

## Utilitarianism- Knowledge organiser

### Sub-topics

**Introduction to Utilitarianism-** It is a consequentialist, deontological theory. It is concerned with consequences of actions, and in this sense believes morality is situational. It came out of a context in which historically the majority had been ignored for the preferences of the minority.

**Principle of Utility-** Utilitarianism states that when faced with an ethical decision, we should choose the course of action which maximises pleasure and minimises pain for the greatest number of people

**Hedonic Calculus-** A method for determining the right course of action, focuses on greatest good for the greatest number.

**Act and rule Utilitarianism-** Act believes that we should always perform the action which will lead to the greatest balance of good over evil. Rule believes that we should always follow that rule in which general adherence to it will lead to the greatest overall balance of good over evil

**Developments in Utilitarian theory-** Preference utilitarianism argues that the right action is the one which satisfies the greatest number of people's preference. Negative utilitarianism seeks to reduce suffering

**Evaluation of the theory-** A consideration of how the theory can be applied to ethical scenarios. An analysis of its strengths and weaknesses

### Quotes

'Nature has placed mankind under two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them to point out what we ought to do as well as determine what we should do.'- **Bentham**

'Justice is a name for certain moral requirements, which regard collectively, stand higher in the scale of social utility, and are therefore of more paramount obligation, than any other.'- **Mill**

'It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.' – **Mill**

### Key words

**Act utilitarianism-** We should always perform the act which will lead to the greatest balance of good over evil

**Consequentialist-** Someone who judges the ethics of an act based on its outcomes.

**Hedonic Calculus-** Bentham's system for determining which act should be performed using seven criteria including the intensity and duration of the pleasure

**Hedonism-** The philosophical view that the good is pleasure and nothing else is the good

**Preference utilitarianism-** We should look to seek as the good that which we would rationally prefer as an outcome

**Principle of Utility-** Seeks to achieve the good to the greatest possible extent

**Qualitative-** Relating to, measuring, or measured by the quality of something rather than its quantity

**Quantitative-** Relating to, measuring, or measured by the quantity of something rather than its quality

**Rule utilitarianism-** We should always follow the rule which will lead to greatest good

**Teleological-** Goodness is determined by outcome

### Key scholars

Jeremy Bentham

John Stuart Mill

Peter Singer

R.M. Hare

David Hume

G.E. Moore

Mary Wolstoncroft

### Further research-

- Vardy, Peter and Charlotte, Ethics Matters (2013) chapters 7-8
- **Panpsycast Podcast-**  
<https://thepanpsycast.com/panpsycast2/2016/10/17/episode-5-utilitarianism-part-i>
- <https://books.openedition.org/obp/4419>
- <https://alevelphilosophyandreligion.com/eduqas-wjec-religious-studies/eduqas-wjec-ethics/utilitarianism/>

