

# 2021 Assessment resources

## A-level Philosophy

### Moral Philosophy

Answers and commentaries

The question numbers in this resource reflect the question numbers from the original papers and match the question numbers in the corresponding 2021 assessment materials.

#### Question 06

**06** Outline Ayer's verification principle.

[3 marks]

#### Student A

Ayer's verification principle claims that claims are only meaningful if they are either; analytically true, or empirically verifiable.

#### Commentary

This is a question where maximum marks require both aspects of one version (strong or weak) of Ayer's verification principle, which he used to determine the meaning, truth-aptness, or factual content of propositions. There is no need to apply the principle to moral statements to get maximum marks. This response has both necessary dimensions – expressed precisely and without redundancy.

**3 marks**

## Student B

The verification principle suggests that you can know something if it <sup>is to be</sup> empirically or analytically ~~justified~~ verified/proven true. To be empirically proven is proof using the senses to be analytically proven is proof using the ~~the~~ definition.

## Commentary

This student has both elements of the verification principle, but it is directed at knowledge rather than meaning, truth-aptness, or the factual content of propositions. It is substantively correct but certainly not precise.

3 marks

## Student C

Ayer's verification principle is that know language must be proven true or false to be considered meaningful. ~~such~~ According to the verification principle, ~~an~~ only analytic terms can be considered meaningful.

## Commentary

There are fragments of relevant knowledge and understanding here (eg the student knows 'meaning' is important), but the response is not substantively correct.

1 mark

## Question 08

08 Explain Moore's 'open question argument'.

[5 marks]

### Student A

Moore's open question argument talks about open questions (ones where there ~~aren't~~ <sup>aren't</sup> a yes or no answer) and closed questions (ones where there are yes and no answers). If someone asks 'Jim is an unmarried man but is he a bachelor?' this is ~~should~~ ~~produce~~ a closed question as someone who understands the definition of 'bachelor' will be able to answer 'yes' to that question. Bachelor is analytically equivalent to unmarried man, however the concept of 'good' is not analytically equivalent to anything. 'Good' is a simple irreducible property like the colour yellow. So, when someone asks 'I know that telling the truth is X, but is it good?' it will produce an open question as there is no simple yes or no answer. Moore's argument shows how 'good' is an indefinable property so ethical naturalism is false as it ~~is~~ defines 'good' in terms of natural properties.

### Commentary

This is a clear, correct and sufficiently full answer for maximum marks. Although the student connects the argument to ethical naturalism specifically at the end, the irreducibility of the 'good' to non-moral properties is clear and has already been explained.

5 marks

## Student B

Moores open question argument ~~is~~ aims to show how pleasure cannot ~~be~~ equate to good. ~~or any other~~ ~~metaphysical~~ ~~substant~~ ~~property~~. ~~He~~ ~~poses~~ the question "Is pleasure good?" he says, ~~show~~ how would be redundant if pleasure was in fact actually equated with good. For then, the question would be a tautology, like "Is pleasure pleasure?". However, the fact that the second question <sup>is closed, and</sup> does not equate with the first <sup>open question</sup>, demonstrates how pleasure cannot be good.

## Commentary

This answer is correct in substance on the open question argument but narrowly focused on pleasure, and not fully developed.

**3 marks**

## Student C

Moore's open question argument was an attempt to show that good is undefinable.

When Moore asks 'what is good?' we can reply 'x'. Moore however, turns this question around and asks 'is 'x' really good?' upon which most of us would be hesitant to say yes. This, to Moore, states that good is undefinable, and that our moral

judgements can therefore not be based upon <sup>a definition of</sup> what good is, but rather, ~~in~~ in his view, based upon our intuition, which shows us what good is.

## Commentary

A couple of relevant points are made on the indefinability of the good and the importance of intuition in Moore, but the logic of the argument is not clear or fully developed.

**2 marks**

## Question 10

1 0 Are utilitarians correct when they say that it is morally right to maximise utility?

[25 marks]

### Student A

Utilitarianism is an act-centered consequentialist moral theory prescribed by philosopher Jeremy Bentham. It values the moral worth of an act based on its consequences. The utility principle is at the centre of utilitarianism, and states that the right action is that which causes the greatest happiness for the greatest number. 'Happiness' can be understood as utility, or usefulness, and different forms of utilitarianism interpret utility differently. I will focus on Hedonistic utilitarianism, which defines utility as pleasure minus pain, and Preference utilitarianism, which defines utility as preference satisfaction. The main strengths of utilitarianism is its simplicity, as it reduces morality to a cost-benefit analysis, and its ability to transcend culture, as everyone feels pleasure. Despite these strengths, in this essay I will focus on the

Utilitarianism is an act-centered consequentialist moral theory prescribed by philosopher Jeremy Bentham. It values the moral worth of an act based on its consequences. The utility principle is at the centre of utilitarianism, and states that the right action is that which causes the greatest happiness for the greatest number. 'Happiness' can be understood as utility, or usefulness, and different forms of utilitarianism interpret utility differently. I will focus on Hedonistic utilitarianism, which defines utility as pleasure minus pain, and preference utilitarianism, which defines utility as preference satisfaction. The main strengths of utilitarianism is its simplicity, as it reduces morality to a cost-benefit analysis, and its ability to transcend culture, as everyone feels pleasure. Despite these strengths, in this essay I will focus on the issues with utilitarianism. The weakest issue is its ignorance of other factors that aren't utility, and the strongest issue is its impracticality as a

moral decision making guide, due to consequences being infinite. Another strong issue is the lack of respects for rights.

The first issue with ~~utilitarianism~~ maximising utility is that it ignores other ends. Hedonistic utilitarians argue that pleasure is the only end we should seek, but this is not the case for everyone.

Nozick's ~~the~~ pleasure machine is a thought experiment in which people can choose to go in a machine that will make them a life filled with pleasure. The fact that some people choose not to go in the machine shows that people value ends other than pleasure, such as truth. Simply maximising utility doesn't allow for any other ends, so it is not morally right to maximise utility.

A response to this criticism could be seen in preference utilitarianism. Because preference utilitarians define utility as preference satisfaction, they can allow for a multitude of ends. For example, if a man is cheating on his husband, and his



husband isn't aware, then even if the husband will be happier not knowing, if he has a preference for the truth, he can learn the truth. This deeper understanding of utility ~~seems like it is~~ allows you to try and cater for everyone's preferences, rather than just pleasure, which means that it is morally right to maximise utility.

This response doesn't solve the issue, as there are issues with preference utilitarianism. Some people have bad preferences, that we wouldn't find it morally right to maximise. For example, if there was a planet of people who had a preference to be tortured, even though it caused them pain, we wouldn't believe that it's morally right for them to torture each other. It seems preferences can be bad, and simply maximising preference ~~satisfaction~~ satisfaction is not always morally right, so it isn't morally right to maximise utility.

This issue ~~is~~ is weak though. It attacks specific types of utilitarianism, rather than utilitarianism as a whole, and has an issue more with how they have defined utility, rather than showing that maximising utility is not morally right.

A second issue with maximising utility is that it has no respect for human rights. Bentham once described rights as 'nonsense on stilts' showing his utter disregard for them. An example of this is throwing a Christian to the lions to entertain Romans. Because maximising utility focuses on the ~~aggregate~~ aggregate as opposed to the individual, no matter what you define utility as, you can always outweigh the needs of one person. We believe that rights are imperative, so it cannot be morally right to maximise utility.

You could try to solve the issue of rights with rule utilitarianism. Rule utilitarians apply the utility principle indirectly, through a set of rules that can be seen to have maximised utility in the past. Human rights ~~lead~~ lead to maximise utility, so they can be imposed as a secondary principle. By including rights in utilitarianism, everyone must ~~also~~ respect our human rights, so there is no issue, and maximising utility is morally right.

This is not adequate, however, as we <sup>want to</sup> respect rights intrinsically, not just as a means of maximising utility. Yes, imposing human rights as a rule means we have to respect them, but it doesn't give them intrinsic value. We would respect human rights even if they weren't shown to maximise utility in the past, and couldn't be set as a rule. The use of secondary principles does not solve the issue of ~~the~~ rights, and maximising utility is not morally right.

A final issue with maximising utility is that the consequences are neverending. ~~Maximising utility has~~ In order to evaluate whether utility has been maximised, you must look at the consequences of the action. This is incredibly impractical. Consequences are infinite, and ~~it~~ it is impossible to know what the consequences will be. For example, if someone saved a young boy from drowning, that would appear to maximise utility. But if that boy grew up to be Adolf Hitler, then the act didn't actually maximise utility. The moral worth of an action <sup>can</sup> change drastically, making all ~~consequentialist~~ consequentialist moral theories very impractical.

and ultimately, makes when making moral decisions as it is impossible to know the consequences. As maximising utility is consequentialist, it is ~~not~~ morally right.

A response to this could be ~~rule~~ rule utilitarianism.

Rule utilitarianism can be known as 'backwards looking' as it focuses on what was maximised

utility in the past, and makes these rules,

so you don't have to evaluate the

consequences of every action. This makes it a

lot more practical. There are two types of rule

utilitarianism, strong, which always follows the

rules, and weak, which only follows the rules

when it maximises utility to do so. Following

rules makes moral decision making simple, and there

is no issue of ~~causing~~ consequences. This means maximising

utility could still be morally right.

Rule utilitarianism has issues, though. Weak rule utilitarianism collapses back into act utilitarianism, as before you follow a rule, you have to assess whether it would maximise utility to follow the rule or not. ~~Act~~ Act utilitarianism faces all the issues I have outlined in this essay, so weak <sup>rule</sup> utilitarianism cannot be correct. Strong rule utilitarianism is no longer utilitarianism. ~~For~~ <sup>For</sup> example, if a man with an axe asks you where your friend is so he can kill him, you would maximise utility by lying to the axeman. However, it is perfectly reasonable that a rule might be 'don't lie', as not lying has maximised utility in the past. Therefore, a strong rule utilitarian wouldn't lie, even though this does not maximise utility. Strong ~~rule~~ rule utilitarianism is no longer concerned with maximising utility, and weak rule utilitarianism collapses into act utilitarianism, which is concerned with maximising utility, but because of the other issues mentioned in the essay, this is not morally right.

In ~~the~~ conclusion, maximising utility is not morally right. It will always allow for people's rights to be disregarded, which is incredibly counter intuitive, but most importantly, it is ~~not~~ impossible to know whether an action will actually maximise utility, making it completely redundant as a moral-decision making guide, so maximising utility cannot be morally right. An ethical theory that doesn't fall foul of either of these issues is Kantian deontology, which is centred around individual rights and autonomy, and is deontological as opposed to consequentialist, so is more practical when making moral decisions.

## Commentary

The student argues with intent towards a clear conclusion, and the logic of the argument is sustained. Relevant philosophical language is used consistently and correctly. There was room for more integration (eg on act and rule versions of utilitarianism mentioned earlier on), and the student could have done more to show why the calculation issue weighted more heavily than the other considerations. But this is a top band answer.

Although many of the best students will answer the question exactly as phrased, others will just treat it as an invitation to assess the merits of utilitarianism (in various forms), and that's fine. This student begins by identifying two strengths of utilitarianism (it is simple and it is universal), and three problem areas – narrow focus on utility, applicability, and rights. None of these are developed in any detail yet, but already the stage is set for a critical study of the issues which will be engaged with the strengths and weaknesses of utilitarianism.

This student decides to attack the basic principle of utility (understood in hedonistic terms), which is exactly what they said they were going to do in the introduction. Nozick's thought experiment is relevant and applied directly at the hedonic principle. The student briefly but accurately elaborates on the nature of preference utilitarianism, and shows how a different conception of utility is able to incorporate the insights from Nozick's thought experiment and expand on the range of 'ends' that utilitarianism concerns itself with. This is integrated evaluation. The balance now seems to be tipping in favour of utilitarianism, as the student indicates.

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Preference utilitarianism is now critiqued by raising the issue of 'bad' preferences. The example used is crude, but it is perfectly serviceable. The balance of the evidence is now moving away from utilitarianism, as the student indicates, but it is by no means decisive. The student notes that they are attacking here a specific version of utilitarianism rather than utilitarianism 'as a whole'. So now they turn to a more important issue.

The student now takes up the issue of 'rights', as they indicated they would, and they have Bentham in their insights with his famous/infamous 'nonsense on stilts' claim. They use the vivid example of throwing Christians to the lions for public entertainment, and correctly note that it is the 'aggregate' happiness which is significant for Bentham, which can breach human rights. Good knowledge and understanding here as well as evaluation.

The student now explores whether the 'rule' version of utilitarianism can save the position, whereby we could 'respect human rights as a secondary principle'. But this does not satisfy the student, who makes the point that rights have intrinsic value. The student might have questioned the intrinsic value of rights from a utilitarian perspective, charging the critic with begging the question, but few students attempt this move.

A third issue is raised which is concerned with the unforeseen 'consequences' of actions when one can never be sure if utility will be increased: the example of saving 'a young boy from drowning' (apparent utility) who grows up to be Adolf Hitler (utility deficit) makes this point clearly. One might object (on technical grounds) to actions having 'infinite consequences', the point they are making is perfectly intelligible.

Rule utilitarianism is again invoked, with the distinction made between strong and weak versions. On either case, the moral good is focussed on following the rules rather than calculating the (infinite) consequences of every action. A more integrated piece of evaluation might apply rule utilitarianism specifically to the drowning boy/Hitler example, but the student leaves that implicit. Rule utilitarianism is said to collapse 'into act', which the student has already rejected; while 'strong rule utilitarianism' is 'no longer utilitarianism' because by following rules which produced utility in the past, one might commit oneself to allowing terrible consequences in the future (the 'axe-man' example).

The conclusion brings together key arguments from within the essay and affirms a stance against utilitarianism. We really did not need the references to 'Kantian deontological ethics', but offering this as a reasoned (albeit brief) alternative at the end is preferable to an essay which has spent half the time and space discussing Kant's moral philosophy rather than evaluating utilitarianism.

**23 marks**

## Student B

Plan: Intro, ~~rights~~ human rights - rule - intrinsic, pleasure is not only good - preference - bad & crazy pref, impossible to calculate utility (Hitler) - rule - collapses into act.

Utilitarians argue that it is morally right to maximise utility. ~~and they understand utility~~ Utilitarianism is a consequentialist theory as in order to maximise utility we must ~~maximise~~ maximise the amount of utility brought about by consequences.

Utility is understood in different ways by utilitarians. Hedonistic utilitarians <sup>such as Mill and Bentham</sup> argue that utility should be understood as pleasure ~~is~~ and pleasure is maximised through maximising happiness. ~~Bentham states that happiness should be~~ In this essay, I will argue that ~~the~~ utilitarians are not correct when they say it is right to maximise utility due to the strength of issues with this claim. I will evaluate and weigh the strength of issues including the utility principle's disregard for ~~rights~~ human rights, the problems of calculating utility, ~~and~~ the fact that pleasure is not the only good and the fact that even if we understand utility as preference satisfaction, this also fails.



My first criticism of the claim that it is morally right to maximise utility is that it fails to ~~not~~ respect human rights which are intrinsically right. Through claiming that it is morally right to maximise utility, the utilitarian argues that any end can justify the means if it maximises utility. For example, if utility is understood as ~~happiness~~ pleasure, it would be right to murder an innocent person to prevent riots if this maximises utility. ~~Theory~~ However, this is not <sup>moral</sup> ~~correct~~ because the ~~innocent~~ innocent person should have the right to life. Thus, ~~utilitarians~~ utilitarians ~~are not correct~~ are not correct to claim it is morally right to maximise utility because this disregards human rights.

A utilitarian may respond to this criticism by introducing the rule utilitarianism theory; rule utilitarians argue we should follow secondary principles which in general maximise utility. In this way, rule utilitarians are backwards looking as they look to what has maximised utility in the past and then create secondary principles based on this. In the innocent person ~~example~~ example explained previously, it would be wrong to kill the innocent person because the secondary principle of 'do not kill' in general maximises ~~happiness~~ <sup>utility</sup>. However, Thus, the rule utilitarian can defend <sup>the</sup> utilitarian's

claim based on the innocent person having the right to life due to secondary principles.

However, this response is not convincing. The reason the utilitarian's claim that it is morally right to maximise utility is wrong because it does not see rights as intrinsically good, as ends in themselves. The ~~the~~ rule utilitarian only argues that the innocent person should have the right to life because it follows a secondary principle that maximises utility in general; the key point is that the utilitarian misses the fact that rights have intrinsic value not just as part of a project to maximise utility but as ends in themselves.

This is a very strong criticism against the claim that it is morally right to maximise utility because there is no way for the utilitarian to get around the fact their theory does not show respect for the intrinsic value of rights.

A second ~~the~~ criticism of the utilitarian's claim that we should maximise utility is that it is impossible to calculate how much utility an act will create. This is because there is an infinite chain of consequences of an action and we have no way of knowing

what those consequences are. For example, if we saw a child drowning, it would seem that saving that child would maximise utility. However, if that child was actually young Hitler, it is clear that ~~that~~ the action of saving the child does not maximise utility. Thus as it is impossible to know what actions will maximise utility, ~~we~~ we cannot determine what is morally right based on what maximises utility.

However, as utilitarian would again respond by arguing this is only an issue for act utilitarians who argue we ~~we~~ should aim to maximise utility in each situation ~~according~~ ~~to~~ by working out what will maximise utility in that situation. Rule utilitarians, in being backwards thinking, and following secondary principles that in general maximise happiness do not have this problem. This is because we do not have to try to know the consequences of each individual act but rather can use our knowledge of what has maximised utility in the past to know what to do. Thus, rule utilitarianism depends the utilitarians claim that it is morally right to maximise utility.

However, the rule utilitarian's argument here also fails. This is because if one is a strict rule utilitarian, you are no longer maximising utility and if one is a weak rule utilitarian your theory breaks down into act utilitarianism. For example, if an axe-man came to your door and asked where your friend is with the intention of murdering your friend you would have to tell the truth as a strong rule utilitarian.

This is because the secondary principle 'do not lie' in general maximises happiness and if you are a strict rule utilitarian you must never break the rule. This, however, no longer depends the claim that it is morally right to maximise utility because as shown in the axe-man example, utility is not always maximised when following the rule. Telling the axe-man the truth does not maximise utility (when understood as pleasure or anything else) as your friend will be killed.

An ~~act utilitarian~~ weak rule utilitarian, on the other hand would argue there are times when we should break the rule ~~as~~ like in the trolley example. However weak rule utilitarianism reverts to act utilitarianism because if in some situations we should break the rule, in each situation we must evaluate whether breaking or following the rule will maximise utility and in doing this we are considering each situation separately so ~~act~~ weak rule utilitarianism reverts to act utilitarianism. Thus, rule utilitarianism, both strong because it no longer maximises utility and weak because it reverts to act utilitarianism, fails to defend the utilitarian against the claim that it is impossible to calculate utility so what is morally right ~~does not~~ cannot be what maximises utility as we must be able to work out what is morally right.

Utility is understood by many utilitarians as pleasure. I will argue that ~~the~~ the utilitarian cannot give a coherent account of utility so this is another reason to reject the utilitarian's claim. Nozick ~~proposes a thought~~ Utility cannot be understood as pleasure because pleasure is not the only good. Nozick presents a thought experiment where one is plugged into a 'pleasure machine', a virtual reality where pleasure is maximised. Some people would not plug into this pleasure machine.

Extra space Even if you would plug into this pleasure machine, the fact not everyone would shows that pleasure is not the only good so utility cannot be understood as pleasure.

A preference utilitarian would respond to this argument through arguing that utility should be understood as preference satisfaction rather than pleasure. This allows for other goods such as truth ~~and~~ to be accounted for in utility. Thus utility should be maximised when understood as preference satisfaction as this means people's preferences should be maximised.

However, the preference utilitarian also fails to give the correct account of utility ~~or~~ because of bad and crazy preferences. We can imagine a world in which everyone's preference is to torture and be tortured. However, this is not a good world. Thus, this example shows that when utility is understood as preference satisfaction it also fails to give the correct account of utility so the claim that we should maximise utility is incorrect as the utilitarian cannot give ~~an~~ a coherent account of utility.

In conclusion, the utilitarian is not correct to say it is morally right to maximise utility because maximising utility fails to respect rights, is impossible to calculate and the utilitarian cannot give a ~~correct~~ coherent account of what utility is. The strongest issue with the utilitarian's claim is that they disregard rights because rights are essential to what is morally good so in disregarding them the utilitarian is clearly incorrect to say what is morally good <sup>is to</sup> maximise utility.

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## Commentary

There is clear and sustained argumentative intent. Detail is sometimes lacking, especially on utilitarianism itself. Argument and counter-argument is evident throughout, however, and the evaluative points are mostly integrated. The conclusion is well supported by the balance of discussion, and weighting is accorded to the different objections, albeit the rationale for the weightings could have been developed in more detail. This belongs safely in the 16–20 band as an atypical but legitimate response which foregrounds critical evaluation of the moral principle at stake.

The student begins by defining utilitarianism in both general and particular terms. They also indicate very clear intent to argue against any form of the theory, and for a range of reasons (eg calculation problems, ignoring human rights etc).

The student goes straight into a criticism here regarding the intrinsic good of human rights. It would have been to the student's credit to have said more about utilitarianism before launching this objection, but knowledge and understanding of utilitarianism is implicit in the critical evaluation, which is clearly illustrated. The student responds to this objection with 'rule utilitarianism', but this is rejected because it is instrumental: not recognising rights as 'ends in themselves'.

The next criticism focusses on problems of calculation. This objection is clearly stated and illustrated, and then briefly countered by 'rule utilitarianism', which is not as vulnerable to this criticism. Rule utilitarianism (strong and weak) is also rejected, although this evaluation is not as well integrated with the supposed issue at hand (calculation). For example, the 'strong rule utilitarian' is committed to maximising utility in the long term, and so it is not clear how specific cases of a loss of happiness (or indeed life) counts against this. The problem with 'weak rule utilitarianism' is clearly stated, and better integrated with the general criticism.

The student now moves on to discuss hedonic utilitarianism: based on pleasure. No argument is offered from the standpoint of utilitarianism to suggest why the theory was ever thought plausible. Instead, the student applies Nozick's 'experience machine' thought experiment. This is accurate but it lacks detail and development.

The student responds to Nozick's 'experience machine' hypothesis from the standpoint of preference utilitarianism, which allows for such preferences as 'truth'. This is also rejected, however, because of the nature of some 'crazy preferences (eg for torture).

The conclusion summarises all the reasons utilitarianism is rejected, with 'human rights' emerging as the principal objection.

**19 marks**



## Student C

Hedonistic utilitarianism would claim that to maximise utility is to maximise happiness. This claim is ~~incoherent~~ incoherent for it is too difficult to empirically calculate happiness and because as humans we value other things beyond happiness.

However, non-hedonistic utilitarianism, though preference utilitarianism, is correct in its understanding of utility in that it is to ~~maximise~~ satisfy people's preferences. So, utilitarianism (non-hedonistic) is correct to say that it is morally right to maximise utility.

But Bentham proposes his quantitative ~~at~~ hedonistic utilitarianism with the notion that it is morally right to maximise utility. For Bentham, to maximise utility is to maximise happiness and to reduce pain, with Bentham going on to name 14 different 'families' of pleasure. His act utilitarianism is consequentialist, in that only the consequences of the act determines its moral worth, for example helping an old lady cross the street is morally good as it has reduced the pain in the world by ensuring that as a result of your action the old woman was not hit by a vehicle. Furthermore, it is a hedonistic theory, that happiness is the only good, and finally is egalitarian

in that every body's happiness is valued equally. An advantage of this is that it favours equality with everyone's happiness equal no matter sex, race, or religion, a laudable idea in the modern world. Bentham introduces his felicific calculus in order to provide some way of calculating which action would bring about the greatest happiness in a given situation. The calculus takes indifferent aspects of happiness/pain such as its intensities, duration and fecundity. Then, the action is scored against each factor and the higher the overall numerical value the greater the moral worth of the action. By using the felicific calculus there is the advantage of being able to have a justice system, punishing people who perform actions with painful consequences with the hedonistic calculus possibly acting as evidence. Therefore, Bentham's utilitarianism is hedonistic as it values happiness, is act as it focuses on the consequences of a specific act and is quantifiable as it seeks to create the greatest quantity of happiness possible. Therefore, this suggests that act utilitarians such as Bentham are correct when they say it is morally right to maximise utility.

However, Act utilitarianism is not without fault,

happiness which must be resolved in order to maintain the coherence of the theory. Most notably, the felicific calculus asks us to analyse the intensity of the pain/happiness but does not provide us with clear information as to how this may be done, as how intense the pain/happiness is is subjective to every person's own experiences. Say we could calculate the happiness reliably through the measurement of endorphin levels or some other method there still remains the problem of the felicific calculus being too long and bulky to use in everyday scenarios. Bentham seems to imply that we must always use the felicific calculus for every moral decision as there is no other way to calculate happiness in his theory. However, in the time it would take to calculate the pain/happiness caused as a consequence of me potentially helping an old lady cross the road it is too late and the old lady has crossed the road herself. ~~If~~ The felicific calculus simply just takes too long to use. This suggests that Bentham's act utilitarianism is incorrect due to problems in calculation and thus reopens the question of whether utilitarians are correct to suggest that maximising utility is morally correct.

In reply, Bentham could aim to save his theory from the problem of calculation by admitting that the selfish calculus is too bulky to use constantly for everyday scenarios. Instead, the selfish calculus is only intended to be 'kept in view' rather than strictly obeyed. This notion does seem to work to some extent as with the example of the old lady crossing the road we do not need to explicitly calculate the happiness/pain that will be as a consequence but rather by simply ~~keeping~~ 'keeping the selfish calculus in view' we are able to realise that rather quickly that helping the old lady cross the road leads to the greatest happiness rather than

road leads to the greatest happiness rather than need to explicitly calculate it. Bentham's reply appears to rectify the problem of calculation keeping his argument in favour and suggesting once more that utilitarians are correct when they say it is morally right to maximise utility.

In evaluation, act utilitarianism suggests that it is morally ~~is~~ right to maximise ~~the~~ utility with this utility corresponding to the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Although, I do not find Bentham's reply to the problem of ~~calculation~~ calculation adequate, with Bentham failing to explain when the hedonistic calculus should be ~~is~~ used in full and when it should only be 'kept in view'. Furthermore, the question still remains of how we could go about empirically testing the intensity or the security of the happiness/pain. Therefore, Act utilitarianism under Bentham ultimately fails as it ~~is~~ cannot provide an adequate ~~is~~ response to the problem of calculation. Thus, it is now unclear whether utilitarians are correct when they say that it is morally right to maximise utility.

Mill presents his own theory of utilitarianism that avoids the problematic nature of calculating happiness under Bentham. Mill's theory is known as hedonistic quantitative rule utilitarianism. It is similar to Bentham's in that it remains consequentialist (only the consequences determine the moral worth of an action) is egalitarian (everyone's happiness is equal) and is hedonistic (only valuing happiness). However, it differs from Bentham's act-centred utilitarianism ~~and~~ as instead of valuing the happiness created from ~~single~~ the consequences Mill reasons that we should follow those rules that if everyone followed would lead to the greatest happiness to the greatest number as a consequence. For example, the rule 'do not lie'

Should be followed as if everyone followed this me then the greatest happiness would be increased as a result. This has the advantage of allowing a robust justice system, even more so than with Bentham's utilitarianism, with punishments being handed to those who break these moral rules. Bentham's utilitarianism is also qualitative, valuing the quality of the happiness over the quantity of the happiness otherwise, as Mill puts it "Push-pin <sup>game</sup> and gambling ~~game~~ would be just as good as poetry." So, ~~Bentham~~ <sup>Mill</sup> splits acts of happiness into higher and lower pleasure.

Higher pleasures are more creative activities that require reason such as poetry, music, or drawing. Lower pleasures are our more animalistic tendencies such as eating, sleeping, sex etc. With Mill suggesting that as long as our lower ~~needs~~ needs are met some who is 'fully acquainted' with a higher pleasure will always pick it over a lower pleasure. So, Bentham's rule utilitarianism does not suffer from the problem of calculation as it concerns itself with rules not acts and as a result argues that utilitarianism are correct when ~~saying~~ saying that maximising utility is morally correct.

Although, Wozick would doubt the claim that morality is the advocating the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

Extra space as Nozick would argue that we value other things apart from happiness. Nozick asks us to imagine an experience machine, if we plug into the machine we will experience the most pleasurable/happiest life possible. However, if we plug into the machine it is a permanent transition and we would believe that the experience machine is reality. As utilitarianism holds that we only value happiness then we should all plug into the experience machine immediately, however, the majority of us wouldn't plug into the machine as we value something utilitarianism doesn't, to be in cognitive contact with reality. Therefore, suggesting that hedonistic forms of utilitarianism, (including rule) are incorrect as we value more than happiness. Thus suggesting that utilitarians are wrong to suggest that advocating the maximal utility is morally correct.

However, Preference utilitarianism under Singer is a form of non-hedonistic utilitarianism that provides an adequate answer to the experience machine and does not suffer from the problem of calculation. Preference utilitarianism holds that rather than advocating the greatest happiness for the greatest number



that instead we should aim to satisfy people's preferences, including people's preference not to be put in to Nozick's experience machine. This has the advantage of recognising our human preference to want to earn an award not just be given it to us to make us happy, so, preference utilitarianism solves Nozick's experience machine by valuing our preferences. Therefore, suggesting that a utilitarian is correct to say that it is morally correct to advocate the maximal utility if that utility represents our preferences. In conclusion, ~~both~~ rule and act utilitarianism both fail in their understandings of utility and act utilitarianism fails also owing to the problem of calculation. However, preference utilitarianism succeeds as a form of non-hedonistic utilitarianism suggesting that a utilitarian is correct to say that it is morally right to maximise utility as long as that utility corresponds with our preferences.

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## Commentary

This is a clear response in the form of an argument. Much of the content is detailed and it is mostly integrated. There is argument and counter-argument. There is also a weighting of argument, but not in a way that fully supports the conclusion. There is a lack of clarity in places, particularly in relation to the rationale for some of the judgments that are made. It belongs high in the 11–15 band.

The student's position is clear from the outset: they will be defending a 'preference' approach to maximising utility over a 'hedonic' approach. The charge of 'incoherence' is not precisely formulated here, but the objection to 'utility as happiness' is very clear.

Bentham's quantitative approach to maximising happiness is explained, accurately enough, and to their credit the student brings out its strength/appeal (eg it favours 'equality'). The problem of calculating utility in everyday situations is raised, and responded to from a Benthamite perspective (eg we only need to keep the calculus 'in view'). There then follows a considered paragraph which comes back to the problem of measuring things like 'intensity', although the alleged 'incoherence' of the position is still not clear.

Rule utilitarianism is introduced via Mill, and is said to avoid some of the problems faced by utilitarianism, and to provide an even better model for the justice system. There is some imprecision in the discussion of Bentham v Mill on the quantitative/qualitative forms of pleasure.

Nozick's 'experience machine' thought experiment is applied to the fundamental assumptions of any form of hedonic utilitarianism. Human beings, so this argument goes, desire other things, such as 'cognitive contact with reality.'

The preference utilitarianism of Singer is introduced as solving the problems posed by the 'experience machine' (we prefer to 'earn' our positive experiences) and calculation (although this is not so well explained). No objections at all are considered in relation to preference models of utility before a conclusion is reached.

In the conclusion, all hedonic conceptions of utility maximisation are rejected, while the conception of utility as preference satisfaction is affirmed. The reason this student did not score significantly higher (and they easily could) is because their affirmative position on utility emerged so late in the essay, and was subject to no critical evaluation.

**14 marks**

## Student D

In this essay, I will aim to state why <sup>utilitarians are</sup> ~~'utilitarianism'~~ is incorrect to say that it is morally right to maximise utility through looking at criticisms of utilitarianism, such as it being a consequentialist theory and the tyranny of the majority.

Utilitarianism is the moral ~~re~~ realist, naturalist theory in which states that we should maximise pleasure and minimise pain. The principle of utility (that an action should bring about the most amount of pleasure and minimum amount of pain) is measured through the utility calculus through 7 measurements, such as duration of the pleasure and intensity of the pleasure.

A strength to this is that the principle of utility aims

to provide the maximum pleasure for all, and so it is morally right to maximise utility as it is making as many people happy as possible. ~~★~~ last page

However, the utility calculus is not a mathematical formula ~~ff~~ which we can calculate and so there may be problems with the calculation, and therefore we cannot be certain through the utility calculus that it is morally right to maximise utility.

Bentham believed that all pleasure is quantitative, and so all pleasures are equal.

Whereas Mill believed that pleasure/happiness is qualitative, and so ~~ff~~ not all pleasures are the same. ~~He created~~

A strength to Mill's <sup>qualitative</sup> ~~quantitative~~ utilitarianism is that it takes

all individual pleasures into account and so it can be to the individuals needs, meaning it may be correct to say that it is morally right to maximise utility as Mill is ~~quantitatively~~ trying to maximise pleasure by qualitatively measuring pleasures.

On the other ~~hand~~<sup>hand,</sup> a main criticism of utilitarianism is that it is a consequentialist theory of ethics. This means that it only looks at the consequences of an action. This is a weakness as it ignores the intentions of the individual. For example, if a mad scientist poisons the water of a town in order to kill the residents but actually ends up curing cancer, it is only the consequence that will be valued. And so utilitarians may not be correct in saying that it is morally

right to maximise utility as ignoring the intention means that a good intention is not always there (if the intention was to maximise pain, for example) and so just because the consequence of the action was good does not mean that the intention was morally right and so it may not be correct to say that it is morally right to maximise utility.

Another reason why it may not be correct for a utilitarian ~~to~~ to say that it is morally right to maximise utility is because the nature of happiness is subjective. What may bring happiness to one person (for example, going to the cinema) may not ~~be~~ bring happiness to another person (for example, if the person is blind they may not want to go to the cinema). As a result,

it may not be morally right to maximise utility due to the subjective nature of happiness, therefore meaning that utilitarians may not be correct when they say it is morally right to maximise utility.

However, if the act makes the majority happy then it may (for a utilitarian) be morally right to maximise utility as it is bringing about the most amount of happiness for the most amount of ~~the~~ people.

But, this may lead to the tyranny of the majority. The tyranny of the majority is when only the majority's happiness is taken into account and the minority's unhappiness is ignored. An example of this is in Nazi Germany when the Jewish faced persecution. This created more pleasure than

pain (for the Germans) and so the happiness (or unhappiness) of the Jewish people was overlooked, creating the problem of tyranny of the majority. Therefore utilitarianism would be incorrect, in this case, in saying that it is morally right to maximise utility.

In conclusion, after weighing up the evidence of strengths, such as the hedonic calculus, and weaknesses such as the tyranny of the majority, it is ~~shown that~~ evident that utilitarians are incorrect to say that it is morally right to maximise utility.



★ A further strength of the utility calculus is that it can be applied across cultures as ~~these~~ this calculation is not culture based and so

Extra space through using the utility calculus it may be correct for utilitarians to say that it is morally right to maximise utility as it works across cultures, creating the maximum <sup>amount</sup> ~~amount~~ of pleasure for the most amount of people.

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## Commentary

Here is a response in the form of an argument. Relevant points are raised, but there is a lack of detail throughout in terms of knowledge, understanding, and evaluation. There is also imprecision/lack of clarity in some of the points raised. A conclusion is reached, but it is not particularly well supported. This belongs high up in the 6–10 band.

The student briefly indicates their intention to reject the maximisation of utility as the correct right moral principle, and they raise two objections – that it is a ‘consequentialist theory’ and encourages the ‘tyranny of the majority’.

Utilitarianism is characterised accurately but very generally: ‘realist’, ‘naturalist’ etc. The student focusses on the imperative to maximise ‘pleasure’ and minimise ‘pain’. There is an attempt to engage in positive evaluation, but the student initially does little more here than restate the nature of the theory in approving terms. The point about the ‘cross cultural’ applicability of utilitarianism is clear, however.

The problem of ‘calculation’ is briefly raised, before a distinction is made between Bentham and Mill on quantitative and qualitative pleasure. There is an attempt to sympathetically evaluate Mill’s qualitative approach, but the supposed strengths are not clearly stated.

Two objections are then considered: 1) overlooking the importance of intentions; 2) the subjective nature of happiness. Both are clearly stated, but only the second receives a response, which speaks in favour of maximising majority happiness. This, however, raises the spectre of the ‘tyranny of the majority’, which is clearly illustrated. No response is offered.

The conclusion identifies a strength (the ‘hedonic calculus’) and a weakness (‘tyranny of the majority’), and asserts that utilitarians are ‘incorrect’. Any weighing of the arguments in this conclusion is implicit.

**9 marks**