

Kant

b) How useful is Kant's theory of duty as a basis for morality? (17marks)

Kant's theory is arguably not very useful; there appear to be a number of difficulties with Kant's Deontological Ethics. We can understand that allowing no exceptions in using people **merely** as a means to an end places restriction on the behaviour of an individual. We can see that during a war for example it may be politically necessary to sacrifice an individual for the good of the majority. With Kant's theory this is not allowed creating great restrictions. Fundamentally from this it is clear and obvious that Kant's theory cannot be and is not well suited to world politics, where important decisions would need to be made. **What you're really saying is that politics is teleological. I'm not sure you've convinced me – can you think of an example where an innocent person is sacrificed that we'd all feel comfortable with? Maybe you should present this as a possible criticism rather than being 'clear and obvious'.**

Other than this there is other potential problems and flaws in Kants argument, there are cases when duties conflict. An example for this would be if a hospital were to be run on a fixed budget. There would be decisions to be decided about how many patients of each illness you could treat. Also with a fixed budget there would come a time when the money would run out. Decisions of who receives the treatment would have to be thought over. With Kant it would be hard for him using his rules, to make the decisions necessary. **Again a concrete example would be useful, and why not use one from the areas studied? What about killing Mary to save Jodie?** WD Ross used the idea of these flaws, and later adapted the Kantian approach and introduced the idea of having a hierarchy. He believes there can be no moral absolutes. Ross would argue that **they're are prima facie duties or obligations that** appear to be absolutes for example, not to steal, lie etc. However if two come into conflict it is obvious that you cannot follow both obligations. By using a hierarchy system you can determine which is the greater obligation, hence then it is our absolute duty to follow that.

(The weakness of universalisability is the problem of different but similar moral dilemmas. The question can be raised as to, are any two moral dilemmas the same? Are murder, **killing in** self-defence and defence of the realm all to be covered by the same maxim about taking human life or can some types of killing be justified? A challenge to moral deliberation is that Kant rejects that you could look to consequences and act out of compassion; this is how a teleological thinker would think. Kant instead proposes a reason-based case for moral behaviour.)

On the other hand however, you could argue that the categorical imperative is the one set of powerful moral principles that prohibit acts that would be considered wrong, for example, murder, violence and sexual abuse. They are a logical approach to how the world should be run without making it an intolerable society. The set of rules applies to everyone and creates respect for the human life. You can divide Kant's contribution in 3 ways. Firstly Kant creates the distinction between duty and inclination. He provides insight into the fact that morality is more than personal preference, even if we are more inclined to do what benefits ourselves individually. Secondly he challenges the Utilitarian approach that if you kill one to save a majority, you are performing the correct action, as it is bringing about the greatest good. Kant says that you cannot promote happiness if it undermines the happiness of another individual. Finally Kant's theory provides individuals with human worth. He makes it clear that humans can only ever be treated as end in themselves, not as means. Humans therefore cannot be killed as an act to bring about the greater good for a

majority. They are unique individuals with just as much right to life as other human beings.

Katharine, you show the examiner at the end that you are aware of the limitations of criticisms of Kant – your final paragraph is well written and contains several big ideas. You should re-read the criticisms of Kant though. I think you need to include specific examples to make your points clearly. However, overall this is well written and you still get an A!