**Utilitarianism – Revision**

**Possible questions:**

**Explain the theory:**

* Describe and explain the main principles of Utilitarianism (or specific features e.g. Mill’s Utilitarianism)
* Explain the main differences between Act and Rule Utilitarianism (or other variants)

**Apply the theory:**

* Explain a Utilitarian approach to issues raised by fertility treatment (or any other issue)

**Evaluate the theory:**

* **Explain the main strengths of a Utilitarian ethical system (or e.g. Bentham’s Utilitarianism)**
* What are Utilitarianism’s main weaknesses?
* To what extent is Utilitarianism a useful method of making decisions about euthanasia? (or any other issue)

**Explain the theory:**

* The principle of utility (teleological, consequentialist)
* Bentham (Hedonism, Hedonic Calculus, quantitative)
* Mill (qualitative, higher/lower pleasures, individual sovereignty)
* Act/Rule Utilitarianism
* Preference Utilitarianism (Hare, Singer) and other advances

**Evaluate the theory:**

**Strengths**

* Makes the world a better place (Bentham/Mill were reformers who made positive changes)
* Practical and useful (this is the way lottery money is distributed or hospital budgets are spent) and easy to use
* Flexible – allows for the fact that people find happiness in different ways in other societies
* Overcomes problems inherent in deontological ethics (what do you do if two rules clash?)
* Easy to apply, and intuitive – if it upsets people, don’t do it, but why is it wrong if no one gets hurt?
* Fair – treats everyone’s pleasure as equal, challenging elitism and any form of favouritism

**Weaknesses**

* Consequentialism is inherently flawed – it is easy to think of examples of wrong actions that happen to lead to good consequences by chance
* Hedonism is wrong – just because someone enjoys an activity (e.g. looking at paedophile pornography) this doesn’t make it right, even if no-one else was affected
* Unpredictable – we cannot know what will happen, so can never know what the right course of action will be
* Incalculable – what I do affects so many people, I couldn’t add up all the effects even if I could see the future
* Immeasurable – you can’t put a value on our feelings. If only I was affected, e.g. by going to a concert or buying a CD, I still couldn’t put a number on the pleasure I would feel either way
* It is unfair – it justifies doing horrible things to innocent people for the ‘greater good’
* Naturalistic fallacy – just because people desire pleasure, this doesn’t make pleasure ‘desirable’. Or, why should we maximise people’s preferences just because they have them?