

Explain the difference
between rule



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Explain the difference between rule, act and preference utilitarianism (25 marks) Utilitarianism is the ethical theory behind Justifying an action for being for the greater good. This is a teleological theory because it looks at the consequences of an action. Utilitarianism is a consequentialist theory. There are three types of utilitarianism: Act, Rule and Preference. Jeremy Bentham began the Utilitarianism theory. Utilitarianism is a hedonistic theory because it is based on pleasure and happiness. Each utilitarian has a different theory of Utilitarianism and this will be explained in my essay.

First there was Jeremy Bentham the one to think of the Utilitarianism theory. Bentham was an act Utilitarian. Bentham was interested in the principle of utility, this is the theory of usefulness that suggests that an action is right if it brings the greatest happiness for the greatest number. He developed his ethical system based on ancient hedonism, which pursued physical pleasure and avoided physical pain. Bentham believed that a moral act is one that maximises pleasure and minimises pain. From this Jeremy Bentham invented something called the 'hedonic calculus' this was his way of measuring the good and bad of an action.

Bentham said: the principle of utility aims to promote happiness, which is the supreme ethical value... An act is right if it delivers more pleasure than pain and wrong if it brings about more pain than pleasure. ' To help people choose what would have the best possible consequence, Bentham provided a way of measuring it. This is the 'hedonic calculus'. There are seven elements: the intensity of the pleasure; the duration of the pleasure; the certainty of the pleasure; the remoteness of the pleasure; the chance of

succession of pleasures; the purity of the pleasure and lastly the extent of the pleasure.

Bentham invented this to help people weigh up and measure how much pleasure an action will produce. Bentham was interested in the 'greatest good for the greatest number' and therefore his theory is quantitative. Bentham's view is described as Act Utilitarianism. Act Utilitarianism is Eudemonistic because actions are based on the happiness it brings; Consequentialist because the consequences an action will bring about and also Act Utilitarianism is measurable (by the hedonic calculus) and also quantitative because it's based on the 'greatest number'.

Act Utilitarianism is teleological because it aims to maximise the pleasure of the majority and has an end aim. Act Utilitarianism is also relative due to the fact that there is no notion of absolute right or wrong. On the other hand, Stuart Mill didn't agree with Bentham's Act Utilitarianism. Mill stressed that happiness was more important than pleasure. Mill said: 'The Greatest promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness'. Here Mill is suggesting that happiness is the importance when looking at a moral action. Something that Mill also criticised about Bentham's view was the quantitative emphasis.

Mill thought that actions should be measured in a qualitative way instead of quantitative way. Mill was interested in the quality of the pleasure. Mill looked at intellectual pleasures such as reading poetry and not pleasures such as eating or having sex. To add, Mill thought about the difference between animal pleasure and human pleasure. He said: 'It is better to be a human

being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied... ' Furthermore, Mill suggested that in order to derive the principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number we should have a principle of universality.

Mill believed that we need moral rules to produce social order and justice. These rules should be followed universally. Mill was therefore seen as a Rule Utilitarian. Rule Utilitarianism is Consequentialist as is Act Utilitarianism; Rule Utilitarianism is Universalistic and also qualitative. Rule Utilitarianism is deontological due to the fact that rules take priority. It is also relative because actions are based on the maximisation of pleasure for a particular society where the rules are used.

Contrasting to Act and Rule Utilitarianism there is Preference Utilitarianism; this is the most recent form of Utilitarianism. R. M. Hare, Peter Singer and Richard Brandt all have different views though they are all Preference Utilitarianists. Preference Utilitarianists judge moral actions according to whether they fit in with the preferences of the individuals involved. R. M. Hare's approach argues that when making the decision on whether an action is right or wrong we must consider our own preferences and those of others. Hare said: 'equal preferences count equally, whatever their content'.

One problem is that sometimes people's preferences may clash therefore Hare suggested that we should 'stand in someone else's shoes' and try to imagine what they would prefer. Hare thinks that people should treat others with impartiality and he argues for universalisability. Peter Singer was also a Preference Utilitarian though he suggests that we should take the viewpoint of an impartial spectator. Singer said: 'our own preferences cannot count any

more than the preferences of others' and so, in acting morally, we should take account of all the people affected by our actions.