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The Principle of utility

a) The definition of utility

 Utility means a property is an object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness, (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community.

 b) The principle on which it is based

 Everything you produce has to be useful for society, to produce happiness or pleasure and to diminish pain.

 c) The way in which utility can affect policies

 A measure of government is utilitarian when its tendency to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any which it has to diminish it.

The extract is taken from the first chapter of “Of principle of utility” by Jeremy Bentham who was the main theorist of the doctrine of Utilitarianism. In the extract taken in consideration Bentham presents, as the intelligent reader could understand, some of the most significant elements in his doctrine. Utilitarianism is in line with Puritanism and so with the ideology of the middle class which was the main protagonists of the Industrial Revolution. Indeed the idea of utility is based on the principle of pain and pleasure, of right and wrong and in the same way puritans thought that who did not progress in life was making something wrong (this way of thought reminds also to the Manichaean philosophy).