but it depends on who or what the good consequences are, and therefore, depending on whether the consequences only concern the actor, or others, or most people. Three moral theories have been formed. (Frankena, 1997) Some believe

that an action is morally good that provides the interests of the actor, which is called moral selfishness. Some believe that it is a moral practice if only the interests of others are considered and the actor should not be considered at all, which is called moral heterogeneity. The third theory, known as moral utilitarianism, is that it is a moral practice that benefits the most people.

There is a difference of opinion as to what is meant by profit. According to Bentham, benefit means pleasure, and therefore an act is moral if creates the greatest overcoming of pleasure over suffering for most people, and in contrast, an act is bad if creates the greatest overcoming of suffering over pleasure for most people. If the amount of pleasure and suffering that an action creates is equal, the action is morally neutral and doing or leaving it is no different from a moral point of view.

Bentham sums up pleasure only in material pleasure and does not consider spiritual pleasure at all, and hence he has a serious form which is known as the form of tortured prison guards. Suppose there are several prison guards in a prison far from the city and they do not have more than one prisoner. This prison is so far from the city that no matter what happens in it, the news does not reach the city. Prison guards have no means of entertainment to keep them busy and entertained. The only thing they can do to make them happy is to torture the prisoner (Palmer, 1995). The implication of Bentham's theory is that such a thing is morally right, because it is assumed that only one person suffers and several people enjoy doing so.

Bentham's student John Stuart Mill, who has been instrumental in promoting his theory, considers pleasure, both material and spiritual, to be a serious form of torture, given the serious forms of

tortured prison guards. Because in this case, it is true that the sum of pleasure in terms of quantity is greater according to the number of people, but the amount of mental and psychological suffering that a prisoner experiences in terms of torture is not comparable to the material pleasures of prison guards (Palmer, 1995).

### **The Main Components of Moral Utilitarianism**

Bentham utilitarianism has two main components, without which utilitarianism becomes meaningless in general: one is pleasure and the other is the greatest pleasure for most people. If for any reason pleasure is left out altogether or pleasure is considered but the greatest pleasure is not considered for most people in the calculation of pleasure, that theory cannot be considered utilitarian. Hence, with the modification that the desire created in utilitarianism and considered pleasure, including material pleasures, and considered it as including spiritual and spiritual pleasures, his theory is again considered as a utilitarian theory. Therefore, in order to provide alternative interpretations of Bentham's utilitarianism, given the drawbacks that have been encountered, these two components must be considered. This is why some, considering other serious forms of Bentham's theory, namely the problem of calculating profits, have presented another interpretation that does not include the forms of calculating profits, and have called it normative utilitarianism. (Palmer, 1995)

Bentham utilitarianism is pragmatic; That is, measuring and calculating pleasure and pain must be calculated in each of human actions. It is clear that it is not possible to calculate pleasure and sorrow even according to the seven criteria that he has provided for this purpose. Humans are constantly confronted with people throughout the day who have to make moral decisions about how to

treat them. Now how can one calculate the greatest pleasure over pain in doing the most for the most affected people? In addition, his seven criteria in practice may be in conflict with each other, and resolving conflicts and summarizing between the criteria is itself problematic. But in normative utilitarianism, it is the rules that measure the greatest overcoming of pleasure over most people, not just individual actions. As a result, it is a morally sound rule that must be followed in order for the greatest pleasure to prevail over most people. For once, if such a thing is done and the pleasure and knowledge that follows a rule are weighed, everyone acts according to that rule, and there is no longer any problem in calculating the profit, unless the two rules are in conflict with each other in practice. Conflict can be resolved based on the principle of profit.

In the meantime, the second component is more important, because although Bentham has defined profit as pleasure, but if one considers benefits other than pleasure, it can still be considered a utilitarian theory, because the principle Profit is actually "the most profit for most people" and of course Bentham means profit for pleasure. But if the term "most people" is not considered, it can no longer be considered a utilitarian theory, because the principle of profit is "the most benefit for the most people" and without considering this condition, a utilitarian theory cannot be interpreted.

An important point that is not one of the components of utilitarianism alone but of the component of teleology in general (selfishness, heterogeneity and utilitarianism) and should not be neglected is that actions are empty regardless of their purpose and consequences. They are of moral value and are the consequences of actions that actually make good and bad. Hence, the answer of a consequentialist to the question of whether justice and truthfulness are

good or bad? That is, I do not know, and I can answer such questions only by examining the consequences. Some who have given a utilitarian account of Islamic morality have stated that "according to the theory of utilitarianism, actions have no moral value per se, but rather the effect of things on the state of the world (the happiness of individuals). In fact, the only dimension of the world that is of immediate moral importance is the happiness of the people" (Nasiri, 2010)<sup>1</sup>.

### **Utilitarian Interpretation of Islamic Ethics**

Some Muslim thinkers, such as Nasiri and Sobhaniniya, have considered Bentham's utilitarianism as one of the theories that is interesting and compatible with some human tendencies and inclinations. Therefore, they have accepted it in themselves, but due to the drawbacks that it has, including the allocation of pleasure to material pleasures, they have tried to give an interpretation consistent with the verses of the Quran by modifying it. Nasiri, by introducing objections to Bentham's utilitarianism and presenting his narration according to the Quranic teachings, has called it supreme utilitarianism or utilitarianism, and considers profitable utility in the lasting interest of the individual, and the meaning of lasting utility is a benefit that is not limited to the world. Include the Hereafter. (Nasiri, 2010) According

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<sup>1</sup> As will be seen, it seems that the main reason for the mistake of Islamic thinkers in the interpretation of the theory of Islamic ethics is from this area, and it is interesting that Nasiri himself has not adhered to this fundamental point in the interpretation of the theory of utilitarianism. In short, according to this theory, actions are in themselves devoid of moral value and acquire their value from the end, and as a result, the present is morally good to have the greatest overcoming of pleasure over suffering, and we must do the present. To create the greatest happiness, that is, pleasure for most people. In fact, this is the end that is good and bad, and regardless of the end, the moral value of actions is zero.

to him, the axis of all things in Islam is set on the axis of eternal profit, and of course, according to people's understanding, different things are introduced as profit: sometimes different types of heavenly blessings are mentioned and sometimes The pleasure of God is emphasized. According to him, all these things can be achieved by obtaining divine consent. (Nasiri, 2010)

Sobhaniniya also considers the most important forms of Bentham's theory as not paying attention to the supernatural and monopolizing pleasure and profit in pleasure and material gain. In his view, although Bentham has explained seven important criteria, by limiting those criteria to material and natural matters, he has "degraded the level of his theory and prevented his theory from being a logical and defensible theory from the perspective of a "Let the thinker believe in the heavenly religion." (Sobhaniniya, 2010) Therefore, he has tried to explain the criteria for measuring his pleasure based on Islamic teachings by considering the acceptance of Bentham's principle of utilitarianism. In the first step, in order to reconcile Bentham's utilitarianism with Islamic teachings, he considers profit beyond material benefit in a way that includes spiritual and otherworldly benefits and is not limited to the benefits of this world. In other words, if Bentham's worldview changes and he believes in the world of the hereafter, pleasure will not be limited to the material pleasures of this world, but will also include spiritual and otherworldly pleasures. With such an alteration to the principle of profit, the fundamental forms which Bentham had acquired (the monopoly of profit on worldly pleasures) no longer enter. He goes on to try to provide narrative Quranic evidence for Bentham's criteria.

### **Quranic Evidence of the Validity of the Seven Criteria**

To measure pleasure, Bentham has proposed seven circumstances

includes: intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity, and extent, and Sobhaniniya, citing the acceptance of utilitarianism and recognizing profit from worldly gain, has given narrative Quranic evidence for them:

### **1: Intensity**

According to Bentham, one of the criteria for choosing between pleasures is their intensity, and more intense pleasures are preferred to weaker pleasures. As a result, any act of intense pleasure is good and should be considered. The Quran also invites people to do good deeds and rewards them for doing them: "Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds [that] for them there is forgiveness and great reward" (Holy Quran, al-Ma'idah, 9)<sup>1</sup>. According to Sobhaniniya, this Quranic point strengthens man's motivation to do good deeds and prevents him from doing bad deeds (which may have only fleeting material and worldly benefits and consequently smaller and weaker).

### **2: Duration**

Bentham means that the criterion of duration is that any verb that has a longer duration of pleasure, in other words, a more stable pleasure, should be selected. As a result, if two things are equal in pleasure, but the pleasure of one is more stable and more lasting, it is considered morally good and should be chosen. According to Sobhaniniya, Bentham has chosen this criterion based on reason and

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<sup>1</sup>. Or this noble verse: Allah has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from Allah is greater. It is that which is the great attainment (Holy Quran, At-Tawbah, 72).

logic, and now based on this reason and logic, if there is another world, in measuring pleasure, we must also consider the pleasures of that world. According to the divine worldview, the world is fleeting and mortal, and there is another world before man, which is interpreted as the world of the hereafter, and man does not die and dies, and will continue to live in that world. Hence, it is a morally good thing to pursue long-term and hereafter interests. Of course, the interests of the hereafter are not incompatible with the worldly interests and can be combined, but if in some cases there is a discrepancy between the two, common sense dictates that long-term and otherworldly interests are preferable. Hence, God has warned mankind to be content with the fleeting life of this world, and has guided them to true and hereafter bliss and salvation: "And those who believe and do good, we will soon admit them into Gardens under which rivers flow, to stay there for ever and ever. Allah's promise is 'always' true. And whose word is more truthful than Allah's?" (Holy Quran, An-Nisa, 122)<sup>1</sup>.

### **3: Certainty**

Another criterion Bentham has set for measuring pleasure is the assurance of pleasure. Pleasure makes the action good that is sure to be achieved. Consequently, any act by which pleasure is more likely to be realized is moral and must be performed. According to Sobhaniniya, this criterion has not been neglected in religious teachings, and "in many verses and hadiths, the certainty of achieving the benefits of the Hereafter has been specified, and any doubt about the Hereafter has been considered incorrect.", Including: " Allah's

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<sup>1</sup>. Or this: Allah has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally (Holy Quran, At-Tawbah, 72).

promise is 'always' true. And whose word is more truthful than Allah's?" (Holy Quran, An-Nisa, 122); "Surely Allah's promise is 'always' true, but most of them do not know" (Holy Quran, Yunus, 55; Holy Quran, Al-Qasas, 13) and "'That is' the promise of Allah. 'And' Allah never fails in 'His' promise" (Holy Quran, Az-Zumar, 20). Such verses indicate the confirmation of the criterion of Bentham's certainty and its rationality and rationality, of course, adding that the benefit that God has promised to give to the believers is the benefit of the hereafter and not the benefit of this world, and therefore, He warned them against being deceived by fleeting worldly benefits: "O mankind, indeed the promise of Allah is truth, so let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allah by the Deceiver" (Holy Quran, Fatir, 5).

#### **4: Propinquity or remoteness**

Another criterion used to measure pleasure is proximity or distance. The action is morally good that its pleasures are realized sooner. Consequently, if two acts cause the same pleasure, but one of them is obtained sooner than the other, it is the same moral act and must be done. Sobhaniniya has pointed out that Bentham uses the criterion of closeness and distance in cases where the benefit of two works is equal, and only then can the current criterion be preferred, whose benefit is obtained sooner. However, in cases where the benefit of one of the two works is greater than the other but its achievement is farther away, it is unlikely that he will prefer the near and lower profit to the greater profit because it is sure to consider the greater profit and pay attention to other criteria, will make him doubt Nasdaq's profit preference. In any case, this criterion is also accepted by common sense, but since the Hereafter is farther from the world, it may seem that this criterion is incompatible with Islamic teachings and does not agree with them, but given that the Quran considers the world to be

near and, on the other hand, considers the world to be mortal and short and its blessings to be insignificant, God, in order to strengthen the motivation of the believers, which is the same as the benefit of the Hereafter, prevents people from imagining Hereafter and the consequences of deeds in faraway: "Do not spread corruption in the land after it has been set in order. And call upon Him with hope and fear. Indeed, Allah's mercy is always close to the good-doers." (Holy Quran, Al-A'raf, 56)

Moreover, Imam Ali (PBUH) also says: "You are in a place - and a part of the world - and you are close to the Hereafter." He also says: "The Hereafter is near, and the stop in this world is short" (Nahj al-Balagha, Maxims, 168). We see that even according to religious teachings, the proximity of benefit as a motive influences the choice of action, and for this reason, knowing the proximity of the Hereafter makes people less inclined to prefer worldly interests to the hereafter."

### **5: Fecundity**

According to the criterion of fecundity, pleasures that are productive and have more benefits are preferred to pleasures that are not. Sobhaniniya, to explain this criterion religiously, says that the Islamic teachings of the world are not generally rejected, and the use of legitimate and lawful blessings is desirable and sometimes necessary. It is further noted that "the least worldly benefit of any moral behavior is the evolution of the perpetrator and his attainment of higher degrees in terms of moral and human dignity." According to him, if these moral acts have no benefit for the actor other than spiritual development and are performed by a person who believes in the divine religions, especially Islam, they are productive, because he can achieve the divine intention in addition to the highest levels of

humanity, to enjoy the divine reward and reward of the Hereafter. Among its Quranic evidence are: Whoever comes with a good deed will be rewarded tenfold (Holy Quran, Al-An'am, 160), So whatever thing you have been given - it is but [for] enjoyment of the worldly life. However, what is with Allah is better and more lasting for those who have believed, and upon their Lord relies (Holy Quran, Ash-Shuraa, 36), So Allah gave them the reward of this world and the excellent reward of the Hereafter (Holy Quran, Ali 'Imran, 148), And We will surely give those who were patient their reward according to the best of what they used to do (Holy Quran, An-Nahl, 96), and the home of the Hereafter is better. Moreover, how excellent is the home of the righteous (Holy Quran, An-Nahl, 30).

### **6: Purity**

According to the criterion of purity, any work that creates only pleasure is preferable to work whose pleasure is mixed with suffering. This criterion is considered in all the pleasures of the Hereafter, and the pleasures of the Hereafter are free from any misfortunes, and absolute comfort is possible only in the Hereafter, unlike the worldly pleasures which are always accompanied by pain and suffering and comfort free from suffering, and there is no hardship in the world. It is noteworthy that although, for Bentham, the profit that is not accompanied by suffering is preferable to anything else, such a thing is unattainable in this world because the world is always accompanied by hardship. As a result, according to this criterion, in case of conflict between worldly interests and otherworldly interests, otherworldly interests take precedence and should be preferred. Among the Quran evidence of this criterion are those who do good will have the finest reward and 'even' more. Neither gloom nor disgrace will cover their faces. It is they who will be the residents of Paradise. They will be

there forever (Holy Quran, Yunus, 26), There they will be reclining on 'canopied' couches, never seeing scorching heat or bitter cold. (Holy Quran, Al-Insan, 13), There they will never hear any idle or sinful talk, only excellent and virtuous speech (Holy Quran, Al-Waqi'ah, 25 & 26).

### **7: Extent**

The final measure of Bentham's profit is inclusion and breadth. This criterion implies that the broader the scope of the current pleasure and the more people it includes, the more preferable it is. According to Sobhaninya, being called a religious brother of Muslims, not being considered a Muslim who does not care about the affairs of Muslims every day, paying attention to others, including mercy, neighbors, and even those who believe in God, are considered God's family, including God's creation, including Religious evidence, is this criterion.

Sobhaninya concludes by noting that Bentham's utilitarianism uses the history of humanity and civilization for many centuries to calculate profits. However, from the point of view of a person who believes in the heavenly religions, religious teachings help him practice moral action. Choose and get rid of the calculation of profits and its problems to a large extent. He states that "religion, by determining its moral practices and behavior, has relieved mankind of the burden of this calculation." He concludes the analysis of the compatibility of Bentham's seven criteria with religious doctrine: 1. Bentham's theory of utilitarianism can be refined according to Islamic teachings, which he calls "religious or Islamic utilitarianism," and 2. It is unnecessary to interpret Islamic utilitarianism that Islam "considers utilitarianism the only moral theory." Because the pleasure of God and gaining His pleasure is higher and more complete than

Islamic utilitarianism, and according to Imam Ali (as), the first is the worship of the free, and the second is the phrase of merchants.

### **Problems Of Utilitarian Interpretation Of Islamic Ethics**

There are several drawbacks to Sobhaniniya's interpretation of Islamic utilitarianism; Including 1. Impossibility of a utilitarian interpretation of Islamic ethics, 2. Incorrect interpretations of Quranic verses in affirmation of moral utilitarianism, 3. Internal conflicts, 4. Purpose of presenting a moral theory, 5. Ambiguities in the analysis of the seven criteria, 6. One-sided view to the verses of Quran and lack of comprehensive view.

#### **1. Impossibility of a Utilitarian Interpretation of Islamic Ethics**

Every theorist in presenting a theory must pay attention to the components and accessories of his theory and adhere to them. Philosophers of ethics are no exception, so James Rachel pays attention to one of the fundamental components of utilitarianism, the consequences, and considers it to be the most fundamental component of utilitarianism in such a way that utilitarianism will collapse without it. He considers the most serious argument against utilitarianism to be from this area, in which non-profit matters are also involved in determining the rightness or wrongness of actions. (Rachels, 2003) On the other hand, he relies on their implications and consequences in his critique of some moral theories. For example, in his critique of moral relativism based on cultural relativism, he says that if cultural relativism is taken seriously, it has implications and consequences that relativism itself cannot be bound to, including 1. We can no longer talk about lower etiquette and comment on the customs of other societies concerning the customs of our society, 2. We cannot even criticize the customs of our society, 3. The idea of moral progress is

questionable and meaningless, resulting in belief in reform and reform and the work of reformers. Society is morally doomed to transform society. (Rachels, 2003, pp. 21-23) Given the two points that have passed, it seems impossible to provide a utilitarian account of Islamic ethics.

**A. The nonsense of Islamic utilitarianism.**

As we have seen, the two primary components of Bentham's utilitarianism are profit, which according to Bentham's meaning is "pleasure" and the other is "the most pleasure for most people," so that if a description of utilitarianism is presented, one of these two components If not, it cannot be considered utilitarianism consistent with Bentham's account. In the meantime, the second component is more important. Without such a constraint, it cannot be considered a utilitarian theory. Therefore, for a utilitarian interpretation of Islamic ethics, the meaning of pleasure, both worldly and otherworldly, can be considered. It was considered, but the maximum benefit for most people must be considered.

Can the report presented by Sobhaninyia provide the maximum benefit for most people? According to this narration, pleasures are both worldly and otherworldly pleasures, and as a result, the principle of profit is that "the action is morally good to bring the worldliest and otherworldly pleasures to the most people." Now the question is, through what is the "greatest pleasure" of people in the Hereafter provided? Because of what they have done in the world or what we do as moral agents? In the world, it can be imagined that we do something. It brings the most pleasure to most people, and this makes my work good, but how can it be imagined that I do something in the world and get the most pleasure for Most people will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection, except that the pleasures of the Hereafter depend on their own deeds (Every soul, for what it has earned, will be

retained). Everyone will see the result of his suffering in the Hereafter (there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives). Assuming that according to Islamic literature, some of our works bring rewards to the souls of the dead, it is by divine grace and care and has nothing to do with the issues in question.

On the contrary, it is a bad thing to create the greatest overcoming of pleasure for most people in this world and the hereafter. The loss of a person's lousy deed will return to him in the Hereafter, and his work will not be noticed by others (That no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another) unless it can be imagined that someone does a bad deed, but another will feel the pain and resentment in the Hereafter. Is such a thing compatible with God's justice? All the verses that indicate the rewards of the Hereafter and mention their intensity, duration, certainty, closeness, purity, fertility, and breadth refer to the rewards of each individual who have been promoted due to their deeds, not more than one person. Therefore, the theory of Islamic morality cannot be utilitarianism just by generalizing pleasure to the pleasures of the hereafter, and the condition of the most pleasure for most people plays a fundamental role in utilitarianism.

#### **B. Conflict of divine satisfaction with the greatest pleasure of most people**

Divine satisfaction from individuals and closeness to God play an essential role in Islamic morality, and even reward is for those who are pleased with God and have approached God through their actions. Sobhaniniya himself has been subjected to divine approval. Other Muslim thinkers who have tried to interpret the theory of Islamic ethics in a consequentialist and utilitarian way have mentioned those two constraints and considered them as fundamental. (Mesbah Yazdi, 2005;

Nasiri, 2010) If we consider the amount of moral value as the most pleasure for most people if a job pleases the most people and brings them the most pleasure, but God is not satisfied with doing it, what should we do? Or something should bring us closer to God, but people are unhappy with what we do; what should we do? How can one combine divine satisfaction with the greatest pleasure for most people? How can one reconcile God's closeness with people's unhappiness? In other words, if the satisfaction and nearness to God are taken, the moral theory turns away from egoism, and if it is taken for the greatest pleasure for most people in order to preserve the primary component of utilitarianism, a specific thing in Islamic ethics must be left out. In any case, by considering two components, namely, the greatest pleasure for most people in the world and the end, as well as divine satisfaction and nearness, it is possible to imagine a conflict between the two, and in the event of such a conflict, it is not possible to combine the two.

### **C. Impossibility of proving the existence of God and prophecy**

As we have seen, based on utilitarianism, actions are devoid of moral value, regardless of their purpose, and it is due to the consequences of actions that their moral value can be understood. With such a view, how can one prove God and prophecy and present a utilitarian account of Islamic morality by relying on religious teachings? In other words, if we do not understand the goodness of justice, benevolence, honesty, and other moral values, how can we prove a god with moral and perfect attributes such as just, benevolent, honest, and kind while these actions depend on good utilitarianism? Considering their consequences and their goodness is not inherent, and considering the benefits of the Hereafter and recognizing it through divine revelation, we must first accept religion in order to be

able to give such an account of morality. Even if one says that we reach God through intuition, one must still have an intuitive understanding of moral values and intuition of a moral god.

Also, if we do not understand the ugliness of God's deception, how can we prove the prophecy of a particular prophet? One of the ways to prove a particular prophecy is to present a miracle by the claimant of prophecy, and if a false prophecy is spread by God Otherwise, how can the prophecy of the valid claimant be proved? That is why Islamic theologians have said that it is ugly for God to perform a miracle at the hands of a false claimant of prophecy.

Some verses of the Quran confirm this view, such as the verse "Allah is not ever unjust to [His] servants," which means that it is not God's honor to oppress His servants. From this noble verse, it is understood that the evil of oppression is clear and obvious, and oppression is not in the dignity of God. This meaning is consistent with the inherent goodness and ugliness, not with the utilitarian view of morality, which is not inherently evil and depends on the consequences. Therefore in some cases, oppression may be considered good, but the inherent ugliness of oppression does not go away at all. Alternatively, in another verse, God commands justice and benevolence and does not command prostitution and denial. This type of verse indicates that human beings, regardless of the consequences of some actions, are familiar with their good and bad, and if God wants to rule on moral values, He will rule on the same moral values as promised.

## **2. Confusion between the criterion of moral value and moral motivation**

In the theory of normative ethics, the philosopher of ethics seeks to obtain the criterion of moral value. In this regard, some have become consequentialist, some conscientious, and some virtuous. With

such a philosophy, the man finally realizes moral value. Nevertheless, is moral knowledge alone sufficient for moral action? Although Socrates believed that the only moral virtue is knowledge, and as a result, whoever acquires moral knowledge will realize a moral act, the thinkers after him typically did not follow his words and criticized it. In other words, according to Socrates, there is no gap between moral knowledge and moral action, but most other thinkers believe that there is a gap between the two, and we see many people who have moral knowledge and the good and bad of actions (by any criteria). Those who accept are aware but do not follow them in practice. This is where the critical issue of moral motivation comes into play; That is, many people with moral knowledge are not motivated to moral action alone, and other stimuli are needed to motivate them to moral action. That is why one of the most important topics for ethics psychologists is the issue of moral motivation.

Given the above, the fundamental question about the verses on which Islamic utilitarians have relied is whether these verses serve as a criterion of moral value or as a motivator. A review of the verses of the Quran confirms the second view. Conclusion On the issues raised in the fourth criterion (Propinquity or remoteness), he says: "The Hereafter does not make human beings less inclined to prefer worldly interests to otherworldly interests." In other words, he says: "In order for a man not to prefer the meager possessions of the world to the great blessings of the Hereafter, he has been reminded of the torments and losses of the Hereafter ... and in this way, the motivation to do good deeds is doubled in him." Interestingly, in the abstract of the article, which mentions the main focus of the discussion, he writes: "The author ... seeks to complete and correct Bentham's seven criteria by relying on the moral themes of the Quran and Hadith in order to encourage mankind to believe in God and the Resurrection and to

observe moral principles." What follows from these statements is that the verses cited are motivating to uphold moral values, not providing a criterion for moral value. In other words, there is a confusion between the ontological and psychological direction of the debate; Obtaining the criterion of moral value is related to the ontological direction of the discussion, but the motivation for looking at psychological issues is examined first in normative ethics the second in moral psychology.

### **3. Internal conflict**

As Sobhaninya has said, he tries to modify Bentham's utilitarianism concerning the benefits and pleasures of the Hereafter, to introduce the normative theory of the Quran as utilitarian and therefore seeks to make Bentham's seven criteria compatible with the Quran and to document He mentions verses from the Quran for it. However, in conclusion, he points out a point that is not compatible with utilitarianism. According to him, "the conversion of Bentham's moral theory to the theory of Islamic utilitarianism does not mean that the religion of Islam considers utilitarianism as the only moral theory because by referring to religious sources we will see that God is pleased with him and gains his pleasure. Furthermore, it is more complete than Islamic utilitarianism, and according to Imam Ali (as), it is the worship of the free, and this is the worship of merchants." It is understood that what causes the moral value of actions is the pleasure of God. It is clear that God's satisfaction is with each individual, not the most individuals (which is one of the essential components of utilitarianism), and requires moral selfishness, not utilitarianism. In other words, man must do something that God is pleased with, and God's pleasure causes something to have moral value, whether the greatest pleasure is obtained for others or not. Therefore, the main criterion of moral value is God's satisfaction with man, not the greatest

pleasure for most people. Of course, other fundamental problems occur in this case: where and how should we obtain divine satisfaction? It is better to keep this debate going for now.

Of course, the requirement of a utilitarian interpretation of Islamic ethics and the explanation of the seven criteria for measuring profit and its Quranic evidence also indicate moral selfishness, not utilitarianism, because the rewards and pleasures of the Hereafter are for the actions of individuals, not most people. How can moral theory be considered utilitarian on the one hand and moral selfishness on the other?

The words of Amir al-Mu'minin, who has divided people into worship into three categories (some worship God because of the hope of heaven, and some because of the fear of hell, and some find God as worshippers) indicate the criterion of value. Its morality does not have a utilitarian criterion, but it is in the position of expressing the motivation of people to worship. The goodness of worshiping God cannot be conditioned on its consequences, but the goodness of worship is because God deserves worship, but some do not understand this meaning Motivated to worship heaven or fear of worship. In any case, the worship of the free to gain the pleasure of God, even if it is in the position of expressing the criterion of moral value, does not indicate motivation, moral selfishness, or utilitarianism.

#### **4. The purpose of presenting a moral theory**

The purpose of presenting a moral theory, in addition to defining the basis of moral value, which is a theoretical goal, is to provide a practical guide for moral actors so that in practice, they can recognize the morality of actions and act accordingly and not be surprised and confused in moral decisions. That is why some have defined normative ethics as obtaining the criterion of moral value and

implementing it in exceptional and partial cases. The first part of the definition refers to theoretical, normative ethics, and the second part refers to practical, normative, or applied ethics. Some, such as Bernard Gert, have defined applied ethics as applying moral theory to specific and partial cases (Gert, 1998). Someone, like Beauchamp, considers this definition of applied ethics to be a narrow one and defines applied ethics as any use of philosophical theories and methods to solve ethical problems in professions, technology, etc. (Beauchamp, 2003). In any case, whether we accept the narrow definition of applied ethics or the broad definition, ethical theory must be put into practice.

Bentham utilitarianism, regardless of the forms of profit calculation, is a practical and straightforward theory in this respect and can easily be a practical guide. But does Islamic utilitarianism have this feature, and can it be a practical guide for people? It seems that not only the proposed theory does not have such a function and cannot help man in action, because access to the afterlife pleasures of most people is not possible for man, but also the presenter does not expect much from his theory because the burden of guidance He puts action on the shoulders of religion and says that religion has removed the burden and burden of this calculation from human beings by determining moral actions and behavior. With such an attitude, there is no theory that is a guide to human action, and in all matters, one should refer to religion and use religious teachings as a guide for one's action and act according to them. Of course, it is clear that the suggestion of referring to religion in all cases of moral values without considering reason and values that are understood through reason alone, and religious teachings in this field, guidance is the same as a rational rule, can have implications and consequences. Notice that some of them were mentioned.

### **5. Ambiguities in the analysis of seven criteria**

There are some ambiguities in the analysis of the seven criteria, including that Sobhaniniya has interpreted the Quranic affirmations of utilitarianism as if the intended rewards are the same as pleasure. However, the concept of reward is different from pleasure because of pleasure. The description becomes severe and weak, but the benefit of the description does not become severe and weak, but the description becomes more or less. In other words, intensity and weakness are from the bags category, but more or less from low. The second criterion of Bentham is the term for quantity, not the first criterion (intensity).

The third criterion speaks of the certainty and certainty of pleasure and its absence. The question is, from whose point of view is certainty and certainty? According to Bentham, the certainty or not of pleasure is from the point of view of the moral agent and not another person, while in his explanation, the certainty of the Hereafter is discussed from the perspective of God. Here, too, there is confusion between the assurance of profit from the perspective of the moral agent and God. The same can be said about the fifth criterion, namely distance and proximity; People see the Hereafter far away, but God sees it near. Bentham wants to choose between various actions, one that creates near pleasure and the other far-away pleasure, with distance and closeness.

In the fifth criterion, fertility is meant for most people or the moral actor himself. Bentham means fertility for most people, not a moral agent, while what he has mentioned in this regard is fertility for the moral agent himself, and it requires a selfish interpretation of Islamic morality, not utilitarianism. Bentham's criterion of fertility is to choose and do what is produced in the face of two currents, one that is productive and the other not productive. In other words, fertility is a criterion for distinguishing good work.

In the criterion of fertility, he has relied on verses and hadiths that God has considered double rewards for the deeds of people in the world, but he ignored the fact that increasing rewards are for doing moral deeds in the world, not for the world recognizing good deeds. Therefore, he has said that he who does good deeds will be rewarded ten times more; That is, good deeds must be discovered and done through something other than the reward of the Hereafter, and if it is done, God will reward ten times as much. Therefore, such words motivate the believers to do moral deeds, not to give a standard for moral value. In addition, such themes confirm the previous point and imply moral selfishness, not utilitarianism.

#### **6. One-sided view to the verses of Quran and lack of comprehensive view**

In order to deduce the moral theory of the Quran, in addition to rationally examining the theory, one must have a comprehensive and comprehensive view of the verses of the Quran. Irrespective of the first forms, it means the impossibility of a utilitarian interpretation of Islamic ethics, and regardless of the other objections to the utilitarian interpretation, verses from the Quran indicate the inherent goodness and ugliness of actions. Accordingly, the accepted theory must be conscientiousness. Not utilitarianism. Now the question is, how can a conservative narrative be combined with a utilitarian narrative? Is utilitarianism at all compatible with the inherent goodness and ugliness of reason? According to moral utilitarianism, actions are devoid of moral value regardless of the consequences, but according to inherent goodness and ugliness, actions have moral value in themselves.

#### **Conclusion**

Some have given utilitarian lectures of Islamic ethics and have relied

on verses and hadiths in this regard, including Mohammad Taqi Sobhaniniya, who, by accepting the principle of Bentham's theory of utilitarianism, has tried to modify it and offer it as a theory of Quranic ethics. By generalizing profit and pleasure to the profit and pleasure of the Hereafter, he has brought evidence from verses and hadiths in explaining Bentham's seven criteria. This narration faces several problems, which are: the impossibility of a utilitarian narration of Islamic ethics, confusion between the criterion of moral value and its motivation, internal conflict, inability to achieve the purpose of presenting moral theory and practical guidance for moral actors, there are ambiguities in the analysis of the seven criteria based on the verses of the Quran, lack of comprehensiveness to the verses of the Quran.

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