ETHICS EAST AND WEST: AN ENCOUNTER BETWEEN UTILITARIAN AND BUDDHIST ETHICS

Jerry D. Imbong

I. Introduction

Utilitarianism and Buddhism are two philosophical systems, which came from two different Traditions (Utilitarianism belonging to the Western Tradition and Buddhism belonging to the Eastern Tradition). Although both systems differ in origin, history, context and culture, both share a lot of commonalities. First, both beliefs seek what is “the good”, second, both are geared towards the search for happiness of humankind (and consequently of all sentient beings) and third, to some extent both focuses on the effects of the actions that the agent performs. Based on these three commonalities mentioned above, we could say that there are indeed parallelisms, which we could find in both systems of thought.

Yet despite these commonalities, one can also find certain differences and/or divergences in both ethical systems.

This paper therefore, seeks to crystallize the following problems. First it will highlight the important ethical aspects of Utilitarianism and Buddhist ethics. Although the two philosophical systems belong to two different Traditions, the researcher is convinced that both systems of thought have very much in common. The second part seeks to analyze the convergence between Utilitarianism and Buddhist ethics, i.e. how the two philosophical systems are alike. And the third part will discuss the divergence of both philosophical thought. The third part will therefore focus on their disagreements.

In dealing with Utilitarian ethics, this paper will focus on the work of John Stuart Mill, especially on his famous work *On Utilitarianism.* On the other hand, this paper will focus on certain aspects of Buddhism, which touches topics on morality and ethics.

II. Utilitarian Ethics

A. Mill's revision of Bentham's idea

Mills' work on utilitarianism spans an impressive variety of diverse areas. His books and essays are still studied for their insights into logic, epistemology, philosophy of science, and social philosophy, as well as in the field of ethical theory. His work has so often been considered as "the best single introduction to the subject." (Sher 1979: viii)

John Stuart Mill, in his famous work on utilitarianism deviates from his most influential teacher Jeremy Bentham. As Wendy Donner puts it, Mill's utilitarianism is "boldly a revisionist, breaking free of many of the constraints and confines of the narrower and simpler utilitarianism." (Donner 1998: 255) Bentham defines the Principle of Utility as "the principle that which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish… happiness." (cf. Stumpf 2003: 335) Bentham adds that pleasures and pains differ from each other and have different values. He identifies seven criteria "for weighing down the values of all pleasure on the one side and those of the pain on the other". These are intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity or nearness, fecundity, purity and extent. The balance, "if it be on the side of pleasure, will give the good tendency of the act… if on the side of pain, the bad tendency." (2003: 336) However, in Mill's restating of the Utilitarian doctrine, he goes beyond Bentham's contention that the essential differences among pleasures and pains are *quantitative*, maintaining that they are also subject to significant *qualitative* differentiation. In propounding qualitative hedonism, Mill moves beyond Bentham's quantitative hedonism in a decisive and notable way. His insistence that the quality of states of happiness is crucial to their value "justly earns for him the reputation of revisionary utilitarianism." (Donner 1998: 261)

B. What Utilitarianism Is

Mill defended Betham's ideas by first of all underlying its ethical principles. He did this by first clarifying the doctrine and correcting

misrepresentations of it and, second, by restating the doctrine by a straightforward exposition of the principle. (Denise, White, Peterfreund 2006: 162). Mill defended Betham's idea by accusing those who attack the utilitarian principle with "ignorant blunder" and an "absurd misconception" of Bentham's idea. Mill contends that those who attacked utilitarianism were wrong on two accounts. They believed that "utility is opposed to pleasure" and utility refers "everything to pleasure" (Mill 1979: 6). Mill clarified that "the theory of utility meant by it, not something to be contradistinguised from pleasure, but pleasure itself, together with the exception from pain." (1979: 6) Thus he defines utilitarianism as:

> The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals "utility" or the "greatest happiness principle holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure. (1979: 7)

For Mill the, pleasure and the freedom from pain are the only desirable goals in life. Things are desirable in themselves either because of the inherent pleasure or they can be used as a means to promote pleasure and to prevent pain.

C. Utilitarianism as a "Swinish" Doctrine?

For those who accused the Principle of Utility as a purely "swinish" idea, Mill has this to say:

> When thus attacked, the Epicureans have always answered that it is not they but their accusers, who represent human nature in a degrading light; since the accusation supposed human beings to be capable of no pleasures except those of which swine are capable… The comparison of the Epicurean life to that of beasts is felt as degrading, precisely because a beast's pleasures do not satisfy a human being's conceptions

> of happiness. Human beings have faculties more elevated than the animal appetites…" (1979: 8)

For Mill, pleasures of the intellect and imagination have a higher value than the pleasures of mere sensation. Utilitarians have placed superiority of mental over bodily pleasures chiefly in the greater permanency, safety, uncostliness, etc. Therefore, "a being of higher faculties requires more to make him happy…than one of the inferior types" and that "he can never really wish to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence." (1979: 9)

However, there are times when people tend to abandon the higher pleasures for the lower ones. Mill explains that these people are incapable, either inherently or by lack of opportunity, of enjoying the higher kind. Many who are capable of the higher pleasures, occasionally, under the influence of temptation, postpone them to the lower. He explains that "men often, from infirmity of character, make their election for the nearer good, though they know it to be the less valuable; and this no less when the choice is between two bodily pleasures, than when it is between bodily and mental." (1979: 10). Mill argues that most of the time people lose their high aspirations when they lose their intellectual tastes. This is because "they have not time or opportunity for indulging them; and they addict themselves to inferior pleasures, not because they deliberately prefer them, but because they are either the only ones to which they have access, or the only ones which they are any longer capable of enjoying." (1979: 10) Therefore, the only competent and final judges "are those who have tested the entire spectrum of pleasures."

D. Utilitarianism as Universalistic Hedonism

Mill reminds us that the "greatest happiness principle" is not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness *altogether.* Here, he tries to bridge the gap between egoistic hedonism (that it is rational for you to pursue your own happiness) and universalistic hedonism (the utilitarian view that you should pursue the greatest happiness overall). (see Crisp 1997: 77) This means that the good that Mill referred to is the good of the "aggregate of persons." As Crisp puts it, "the phrase 'every human being's happiness

is a good to every other human being' is almost certainly means as equivalent to 'the sum of all individual happiness (that is, the greatest happiness) is a good to each human being.'" (1997: 78) The ultimate goal then "is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments both in point of quantity and quality…" (Mill 1979: 11) Moreover, not only does the utilitarian principle seek the happiness of humankind, it also seeks to promote the happiness of all sentient beings. According to the utilitarian opinion, "the end of human action is necessarily also the standard of morality… (happiness) to the greatest extent possible, secured to all mankind; and not to them only, but… to the whole sentient creation." (1979: 12) This, I think is very much compatible with Buddhist ethics.

E. Utilitarianism on Self-Sacrifice

Before going on to Buddhist ethics, it is good to elaborate first on Mill's understanding of sacrifice, especially self-sacrifice. Those who attack the utilitarian principle allege that utilitarian morality is incompatible with the acts of personal sacrifice that is so revered in Christianity. Mill acknowledges that there are a few number of people (according to Mill nineteen-twentieths of mankind) who voluntarily offered their lives "for the sake of something which he prizes more than his individual happiness." (Mill 1979: 15) Mill calls these people the "hero" or the "martyr". Mill believes that self-sacrifice is something that is "noble" if it would earn for others immunity from similar sacrifices. The martyrs end is no longer for *happiness* but bur *virtue* which for Mill "is better than happiness". Moreover, Mill honors "those who can abnegate for themselves the personal enjoyment of life when by such renunciation they can contribute to increase the amount of happiness in the world…" (1979: 16). Mill puts it more clearly when he says:

> The utilitarian morality does recognize in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for the good of others. It only refuses to admit that the sacrifice is itself good. A sacrifice which does not increase or tend to increase the sum total of happiness, it considers as wasted. The only self-renunciation which it applauds

> is devotion to the happiness, or to some of the means of happiness, of others, either of mankind collectively or of individuals within the limits imposed by the collective interests of mankind." (1979: 16)

Mill reiterated that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right is not the agent's own happiness but that of all concerned. What is important is no longer the self but the others (the maximization of welfare). As Roger Crisp puts it, "utilitarianism does not require any particularly special conception of the self." (Crisp 1997: 142) The self should not be understood as independent from all other commitments and moral deliberations.

F. Sanction

Another important topic which Mill discussed in his book on Utilitarianism is the question of sanction: What are the motives to obey the principle? What is the source of its obligation? Where does it derive its binding force? In other words, Mill is asking not only what might in fact motivate people to be utilitarians, but why anyone *should* feel obliged to act in accordance with utilitarianism.

Mill divides sanctions into two classes: external and internal. According to Roger Crisp, the external sanctions "are not literally external to the individual, since they include the *hope* of favour from others, *fear* of their anger and *sympathy* for them." (Crisp 1997: 91) Mill believes that the external sanctions such as customs, superstructures as well as the social and the supernatural enforce the utilitarian principle. However, those external sanctions "cannot bind us satisfactorily to any moral principle, because people are truly bound only when they feel *inwardly* that the principle is binding on them." (Mill 1979: 19) Mill calls this the "internal sanction of duty", which is "one and the same". For Mill this is the essence of Conscience, "derived from sympathy, from love, and still more from fear…" Mill speaks of a "mystical character", a "binding force", which is the "existence of a mass of feeling which must be broken through in order to do what violates our standard of right, and which, if we do nevertheless violate that standard, will probably have to be encountered afterwards in the form of remorse." (1979: 21) Mill argues

that human beings are naturally social creatures, who desire to be in accord with one another. For Mill, then, the "ultimate sanction" is our "feeling for mankind"—a "feeling of duty". This "feeling for mankind" whether inborn or acquired can be a powerful force and a sound basis for Utilitarian morality. This is for him the firm foundation, the "desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures… form the influences of advancing civilization." (1979: 22) Hence, the best proof of a good character is good actions.

II. Buddhist Ethics

Buddhism, like any other Indian religion, does not divorce knowledge from conduct, theory from practice. Morality is deeply interwoven into the fabric of Buddhist teachings "and there is no major branch or school of Buddhism that fails to emphasize the importance of the moral life." (Keown 1996: 4) As David Kalupahana puts it, "philosophy is meaningful only as it provides an understanding of reality on which to regulate one's life." (Kalupahana 1976: 56) Although there are various and diverse Traditions of Buddhism (like Zen, Mahayana and Tibetan Buddhism) at the level of moral teachings there is still a common ground or a common moral core underlying the diverse customs, practices, and philosophical teachings of the different schools.

A. Dharma

The ultimate foundation for Buddhist ethics is Dharma. Morality (*sîla*) is the first of the three divisions of the Eightfold Path and the foundation of the religious life. Moral development is a prerequisite for the cultivation of Meditation (*samâdhi*) and Wisdom (*paòòâ*). To live a moral life is to live according to the Dharma (see Keown 1996: 97). The term "Dharma" has many meanings, "but the underlying idea is of a universal law which governs both the physical and moral order of the universe." (1996: 97) According to Damien Keown, the Dharma is like a "mirror" that helps us to find out what is good and bad. Everything in the universe is regulated by Dharma. Living in accordance with the Dharma and putting into practice its requirements

is thought to lead happiness, fulfilment, and salvation; neglecting or transgressing it is said to lead to endless suffering in the cycle of rebirth (*samsâra*).

The most central or core teaching of Buddhism is the Four Noble Truth. It is the "heart" of Buddhist teaching. The Four Noble Truth are:

1. *Dukkha*[1]
2. *Samudaya,* the arising of the origin of *dukkha*,
3. *Nirodha,* the cessatioin of *dukkha*,
4. *Magga,* the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.

The Fourth Noble Truth (the Way leading to the Cessation of *Dukka*) concerns the ethical aspects of Buddhism. This is known as the "Middle Path" because it avoids two extremes:

> one extreme being the search for happiness through the pleasures of the senses which is "low, common, unprofitable and the way of the ordinary people"; and the other being the search for happiness through self-mortification in different forms of asceticism, which is "painful, unworthy and unprofitable". Having himself first tried these two extremes, and having found them to be useless, the Buddha discovered through personal experience the Middle Path "which gives vision and knowledge, which leads to Calm, Insight, Enlightenment and Nirvâna." (Rahula 1972: 45)

[1] Most Buddhist scholars would prefer to use the Pali word *dukkha* rather than an English equivalent "suffering", "pain", "sorrow" or "misery". They argue that the English equivalent does not really capture the true meaning of the word *dukkha*. See Rahula 1972: 16

B. The Eightfold Path

In his first sermon, the Buddha was said to have "turned the wheel of the Dharma" and given doctrinal expression to the truth about how things are in reality. The last of this Four Noble Truths, is the Noble Eightfold Path which leads to nirvana.
The Eightfold Path and its Three Divisions are:

1. Right View/Understanding } Insight
2. Right Conception/Thought }

3. Right Speech
4. Right Action } Morality
5. Right Livelihood }

6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness } Meditation
8. Right Concentration }

The Eightfold Path should be followed and practiced one after the other in the numerical order but "they are to be developed more or less simultaneously, as far as possible according to the capacity of each individual. They are all linked together and each helps the cultivation of others." (Rahula 1972: 46) The cultivation of one stage is seen to lead naturally on to the cultivation of the next, so that the components of the path support one another and interact to form a harmonious whole. (Harvey 1995: 1) Furthermore, these eight factors aim at promoting and perfecting the three essentials of Buddhist training and discipline, namely, Ethical Conduct, Mental Discipline and Wisdom. (Rahula 1972: 46)

Ethical Conduct is built on the vast conception of universal love and compassion for all sentient beings. Buddhism believe that for a person to be perfect there are two qualities that he or she should develop, namely, compassion on the one side and wisdom on the other. Compassion here "represents love, charity, kindness, tolerance… or qualities of the heart, while wisdom would stand for the intellectual side or the qualities of the mind." (1972: 46) Great

caution should be observed so as to develop both for “to be perfect, one has to develop both equally.” (Ibid)

Buddhists believe that by following this path of moral perfection, they can find the solution to the “hazards of existence.” The hazards involved are birth, decay and death and uncertainty with regard to the things of the world. The cycle of becoming is caused by craving (*tanhâ*) and grasping or clinging (*upâdâna*). While craving and grasping are the causes of major hazards like birth, decay and death, they also lead to the unhappiness and suffering that man/woman experiences once he/she is born. Thus craving leads not only to suffering here and now, but also to further suffering in the future in the form of rebirth and consequent decay and death. The attainment of happiness in this present existence and the elimination of future suffering can only be attained through the elimination of craving. (Kalupahana 1976: 60)

C. Karma

Karma is a very old teaching in Buddhism. According to the Zen Master Dogen Shobogenzo it is accurate to say that Buddhism as a system of ideas and practices has throughout its twenty-five centuries of existence been concerned mainly with the problem of Karma. (Cook 1979: 49). The doctrine of karma is concerned with the ethical implications of Dharma, in particular those relating to the consequences of moral behavior. The literal meaning of the Sanskrit word karma is “action”, but karma as a religious concept is concerned not with just any actions but with actions of a particular kind. It is defined within Buddhism as volitional action, meaning, “any act, good or bad, which is preceded by will or intention.” (1979: 50)

Moral actions have transitive and intransitive effects. The transitive effect is seen in the direct impact moral actions have on others; for example, when we kill or steal, someone is deprived of his/her life or property. The intransitive effect is seen in the ay moral actions effect the agent. According to Buddhism, human beings have free will. In a way individuals create themselves through their moral choices. By freely and repeatedly choosing certain sorts of things, individuals shape their characters, and through their characters their futures. (Keown 1996: 24)

Karma can either be good or bad. Buddhists speak of good karma as "merit" and the bad karma as *pâpa*. In a sense, merit is a kind of a spiritual capital—like money in a bank account—whereby credit is built up as the deposit on a heavenly rebirth. (1996: 26)

D. Precepts

Precepts can be compared with "The Ten Commandments" of Christianity. A precept can be thought of simply as a list of things a virtuous person would never do. Precepts which apply to the laity are comparatively few in number compared to those observed by monks and nuns. The most general moral duties are found in the Five Precepts. They are as follows:

1. I undertake the precept to refrain from harming living creatures.
2. I undertake to precept to refrain from taking what has not been given.
3. I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual immorality.
4. I undertake the precept to refrain from speaking falsely.
5. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking intoxicants.

E. Virtues

It is important to note that Buddhists don't have an objective set of rules in which all members should follow. In the words of Keown "there are more to the Buddhist moral life than following rules." (1996: 26) Early Buddhist sources "emphasize the importance of cultivating correct dispositions and habits so that moral conduct becomes the natural and spontaneous manifestation of the internalized and properly integrated beliefs and values, rather than simple conformity to external rules." (Ibid) Buddhists encourage people to cultivate virtuous dispositions as a means of spiritual development. This is why Buddhist ethics can best be classified as a "virtue ethics".

One of the most important virtues for lay Buddhists in *dâna* which means "giving" or generosity. In giving to others, a generous person is being freed from egocentric thoughts and become sensitive to the needs of others. He or she can find it easier to practice renunciation and can cultivate an attitude of detachment. *Ahimsâ* is one of the most basic principles of Buddhist ethics. The term literally

means “non-harming” or “non-violence” but it is not simply the absence of something. It is practiced on the basis of a deeply positive feeling of respect for living beings. Compassion (*karunâ*) is closely associated with loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. The practice of these four involves radiating outwards the positive qualities associated with each, directing them first towards oneself, then to one’s family, the local community, and eventually to all beings in the universe. (1996: 27)

III. Buddhism and Utilitarianism: An Encounter Between Eastern and Western Ethical Traditions

Florentino Timbreza identified seven most influential theories of ethics in the West. These are duty ethics, utilitarian ethics, situation ethics, Christian ethics, Pragmatist’s ethics, Ross’s ethics and Rawl’s theory of social justice. (Timbreza 2007: 34-63). We have already discussed utilitarian ethics in the first part. Some philosophers have some serious problems in categorizing Buddhist ethics. If one would try to compare Buddhism from the major ethical theories in the West, one would really encounter what Damien Keown calls a “methodological problems”. Keown asks whether it is legitimate simply to compare Western ethics with Eastern ethics in a straightforward way, considering that there are cultural, historical, and conceptual differences that might distort or invalidate such comparisons. He argues that is could be possible that

> assumptions and presuppositions of Western thought are not compatible with those of Buddhism, and an insufficiently sensitive or nuanced comparison may simply force Buddhism into a Procrustean bed, resulting in the neglect of important aspects of its teachings simply because they have no Western analogue. (Keown 1996: 34)

Despite the difficulty in bridging the gap between Western ethical thought (in our case utilitarian ethics) and Buddhist ethics, we

will attempt to draw out certain similarities and difficulties between the two ethical systems.

A. Similarities

The *first* similarity that we can draw out between the two ethical theories is that both aim to maximize happiness and to eliminate suffering in the world. As a form of hedonism, the utilitarians' goal is the maximization of happiness (i.e. pleasure) not only in the individual person but to the greatest number of persons. Consequently, Buddhism as a "religious" movement seeks to eradicate *Dukkha* not only in this life but to our future lives as well. Furthermore, both ethical theories also aspire to promote the happiness of *all* sentient beings in the universe. In this regard, we can say that both are not only anthropocentric but cosmocentric as well.

Second, both systems of thought can be considered as consequential ethics. Buddhism and Utilitarianism puts emphasis on the outcome or the result of actions. From a utilitarian point of view actions are good if they produce happiness and bad if they produce unhappiness. In other words, moral agents must choose the action (among many other possibilities) that produces the most benefits at the least cost of pain. Therefore, it is very important for a utilitarian to consider the possible effects or results of each moral decision. Accordingly, the Buddhists belief in *karma* also underlines the kind of action a Buddhist should perform. Bad actions *would result* to bad *karma* while good actions *would result* to good *karma*. A Buddhist ought to perform good actions so as to avoid bad *consequences* in the future.

Third both ethical principles belong to the category of "situation ethics". Joseph Flethcher identifies three approaches to morality, namely: legalistic, antinomian, and situationist. The legalistic approach follows objective laws, rules and norms in determining and judging the rightness and wrongness of actions. The antinomian uses no absolute precepts or moral principles to guide actions. (see Timbreza 2007: 45) As a result, the legalistic approach is too rigid while the antinomian approach is too lax. Fletcher believes that situation ethics serve as the "middle way" between legalism and antinomianism. Situation ethics (or situationism) maintains that "the moral norm

depends upon a given situation, but whatever the situation may be, one must always act in the name of love". The "love" that is referred here is neither *eros* (which is sexual love) nor *philia* (which is filial love). For Fletcher the kind of love that is being referred in situation ethics is *agape* which refers to one's care, concern, and kindness towards others. This love is the love that is being exemplified by Jesus Christ—love for one's neighbor, a concern for the well-being of others regardless of his/her situation in life. "It is characterized by charity, respect, and responsibility to and for the other." (2007: 45-45)

John Stuart Mill speaks of a "Conscience" which is "derived from sympathy, from *love*, and still more from fear…" He believes that deep within us is a "mystical character", and a "binding force" which unites us and draws us towards our fellow human beings. The utilitarian's ultimate sanction is his/her "feeling for mankind". Buddhists also strive to develop moral perfection thorough the internalization of virtues such as almsgiving (generosity), non-violence and most especially compassion (loving-kindness). Furthermore, both ethical theories do not have a set of fixed objective rules or norms which are imposed upon its members. The Buddha was known to be "flexible" in his precepts. His teachings would vary depending on the different contexts and situations of his audience.

B. Differences

Although one can find noticeable similarities in both ethical systems undoubtedly one can also find striking differences. *First*, although both seek to find happiness, they also differ in the type of happiness that they are pursuing. For the utilitarian, it is pleasure that they seek—be it sensual pleasure (for the hedonist) or "higher" pleasure such as intellectual (for Mill). The Buddhists (at least in the Mahayana and Zen Tradition) on the other hand, strive to do away with pleasures of this world. By pleasure they mean "sense-pleasure, wealth and power, but also desire for, and attachment to, ideas and ideals, views, opinions, theories, conceptions and beliefs." (Rahula 2007: 30) Their goal is to renounce earthly pleasures for these can hinder them from attaining nirvana. "It is this 'thirst', desire, greed, craving, manifesting itself in various ways, that gives rise to all forms of suffering…" (1978: 29)

Second, the utilitarians concern is to find happiness *for this world*, while the Buddhists are concerned for the happiness or well-being of *this life* and of *future lives*. The difference is that the latter believe in reincarnation and rebirth while the former do not.

Third, utilitarians choose an action which produces the most benefits, comfort or happiness. What *motivates* them to perform certain action is the satisfaction it brings to them. On the other hand, Buddhists perform good actions so as to develop virtues. Buddhism is first and foremost a path of self-transformation that seeks to eliminate bad traits (vices) and the cultivation of good traits (vitues). In other words, Buddhists perform good actions not because of the satisfaction it brings to them (ex: praise, honor, prestige) but because they wanted to become better persons. It is in this connection that Buddhism bears a closer resemblance to virtue ethics than in utilitarianism.

IV. Conclusion

The paper started with an exposition of the two ethical principles, specifically Utilitarianism and Buddhist ethics. John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism is a "revisionist" philosophy because it modified Jeremy Bentham's idea—from a quantitative to a qualitative approach. John Stuart Mill was able to defend Utilitarianism from its opponents. He did this by defending it from its attackers and by restating its very doctrine—that actions are good if they produce happiness and bad if they produce pain.

Buddhists use the Eightfold Path in order to live a moral life. Their goal really is to eliminate suffering in this world by following the Four Noble Truth and therefore to achieve nirvana. Although Buddhists do not really adhere to fixed rules or norms, they also practice and adhere to certain precepts which serve as guidelines for them to follow. These precepts help them cultivate their moral life and can lead them towards self-transformation.

Although both systems of thought came from different Traditions, one can still see striking similarities between Buddhist ethics and Utilitarianism. Both ethical theories converge in the following aspects: First, both aims to maximize happiness and to eliminate

suffering in the world; second, both systems of thought can be considered as consequential ethics and third, both ethical principles belong to the category of situation ethics.

On the other hand, Buddhist ethics and Utilitarianism diverge in the following facet: First, they differ in the type of happiness that they are pursuing, second, Buddhists believe in reincarnation and rebirth while Utilitarians do not, and third, both ethical theories have different motivations in doing good actions.

With this, one can conclude that both Buddhist ethics and Utilitarian ethics can be effectively used in achieving an ethical/moral life. Both ethical systems can complement each other—Buddhism can enrich utilitarian ethics, while utilitarian ethics can also deepen Buddhist ethics.

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