

# Candidate 1 evidence

## Introduction

Make good moral decisions

Look at the consequences

Backtrack to motive, act consequences

Acts = Futile

Consequences = very important

Happiness = pleasure and the absence of pain

## Describing positions

Principle of utility is made up of 3 main parts;

Hedonic principle - pleasure most important

Equity principle - everyone treated with equity

Consequentialist principle - consequences decide morality

Principle of utility - act right when produces most pleasure/pain

## Analysis

Bentham calculated morality using a quantitative approach - his calculus

We need a way to measure happiness

Example £million bentham keep

Mill calculate using qualitative approach

Rule utilitarianism

'Better be socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied'

Higher/lower pleasures

eating/reading example

Competent judges

## Evaluation

### Strengths

Our actions (consequences) effect others and we need to not undercompensate for others  
righteousness/justice

The morality of an act can be found by merely looking at consequences

Consequences are always different it doesn't make sense to have a singular rule.

### Weaknesses

Bad pleasures - smoking

Tyranny of the majority

Happiness is difficult to calculate

## Conclusion

Good understanding but some difficulties

Summarise essay

## Does utilitarianism guide us into making good moral decisions?

### Introduction

Utilitarianism is a philosophical concept which allows us to make the right moral decisions which cause the most pleasure and least pain. When Utilitarians are doing this, they look at the consequences of the actions they do and decide on whether it was a good moral decision or a bad one. To understand the process of utilitarianism we look at the way in which situations develop. Firstly, we have the motive. This is the reasons behind an action, or the thought process people have for doing something. We then have the act. This is the actual action which someone does. It is the thing carried out which was purposely done. Finally, we arrive at the consequences. This is the aftereffects of the act, and the thing that has a long-lasting effect. Utilitarians mainly focus on the consequences when deciding morality of an act. When the act produces good consequences, the act is good and when the act produces bad consequences the act was bad. And likewise, utilitarians always want to produce the most happiness from an act. This is called the principle of utility, and it states that; we should do the act which produces the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest amount of pain. SO, when doing an act, we should do the act that produces the most amount of pleasure and least amount of pain for the majority of people.

Utilitarianism can be divided into three main principles as well as the principle of utility. These are the hedonic principle, the equity principle and the consequentialist principle. The hedonic principle states that we should pleasure is the most important and good thing and pain is the least important and bad thing. If an act Produces pleasure, it was right and if an act produces pain, it was wrong. The equity principle states that we should treat everyone equitably and that we should make sure everyone has the means to be treated equally no matter who they are. Lastly, is the consequentialist principle. This states that the consequences of an act are what decide morality and that nothing else matters except the consequences produced. Together with these three pillars we arrive at the principle of utility.

### Analysis

#### Jeremy Bentham

Jeremy Bentham was a utilitarian philosopher who had his own approach to utilitarianism. He decided the best way to figure out the morality of an act was to create a calculus and measure the quantity of pleasure. When using his quantitative approach, Bentham derived at his seven-step calculus. The seven steps to this are Intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity and extent. With these seven steps Bentham thought we could solve the morality of every situation and therefore measure happiness.

To put this into an example, imagine you won the lottery. You have two options of what to do, keep all the money to yourself or share the money with your family. Keeping the money would cause very high amount of pleasure personally, whereas sharing the money would give pleasure to more people but the pleasure is not as extreme as if it was for one person. For this reason, Bentham would choose to keep all the money for himself.

Bentham wouldn't recognise that there are different types of pleasure/pain because he views utilitarianism in a quantitative approach, not qualitative. He wouldn't see the different types of

pleasure and would only view it as being extremely pleasurable to have won and keep all the lottery money.

### John Stuart Mill

Mill was another utilitarian philosopher but unlike Bentham he had a different approach when it came to utilitarianism. He thought the best way to view and analyse a situation was through a more quantitative approach. He then arrived at the idea of higher and lower pleasures. Higher pleasures are things like reading or maths or the arts. They are pleasure of the mind and things that will allow you to go farther in life and see the world in a better way, pleasures of the mind. There are then the lower pleasures, these are things like eating and sleeping. They are animalistic pleasures of the body and may feel good, but they don't give you any personal growth. They are essential for survival but that is it they don't help your mind grow. Mill uses a rule utilitarian approach when using his rules of higher and lower pleasures.

Mill said it is always better to fulfil your higher pleasures rather than lower pleasures because they are what help your mind grow and are what separate us from animals. The quotation 'It is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied' shows what Mill was saying. It explains that it is better to be a genius but unhappy than a fool happy. At least Socrates' mind is interesting and developed whereas the fool doesn't know any better than what's sitting in front of him.

Mill also explained the idea of a competent judge. This is a person who has experienced both higher and lower pleasures and is therefore in a position on which they can make a judgement on which pleasure to fulfil, and Mill says that every single time, they would tell you to fulfil your higher pleasures.

To put this into perspective and use an example, imagine being presented with the higher pleasure of reading a book and the lower pleasure of sleeping. Mill says you should choose to read the book because it is the more fulfilling of the two pleasures and for this reason, this is the right thing to do in this situation and Mill says this is what a competent judge would say too because they would have experienced both and can therefore make an informed decision.

### Evaluation

#### Strengths

Utilitarianism is a very good process when finding out the morality of an act and despite its problems, it also has its strong points. The first of many being that our actions do affect others and we need to make sure that we think about this before doing an act, at the motive stage so that we can produce the most amount of happiness. It is essential that we do not undercompensate for others righteousness/justice when doing the act so that it does not result in bad consequences.

The second strength is that the morality of an act can be found by merely looking at the consequences of the act. This means that when deciding whether an act is good or bad, we only need to look at the consequences of the act and decide from there whether it is good or bad.

The third and final strength is that consequences are always different in every situation and other moral theories don't make sense because they have one singular rule whereas utilitarianism has many rules which is good because every consequence is different.

### Weaknesses

Utilitarianism also has its struggles, the first of which being that some pleasures are evil. Take smoking for example. At the time, smoking might seem very fun and pleasurable but, in the future, it can lead to horrible diseases and even death. In the short term it may have good outcomes but in the long term it can have very bad outcomes. This brings us to the problem; do we ever know if an action is good or bad?

The second is that there is a tyranny towards the majority. The majority will always win because there are more people who get a say whereas the minority will lose because there are only very few who want something to happen.

### Conclusion

Ultimately, utilitarianism does guide us to make good moral decisions because of its many principles telling us what to do in situations. Looking at the consequences to find out what is right or wrong is a very good way of deciding the morality of an act because the consequences are the long-lasting effects and are the things that have the most impact on a person. Despite this, it does have its wrong things like the bad pleasures, this is a major issue to utilitarianism because there are two conflicting consequences. Overall though utilitarianism does guide us to making good moral decisions because of all the proponents that make it up.