

Subject: *Religious Studies*

Exam Board: *EDEXCEL*

Welcome to A-level RS. We are delighted that you are considering Ethics and Philosophy as an option in Year 12. To demonstrate your commitment to the course and to prepare you for September, you must complete the following tasks to the best of your ability. These tasks are compulsory and must be completed prior to your first RS lesson in Year 12.

We expect you spend at least 3 hours completing the tasks outlined in the bridging work. The activities have been designed to help you begin to develop some of the key skills you will need for A-level Religious Studies.

Learning Objectives:

- To develop a basic understanding of the key concepts surrounding the 'problem of evil' topic.
- To learn the difference between a teleological and deontological approach to ethics.
- To summarise the topic of Utilitarianism to 10 key points.
- To develop research skills by using materials provided and additional sources to show understanding of some key principles .
- To compare the theory of Utilitarianism to an issue in contemporary society.

Contacts for Support:



Mrs Lindsay – please email via Insight or pop into room 2



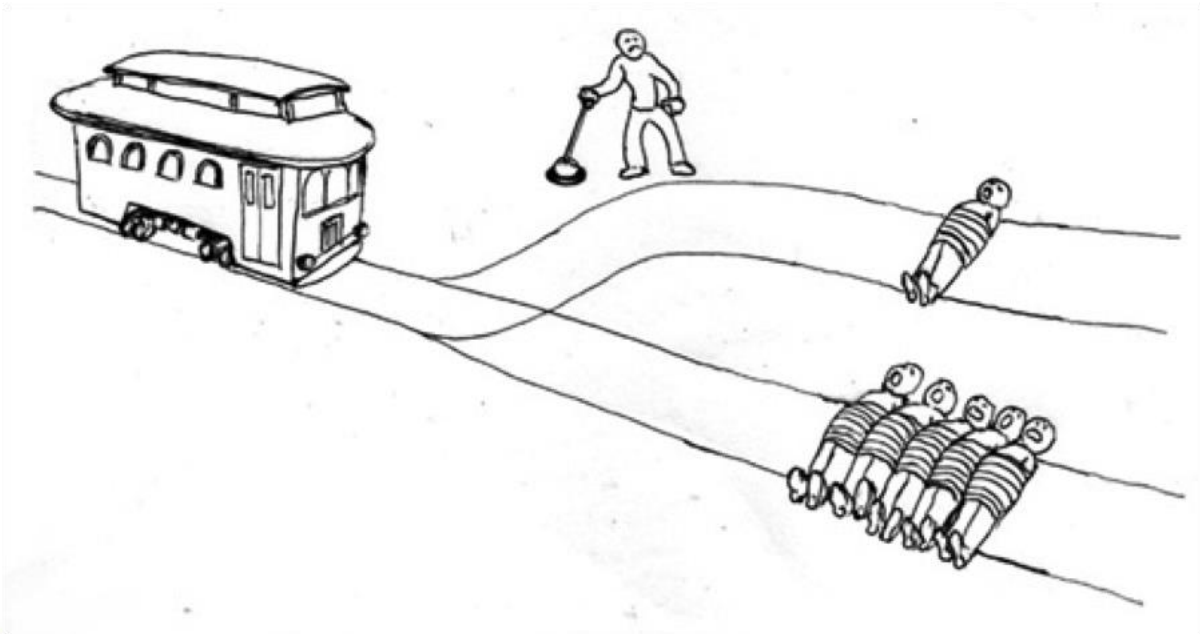
Mr Scott - please email via Insight or pop into room 3



Ethics - Understanding right and wrong!

Ethics is the study of ideas and theories that help us to make choices. Often these relate to rules or principles that are adopted by society

Look at the picture below and annotate on the post-it note what you think it is showing. Write down any key questions you think this is suggesting.



Task 2: Researching an ethical theory

Read through the extract below and reduce the theory of Utilitarianism into ten concise sentences on flow chart provided.

Utilitarianism...

...the greatest happiness for the greatest number

The Greatest Happiness Principle, stated above, is at the heart of a number of ethical theories that fall under the umbrella of ‘utilitarianism’. Utilitarianism is an incredibly useful, and increasingly popular, ethical position. Its many benefits are matched with some serious flaws. However, modern utilitarianists have repeatedly adapted the theory rather than discard it. Peter Singer is one example of a utilitarian whose ideas have gained great popularity in recent years although it was first coined by David Hume.



Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)

Bentham equated happiness with pleasure and the absence of pain. His scientific mind led him to believe that the study of ethics could be undertaken in a practical way, carefully measuring the possible consequences or outcomes of an action before deciding which choice to take.

On the positive side, Bentham’s theories led to extensive social reform affecting Parliament, criminal law, the jury system, prisons, savings banks, cheap postage etc, etc. What was revolutionary about Bentham’s theory was that it resulted in all people being considered when making laws. His felicific calculus (also called the ‘hedonic’ or ‘utility’ calculus) was helpful in determining how to measure different amounts of pleasure:

- REMOTENESS - how near it is
- PURITY - how free from pain it is
- RICHNESS - to what extent it will lead to other pleasures
- INTENSITY - how powerful it is
- CERTAINTY - how likely it is to result
- EXTENT - how many people it affects
- DURATION - how long it lasts



There are some circumstances when you can usefully use the calculus as a guide to determining the overall effects of a course of action, such as in choosing how to spend lottery money, or in deciding how to prioritise medical procedures in a hospital. However, many of our moral decisions do not have predictable or measurable outcomes at all. It is unclear what counts as pleasure or how to equate pleasure and pain.

There is also something instinctively wrong with judging the morality of an action by its outcome - a person motivated solely by greed might choose a course of action that happens to make the greatest number of people happy. Does this make him a good person? Even more concerning is the possibility of sadists whose pleasure at torturing others is so great that this in itself makes their actions good. The theory seems to support the exploitation and abuse of minority groups if it pleases the ruling majority.



John Stuart Mill (1806-73)

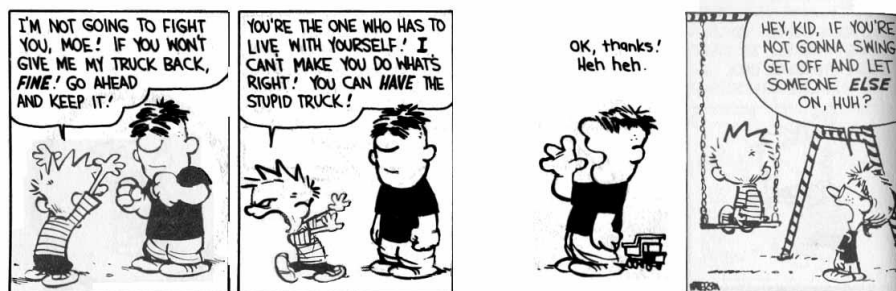


Mill believed that quality was more important than quantity when it came to pleasure. For example, the pleasures of the mind are far superior to the gratification of the body's desires. This deals with the problem of sadistic torturers, as their pleasure is of a significantly lower kind.

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

The problem is, how do you decide whether white-water rafting is a higher-level pleasure than listening to Beethoven played live or eating an Indian takeaway?

The theory seeks to reduce everything to a consideration of happiness, when moral decisions are actually a lot more complicated than that. It also still allows for great injustices to be carried out just as long as the greatest good is served. The theory went on to receive further modifications.





Who originally coined the phrase? Who sings its praises now?

What is the principle behind the theory?

What social change influenced the theory?

Which two scholars is it most associated with?

What is a teleological theory based on?

What is the hedonic calculus? E.g.?

What does the word utility mean in this theory?

What is meant by the word hedonism?

Are there any problems with measuring pleasure?

If something makes us happy is it going to be good for us?

Assisted Dying Bill: MPs reject 'right to die' law

By James Gallagher & Philippa Roxby Health reporters, BBC News website
11 September 2015



MPs have rejected plans for a right to die in England and Wales in their first vote on the issue in almost 20 years.

In a free vote in the Commons, 118 MPs were in favour and 330 against plans to allow some terminally ill adults to end their lives with medical supervision.

In a passionate debate, some argued the plans allowed a "dignified and peaceful death" while others said they were "totally unacceptable".

Pro-assisted dying campaigners said the result showed MPs were out of touch.

Under the proposals, people with fewer than six months to live could have been prescribed a lethal dose of drugs, which they had to be able to take themselves. Two doctors and a High Court judge would have needed to approve each case.

Dr Peter Saunders, campaign director of Care Not Killing, welcomed the rejection of the legislation, saying the current law existed to protect those who were sick, elderly, depressed or disabled.

He said: "It protects those who have no voice against exploitation and coercion, it acts as a powerful deterrent to would-be abusers and does not need changing."

But Sarah Wootton, the chief executive of Dignity in Dying, said it was an "outrage" that MPs had gone against the views of the majority of the public who supported the bill.

*How does this article link to the topic of
Utilitarianism?*

Notes: