**‘Explain Bentham’s hedonic calculus as a means of measuring pleasure’**

Bentham’s hedonic calculus is a way of measuring pleasure as an aid to ethical decision making. It is a Teleological argument that assesses the end result by assessing the elements of a particular situation. There are seven elements of the calculus which aim to seek the greatest happiness principle, which is searching for the greatest happiness for the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people and assessing the best course of action to take. This is based on the idea of utilitarianism. The idea from Bentham is Hedonic, which is from Greek; ‘hedone’ (pleasure), which is the view that pleasure is the chief ‘good’. Bentham suggested that we are motivated by pleasure and pain.

One element of the hedonic calculus is Duration. Bentham suggested that the pleasure gained from a situation and a decision could be measured by the duration; how long it will last for. For example if we were to look at a situation of nuclear war, Bentham would suggest that we would have to consider how long the desired result would last for. If we were to attack another country with nuclear weapons, would the pleasure or positive measures gained be long lasting? The longer lasting the pleasure will be as an end result, the more likely that pleasure will be achieved for the greatest number, and therefore this can help us to assess the ethical dilemma in the right way. This suggests that this element can be useful in assessing an ethical situation.

Another element of the hedonic calculus is extent. Bentham suggested that when we consider an ethical decision, we should consider how widespread it will be. For example, if we look at the common ethical dilemma of a train junction, where one path will lead to the death of 100 innocent people, and the other will lead to the death of you own family members. In this situation, the extent element would suggest that we should save the 100 people, as they are greater in number, and therefore, the extent of the pleasure will be greater if this decision were made. Therefore, we can suggest that the extent element can help us in reaching a conclusion in this situation.

A third element of the calculus is certainty. Bentham suggested that pleasures that resulted from a decision will be better if they are certain to happen. For example, if we were decide if we should torture a captured terrorist to try and get information from it, Bentham suggests that it could be the right course of action if it were certain that this would lead to lives being saved. Therefore Bentham would say that the more certain an outcome is, the more it is the most desirable.

Another element of the calculus is to what extent other pleasures will follow. Bentham would suggest that if the pleasure were a ‘one off’ then it would be less desirable. For example, in a situation of war, if we were going to attack another country to destroy a dictatorship government, then it is likely that other pleasures will follow for the people in that country. For example, better government, more rights, better living conditions etc. Therefore, in this situation we can suggest that a short term period of disruption and pain will lead to long term gain and more elements of pleasure that will continue as a result of this action.

In conclusion we can suggest that the calculus is good at helping us determine the greatest happiness for the greatest number in situations such as those shown above. We can also apply it to contemporary situations when seeking the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

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| Identify the PEEL elements in at least 2 paragraphs |
| Are there certain examples that are more suited to specific elements of the calculus? |
| How could you evaluate the usefulness of the calculus? |
| CHALLENGE: How could you improve this answer? |