

# Explain bentham's utilitarianism: (30 marks)

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A man called Jeremy Bentham had a theory called the 'Utilitarianism theory'. He was born in London at the time of the great scientific and social change and wrote 'The Principles of Morals and Legislation' in 1789. Bentham had the theory that all humans seek pleasure and avoid pain at all costs. Utilitarianism has been described as an act or a rule rather than a theory. We break this down into three parts: -Motivation: Bentham was a hedonist ('Hedone' is Greek for 'pleasure'). Bentham suggests that humans are motivated by pleasure and seek to avoid pain in every circumstance. Bentham quoted 'Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.' Basically he is trying to say that humans pursue pleasure and fight to avoid pain, and believed that this was a 'moral fact', also that pleasure was the 'sole good' and pain was the 'sole evil', meaning humans naturally seek and avoid it.

For example smoking, people know that it will harm them and damage their health but they smoke for pleasure, giving up would be very difficult and would, therefore, cause pain that they're trying to avoid. There are also very different examples from different people's viewpoints such as. People who are motivated by pleasure: A person lives their life to go to Heaven. This means that the thought of going to Heaven (pleasure) motivates them to be a good person. People who are motivated by pain: A person lives their life to stay away from Hell. This means that the thought of going to Hell (pain) motivates them to be a good person. -Principle of utility: utility means 'usefulness', this is Bentham's moral rule. Once Bentham had identified

pleasure and pain (moral) he continued on to the 'utility principle'. This is where every action is judged by the rightness and wrongness by its utility (usefulness) to produce pleasure. Bentham said that pleasure is the cause of happiness, so it can be used interchangeably in the utility principle, so an action that causes or produces the most happiness is the most moral. Everything is based on the end result, if the duration causes pain but it means it will end in pleasure, the utility principle is applied. Bentham devised a theory about 'The Greatest Happiness For The Greatest Number'.

This is explained best when split into two parts; 'The Greatest Good'- Good is the maximization of pleasure so if an action is right it will produce the greatest good for the greatest number. The more pleasure that action produces the better it will be. 'Greatest number'- The 'Democratic Theory' is put in place, this is Bentham's rule that pleasure can't be for one person alone. The maximum happiness for most people should always be chosen when setting with a range of choices in a moral decision. An example of 'The Principle of Utility' using the 'Greatest happiness for the greatest number' theory would be the assassination of Hitler, yes a person's life would be taken and murder will be committed, but the death of one person would save many others people's lives and cause happiness for the greatest number. Hedonic Calculus: was Jeremy Bentham's system to measure how good/bad a consequence is. So if we were to calculate the greatest happiness for the greatest number, we must determine the quantity of happiness that will be produced from this action.

The way that thus we evaluated is by applying these seven values:

1. Intensity- How intense it is (strong).

2. Duration- How long it lasts.
3. Certainty/ uncertainty- How sure it will happen.
4. Remoteness- How near it is to happen.
5. Richness- Like hood of repetition, how much pleasure it will lead to.  
Purity- How free from pain is it?
6. Extent- How far-reaching will be the consequences. The Hedonic Calculus system is a Quantitative assessment of situations, it is therefore concerned with the quantity of pleasure (it produces the highest amount of pleasure) for the greatest amount of people.

An example and the set out to figure out a moral dilemma would be a question like: ' Should I abort my disabled child? Then to figure out if it would be more pleasurable or painful it would be set like so:

	Pleasure	Pain
Intensity	3/10	7/10
Duration	7/10	4/10
Certainty	9/10	8/10
Extent	7/10	6/10
Remoteness	8/10	6/10
Richness	8/10	5/10
Purity	2/10	7/10

Total result	44/70	43/70
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So in conclusion

According to the hedonic calculus, the women would go and get an abortion because it would be the greatest good for the greatest number. So that is Bentham's Utilitarianism Theory all explained through three parts, the Motivation of pain and pleasure, the Principle of Utility, and the Hedonistic Calculus.