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At the most basic level, according to consequentialists, right actions maximize good consequences. The simple intuitive idea motivating consequentialism is that a good person makes the world a better place and, ideally, we should all aim to do as much good as possible.

If morality involves promoting good consequences, we need a theory of the good. What makes one outcome better than another? There are three major theories of the good that correspond to different forms of consequentialism.

The classical utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill represents the most well known form of consequentialism (see UTILITARIANISM; BENTHAM, JEREMEY; MILL, JOHN STUART). Classical utilitarians are consequentialist with a particular theory of the good: the good is happiness, where happiness is simply the experience of pleasure and the absence of pain. This theory of the good, which identifies happiness with pleasure, is called hedonism (see HEDONISM). Of course, unlike egoists, utilitarians aim to maximize the happiness of all people (or all beings capable of feeling pleasure or pain). Thus for utilitarians, the goal of life is happiness and maximizing the happiness of all provides the standard for morality. Other utilitarians, like R. M. Hare (see HARE, R. M.), have defended alternative conceptions of the good. For example, the good as the satisfaction of desires or preferences (see DESIRE THEORIES OF THE GOOD). On the other hand, other consequentialists reject hedonism and

desire satisfaction theories of the good, and instead favor an objective, pluralist conception of the good (see VALUE PLURALISM). A value pluralist can count many different types of things as intrinsically good, including happiness, fellowship, relationships, creativity, art, rational nature, even ecosystems. In contrast, the desire-satisfaction theorists argue that these things are all good because we desire them. The value pluralists counter that we value things and desire them because we judge that they are objectively good.

We need not settle these disputes about the nature of the good. The important point is that consequentialism, per se, is not committed to any particular theory of the good. Whatever you think is intrinsically good, consequentialism maintains that morality should maximize intrinsic goodness.

Although the basic idea that the right maximizes the good is a quick and easy summary statement of consequentialism, more refinement is necessary to adequately capture the essence of consequentialism. In addition, there are several common objections to consequentialism that must be addressed. First, consequentialism has been widely criticized for the subordination of rights and duties to the maximization of the good. If the right promotes the good, it seems that there are no constraints on the means we may use to promote the good. It follows that no action is ruled out as a matter of principle alone. In contrast to consequentialist theories, moral theories that defend the intrinsic rightness and wrongness of actions are deontological theories (see DEONTOLOGY; ROSS, W.D.). Much of the debate between consequentialists and deontologists is focused on the justification and status of rights and duties. Second, consequentialism is potentially a very demanding moral theory. We are required to maximize the good, and this requirement seems to leave little room for personal projects, amusements, and relationships. Consequentialists must also respond to this objection. Before we can adequately

address these two important objections, however, we need to explore more fully the structure of consequentialism.

Refinement and Clarifications

1. Actual or Expected Consequences.

The actual, long term, total consequences of our actions are uncertain. Good intentions do not always lead to good results. For example, if one sees an infant fall into a pond, one should jump to the rescue. Saving a life clearly seems like it promotes the good and is thus the right thing to do. Yet some might object that, for all we really know, the infant could grow up to be the next Hitler. If I save a baby that grows up to be Hitler, my action actually causes great harm. Would the consequentialist conclude that my act was wrong?

In deciding what to do, clearly the best action that a person can do is to choose the option that seems most likely to maximize the good. Some consequentialists thus distinguish the actual consequences (objective rightness) and the expected consequences of actions (subjective rightness). The best actual outcome is the goal and choosing the best expected outcome is the means to this goal. As a theoretical matter, we could define rightness in terms of objective rightness. It would follow that an agent acts wrongly when they blamelessly and unknowingly save baby Hitler. However, it is clearly counter-intuitive to say that saving a little baby is wrong. To call an action wrong implies that it is blameworthy and thus subjectively wrong (Mill 1861). Although the objectively best action actually leads to the best consequences, we can only judge ourselves and others from the subjective perspective of what someone can know and foresee. Therefore most consequentialists focus on rightness from the agent's subjective perspective. It is

the tendency of actions to advance the good that really matters: the right action is the available option that, as far as the agent can see, tends to promote the most overall good.

2. Standard of Rightness & Decision-Making Procedures.

It is helpful to distinguish consequentialism, as a standard of rightness, from the day-to-day decision-making procedures that guide us through our complex lives. Consequentialism is first and foremost a standard of rightness (Bales 1971). Right actions maximize the good, but this does not imply that we should spend all of our time trying to calculate the best possible available option. One thing that is quite clear is that endless calculating without acting is self-defeating. It does not take much reflection to see that too much reflection will itself have bad consequences. Calculating options is a kind of action, and while we calculate options we are not doing any good. How much time and effort should consequentialists spend calculating the best option? The answer, of course, is determined by the costs and benefits of calculating options. We should only deliberate when doing so is likely to lead to better consequences. In most situations, we have our own prior experience and, as Mill argued, the past history of the human race to help guide us in quickly judging the tendencies of actions (Mill 1861).

This is a general truth that applies equally to pursuing any end. Consider, for example, playing tennis or making dinner. The best way to win a tennis match is to be fully absorbed in the flow of the game. Good players have general strategies, and internalize habits, that help them play their best game. Similarly, planning dinner allows for more ongoing reflection, but here too one does not want to over-think the menu. Usually, one considers some obvious options and decides, perhaps even somewhat impulsively. Over calculating will bring little likely gain and is thus not worth the effort.

The distinction between decision-making procedures and a standard of rightness is analogous to these common features of ordinary decision-making. We will usually do more good internalizing a moral code; that is, by habitually following rules that tend to have good consequences. For a consequentialist, common sense moral rules and principles, common virtues of character, and role specific responsibilities are still the tofu and potatoes of morality. The consequentialist adds that, if common sense morality is indeed justified, then the moral rules, principles, virtues, and responsibilities work as part of a larger collective moral system that tends to maximize the good of all.

These internalized intuitive moral principles shape our moral judgments and usually directly guide actions (see INTUITIONS, MORAL). Nonetheless, the primary principle of morality is still consequentialist. The consequentialist standard of rightness itself guides our critical thinking about our more intuitive moral thinking (Hare 1981). In this way, direct consequentialist reasoning is a higher-order decision procedure for critiquing and choosing our more day-to-day decision procedures. For example, as a rule, we should keep our promises. If we ask, "why should we keep promises?" the consequentialist answer is that keeping promises is crucial to social cooperation and we all do better when we can trust on each other. In this way, the practice of promise keeping promotes the good. (In addition, there are common exceptions to moral rules and consequentialism provides a justification for the exceptions to the rules too.)

3. Is Consequentialism Self-Effacing?

It is possible that it would be best, if we never thought critically about what is best. If everyone just followed common sense moral rules, and never second-guessed intuitive morality, this strategy might better maximize the good. After all, since in general people are not very good critical thinkers, we have reason to stick to time-tested moral intuitions. Is it a problem if

consequentialism recommends that we don't engage in critical consequentialist thinking? There is controversy over the answer to this question. Consequentialists argue that the right-making characteristic, the standard that determines whether actions are right or wrong, can be consequentialist even if we don't usually engage in direct consequentialist deliberation. The supposition that we should never evaluate moral rules by directly thinking about their consequences, however, is implausible: some critical thinking is clearly a good thing and a source of moral progress.

But consider a more bizarre example. Imagine that there is a gas that we can release into the atmosphere that will make us all reliable deontologists who reject consequentialism on principle. A deontologist rejects consequentialism and argues that day-to-day duties, like promise keeping and fidelity, are intrinsically right and thus basic principles of morality. For the sake of argument, let's assume that as dutiful deontologists, we would actually better maximize the good than if we were consequentialists. The idea is that we will do more good if we believe in the intrinsic rightness of moral actions. It seems to follow that consequentialists should release the gas that makes us all deontologists (who unknowingly, but in fact, maximize the good). A theory that recommends that you should not believe in it is called a "self-effacing" theory. In this imaginary example, consequentialism would be self-effacing. The right thing for consequentialists to do is to release the deontological gas so that they are no longer consequentialists. Some deontologists consider this to be a serious objection to consequentialism. The objection is that a moral theory is supposed to justify and guide actions. They argue that a standard of rightness that does not actually guide actions is not really a moral theory at all. If a theory is self-effacing it does not guide actions, and so it fails as a moral theory.

How should a consequentialist reply? First, the assumption behind this objection seems to be that it will somehow weaken our resolve, or otherwise do some harm, for us to know that consequentialism provides the justification for deontological rules. Consequentialists reject this assumption. They argue that consequentialism provides a standard of rightness and a basis for intuitive deontological rules, a basis which they would otherwise lack. Providing a clear basis for secondary rules does not weaken the authority of moral intuitions; it strengthens them by providing a basis other than "it just seems right to me!" Indeed, consequentialists emphasize that we have independent reasons for doubting the reliability and self-evidence of immediate intuitive moral judgments, as they are clearly culturally relative and subject to significant framing effects (Sinnott-Armstrong 2008). Without further justification, we should not trust our moral intuitions. (Kantian deontologists, as we will see, offer alternative justifications of common moral intuitions.)

Nonetheless, the deontological gas example does show that in principle consequentialism could be fully self-effacing. It is unclear, however, why this is an objection to consequentialism, rather than simply an implication. Indeed, consequentialist theories clearly distinguish between the acceptance conditions and the truth conditions of a moral theory. The self-effacing objection assumes that these must be the same, and therefore this objection actually begs the question against consequentialism (Railton 1984).

4. Act & Rule Consequentialism

The distinction between consequentialism as a standard of rightness and decision-making procedures should not be confused with the distinction between act consequentialism and rule consequentialism. According to rule consequentialists, acts are right if they are permitted by the set of rules the acceptance of which, by the bulk of the community, will tend to maximize the

good. For rule consequentialists, rightness is determined by the optimal moral code rather than the optimal act. Most consequentialists, however, are act consequentialists who also recognize that, even though the standard of rightness is the direct maximization of the good, the best decision-making procedure is more like rule consequentialism; that is, the best strategy for maximizing the good is following rules and developing virtues that work overall to promote as much good as possible (see VIRTUE ETHICS; For a defense of Rule Consequentialism, see Hooker 2000 and Parfit forthcoming).

5. Moral Relativism and Pluralism

Different cultures have developed different moral systems, and in many cases these distinct moral systems each do a comparable job promoting the good. At the level of complex moral codes, with distinct evolved cultural practices, we should expect to find a good deal of moral pluralism. Distinct moral codes, with different sets of rules and virtues, may be roughly equivalent in promoting the good. Note that this type of moral pluralism is not moral relativism (see RELATIVISM, MORAL). For a consequentialist there is an objective standard of rightness (even though the optimal moral code is often difficult to ascertain). If our moral code does not promote the good of all, we should try to improve it. In addition, as circumstances change, whether it is technological change, ecological change, or social change, old familiar moral principles may need to give way to new and better ones.

To sum up, consequentialism is a theory of the right which evaluates the rightness of actions, rules, virtues and responsibilities in terms of the expected overall best consequences. In principle, there may be a uniquely best action sanctioned by an optimal moral code. In actual practice, however, the right action must be determined by the available evidence, and it will also depend on the particular circumstances and cultural practices. Although consequentialism does

not provide the absolutism that some might identify with a moral theory, consequentialists argue that more modest contingency and contextualism of consequentialist-based moral rules is what we should expect of a moral theory.

Distributive Justice and Distribution-Sensitive Consequentialism

What is the consequentialist standard of a just society? In one of the more influential objections to classical utilitarianism, John Rawls argues that utilitarianism cannot adequately accommodate our more egalitarian intuitions about distributive justice (see RAWLS, JOHN; JUSTICE). Consider this simple example: Person A is extremely happy - to provide an easy reference, let's say A is a 10 on a scale of 1 to 10. Person B is just doing better than miserable – again for easy reference, B is a 2 on the same scale. Given these stipulations, the total overall good is 12 and the average good is 6. Now assume that in a different scenario both A and B are 5s; where a 5 is a reasonably good and satisfying life. Rawls argues that our sense of distributive justice and fairness implies that the more equal state of affairs is the more just and right, even if it is not the overall best in terms of total or average value. According to Rawls, if you did not know whether you are person A or person B, you would choose the 5/5 split instead of the highest average or total aggregate good. This suggests that it is not just the overall aggregate good that matters; in addition, the distribution of well-being also matters.

Recall that consequentialism, unlike utilitarianism, is compatible with any theory of the good. In response to Rawls' criticism of utilitarianism, some consequentialists defend distribution-sensitive theories of the good. For these consequentialists, the right promotes the good, but the best state of affairs is sensitive to the distribution of the good. The overall

goodness of outcomes is not simply a result of the total aggregate sum of goods but it also depends on the distribution of goods.

Rawls argues that from an impartial perspective (where we are hypothetically uncertain of whether we will be rich or poor), we would rationally choose principles of justice that only deviate from an equal distribution of goods when doing so works to the advantage of the least well-off representative person (see DIFFERENCE PRINICIPLE). While Rawls defends an absolute priority for the least well-off, a more moderate form of distributive consequentialism, called prioritarianism, defends a weighted priority principle, where we give disproportionate weight to helping the less well-off but not absolute priority (see PRIORITARIANISM). According to prioritarian consequentialism, we should balance the greater claim of the least well-off with the magnitude of the benefits in question. For example, a large benefit to the slightly better-off might result in a better overall state of affairs than would result from a very small benefit to the worst-off. Imagine that, instead of a 5/5 split, the distribution could be 4 & 8 (and again we have an equal chance of being in either position). Although less equal, some argue that the 4/8 scenario is better than the 5/5 scenario.

The idea behind prioritarian consequentialism is that, even if the total aggregate good is thereby lessened, the world is a better place when those worst-off are made better-off. Other consequentialists, however, argue instead that distributive concerns are better captured by emphasizing the declining marginal utility of goods: the more of a good that one has, the less useful is each additional unit of that good. This is easy to see in the case of income. An additional ten thousand dollars a year, for example, would make a much bigger difference in the quality of one's life to a person earning twenty thousand per year than it would to someone earning one hundred thousand dollars per year. In general, other things equal, a more equitable

distribution of goods lead to higher aggregate levels of happiness. Furthermore, these consequentialists argue that it is the disparate impact of the declining marginal utility of goods that provides the basis and justification of a more egalitarian conception of distributive justice. A more equal distribution of social goods, other things equal, produces better overall aggregate outcomes. Of course, all is not equal. If all goods were distributed equally, without any regard to effort or ability, we would undermine the economic incentives to develop our talents and work hard at our jobs. These consequentialists thus conclude that we must balance the need for economic incentives and declining marginal utility of goods in deciding on principles of distributive justice.

Distributive justice is a complex, rich and interesting topic. Some consequentialists argue that our intuitions about justice are best captured by a more complex distribution-sensitive, prioritarian theory of the good. Others argue that the declining marginal utility of goods, combined with the equally important need for economic incentives, provide an explanation and justification for our complex intuitions about justice. The point for now is not to settle these questions about distributive justice, but to recognize that there are both direct and **i**ndirect approaches open to consequentialists.

Backward-Looking Moral Reasons: Promise Keeping

There are two essential features of consequentialism: an overarching commitment to impartiality and a seemingly exclusively forward-looking moral structure. Moral reasons, however, are often partial and backward-looking. They are responsive to what has happened and not just to what will happen. Consider the duty to keep one's promises, and more generally, to honor one's commitments. If on Monday I agree to meet you Tuesday at noon for lunch, then on

Tuesday I have a reason to be at the café at noon because I agreed on Monday. The agreement made earlier, and not just the future consequences, provides me with a reason for action. Meeting you for lunch on Tuesday at noon is not weighed impartially against all of the options open to me. Leaving aside some extraordinary circumstance, it doesn't matter if I could promote better overall consequences at noon doing something else, I should go to lunch because I promised. Similarly, when we punish someone, it should be in response to what they did and not just because of the good that might come of it. When we help a friend in need, it is because they are already our friend and not simply because it is a fine opportunity to help someone that happens to be in need. In general, our relationships, jobs, and agreements all provide us with particular reasons to do things for particular people, and these reasons look as much to the past as they do to the future. How does consequentialism accommodate backward looking moral reasons?

To understand the consequentialist reply, we must distinguish between a promise and a prediction. Imagine that a student approaches a professor after class and asks if they can meet tomorrow to discuss the nature of a promise. The teacher might respond, "Sure, I am usually in my office at noon tomorrow. If I happen to be there and free when you arrive, I will be happy to meet with you." In responding in this matter, the teacher makes a prediction but there is no promise or commitment. The professor has not suggested that he or she will make a special effort to be available to the student. The student will likely expect more of a commitment, and indeed might respond, "Can I make an appointment?" If we do make an appointment, we both do more than predict our future behavior; we imply that we will make a special effort to be available. Even though these reasons are defeasible (unexpected circumstances may override and justify breaking a promise or appointment), promises and other commitments provide us with particular

reasons to act that we otherwise would not have. Although commonplace and mundane, this type of behavior coordination is essential to our complex social life.

Where does this leave us in thinking about consequentialism? The objection was that consequentialism is essentially forward looking and so it cannot account for the backward looking nature of many moral reasons. It should be clear now that this conclusion is too hasty. While promises and commitments are indeed backward looking, these backward looking obligations clearly facilitate social cooperation, and social cooperation is mutually beneficial and promotes the good. It follows that social practices, like promise keeping, promote the good. If we want to promote the good, other things equal, we should honor our commitments and keep our promises. In general, commitments are the means we use to develop legitimate expectations that allow us to work and live together in more complex and beneficial ways. Promise keeping provides a clear example of the distinction above between consequentialism as a standard of rightness and the day-to-day decision-making procedures that in fact promote the good. Although the standard of rightness is consequentialist, agents will typically promote the good by honoring their commitments.

Counter-Intuitive Cases and the Basis of Rights

The example of promises and commitments provides a general framework for evaluating other objections that emphasize the counter-intuitive implications of consequentialism. In each case the objection highlights an intuitive moral judgment that seems to be rejected by consequentialism. In response, the consequentialist provides an alternative indirect justification for the intuition in question - or in some cases rejects the intuition.

A paradigmatic example, which is meant to pump our non-consequentialist intuitions, is called Transplant. Imagine a consequentialist physician, a maximizing medic or MM for short, serving a healthy patient in for a routine check-up. In the course of the check-up, it occurs to MM that the patient is a perfect transplant match for five of his other patients who are all in dire need of an organ transplant. We can imagine that, to survive, one patient needs a heart transplant, two patients need kidneys, one needs a liver, and one needs skin grafts. MM does the math and sees that he can save five lives for the dear price of one. He drugs his patient, calls in the transplant teams and slices and dices and distributes the organs in an attempt to maximize the overall good. The objection, of course, is that MM's action is clearly wrong. Indeed, the moral judgment that this would be wrong is immediate and intuitive. The non-consequentialist concludes that however plausible consequentialism may seem in the abstract, it is highly counter-intuitive in practice and thus must be rejected. How should a consequentialist reply?

The consequentialist will point out the equally obvious fact that if doctors kill healthy patients to save dying patients, there would be all kinds of bad secondary effects. Routine medical care is essential and highly cost effective. On some estimates, we save as much as $7 for every $1 spent on preventive care. Cost effective medical care results in lower mortality and morbidity rates, which means people are healthier and live longer. If patients cannot trust doctors, they will not go in for routine check-ups and people will get sicker and more will die. Indeed, more importantly, the whole doctor-patient relationship is premised on trust. A hospital that kills its healthy patients will itself not long survive. In addition, our principles of medical ethics, with their emphasis on patient rights, confidentiality, and informed consent, promote a healthy and beneficial patient-physician relationship. Consequentialists endorse the principle of respect for patient autonomy, which is the cornerstone of contemporary medical ethics. Of

course, a consequentialist would embrace any reform that actually helps solve the shortage of organ donors, which is the source of the problem. For example, if there are much higher organ donation rates in countries that presume that everyone is an organ donor (presumed consent) unless they opt-out (instead of the opt-in donor card system in the US), consequentialists would support this change in policy.

In response, the non-consequentialist will stipulate that MM acts in secret, and since no one will know, there will be no bad secondary effects. Of course, in the real world maintaining secrecy would be almost impossible. If MM mobilizes five transplant teams and kills off a healthy person, there is surely a good chance that this will not remain secret! Nonetheless, the non-consequentialist argues, even though secrecy is highly unlikely, if killing the one and saving the five could be done in secret and it would maximizes the good, and the consequentialist would have to support it; and this, they argue, is enough to prove that consequentialism is deeply flawed.

This brings us back to our earlier discussion of consequentialism. First, the consequentialist agent must act in light of the *expected* consequences, the likely and probable effects of her actions. Consequentialists believe that our justified intuitive judgments of rightness and wrongness track the tendencies of actions to produce good or bad results. Our actual moral intuitions are often distorted by class interest and bias, but they also inchoately and imperfectly track the good (Gibbard 1982). Second, recall that a consequentialist agent will do the most good by following the rules, principles, and practices that are most likely to promote the good. The real question for MM is thus to determine the policies and principles of medical ethics that are most likely to maximize the good of all. The objections that focus on counter-intuitive cases, like Transplant, ignore these refinements and focuses instead on consequentialism as a day-to-

day decision-making procedure (Hare 1981). The critics of consequentialism rightly point out that as a decision-making procedure, consequentialism is highly counter-intuitive. But since consequentialism is a standard of rightness, and not a decision-making procedure, consequentialists argue that this line of objection is misdirected.

In addition, consequentialists do not find these types of objections based solely on our moral intuitions convincing. Moral intuitions reflect the norms of a particular culture at a particular historical moment; they are not self-evident moral truths. Moral intuitions require additional justification. We should indeed review and modify intuitive principles when alternative principles produce more good. Thus, in response to counter-intuitive cases like Transplant, the consequentialist insists that we must indeed justify our more immediate intuitions.

Respect for Person and Agent-Centered Restrictions

The critic of consequentialism, especially the Kantian critic, will remain unsatisfied with the consequentialist response to Transplant. The Kantian argues that, even if the consequentialist gets the right answer, the reasoning is still incorrect. Instead, the reason it is wrong to the kill an innocent person is that it is wrong to treat a person as a mere means to an end; that is, to treat a person as if she were just a thing that can be used to promote the good. Persons are not mere things. Persons have a dignity and status that endows them with rights. Individual human rights reflect the distinctness and inviolability of persons, and these rights should not be infringed to promote the overall good.

Here is an impasse in contemporary ethics. Kantians believe that an appeal to the dignity and status of persons, and their inviolable rights, is enough to sound the death knell of

consequentialism (see KANT, IMMANUEL; KANTIAN PRACTICAL ETHICS). Consequentialists, however, remain puzzled that Kantians believe that the debate is won so easily with what seems like nothing more than inspiring rhetoric. First, consequentialists point out that contemporary Kantian are hard pressed to justify, or indeed even agree on, a conception of persons as ends in themselves. Additionally, Kantians are in even more disarray when it comes to developing and agreeing on a Kantian moral theory and its rights and duties. For example, there are Kantian libertarians, liberals, multiculturalists, and Marxists all arguing that only their approach respects the dignity of humanity. Indeed, many consequentialists maintain that Kantian appeals to the dignity of humanity, respect for persons, and inviolable rights, are simply *post hoc* rationalizations for mere moral intuitions. Given the wide variability and apparent relativity of moral intuitions, consequentialists argue that a mere appeal to moral intuitions, even one dressed up in a fine Kantian dress, is no justification at all.

Second, consequentialists will insist that they do respect persons (see RESPECT). Utilitarians, for example, respect persons by counting equally the happiness of all (as Bentham argued, all count for one and none for more than one) and maximizing overall happiness. Utilitarians, however, also often explicitly reject the human-centric focus of Kantian ethics, and insist that all sentient beings have moral standing. Other consequentialists are value pluralist and thus can include the goods of autonomy and equality in their overall assessment of consequences. Consequentialists can be even more Kantian and accept the priority of the value of our rational nature, which for Kantians is the ground of the dignity of humanity, in accessing the outcomes of our actions (Cummiskey 1996); or argue for consequentialism on contractualist grounds (see CONTRACTUALISM and Harsanyi 1975; Cummiskey 2008; Parfit forthcoming);

or argue that consequentialism satisfies the Kantian universalizability constraint (see UNIVERSALIAZBILITY; Cummiskey 1996; Kagan 2002; Parfit forthcoming).

The real dispute between consequentialist and non-consequentialist is over the nature of the proper respect and value of persons. Consequentialists believe that we respect persons by treating all persons equally; and/or by promoting the value of persons, however that value is properly conceived (Pettit 1997). Non-consequentialists argue that respect for persons involves honoring the value of persons as an agent-centered restriction (see AGENT-CENTERED RESTRICTIONS). Agent-centered restrictions function to limit what we can do in promoting values, even the value of persons. For example, the prohibition on killing innocents prohibits killing even when killing one will prevent more people from being killed. This sort of constraint is called an agent-centered restriction because it tells each agent not to kill even when killing one will prevent many more from being killed. In contrast, an agent-neutral constraint on killing would permit killing one to prevent even more people from being killed (see AGENT-RELATIVE VS AGENT-NEUTRAL).

Although intuitively compelling, many consequentialists argue that agent-centered restrictions are actually quite paradoxical when it comes to their justification (see PARADOX OF DEONTOLOGY). If violating rights is so bad, why shouldn't individuals be allowed to minimize rights violations by killing one to save others from being killed? If persons are inviolable, why permit more people to be violated? If it is wrong to intentionally harm innocents, how can it be wrong to minimize the number of innocents that are intentionally harmed? How can it ever be wrong to minimize evil or to do as much good as possible? Agent-centered restrictions are actually paradoxical and even counter-intuitive at the level of justification (Scheffler 1982; Kagan 1989).

For consequentialists, however, the deliberative principles, the optimal moral code of a society, will often include agent-centered restrictions on deliberation that are justified by the agent-neutral consequentialist principle of rightness. Indeed, consequentialists can even treat some rights as near absolute. Mill, for example, defended the priority of liberty on narrow utilitarian grounds (Mill 1859). He also argued that a right to personal security is a matter of justice that should not be subject to utilitarian calculations (Mill 1861), and further argued against the social and legal subordination of women (Mill 1869). The structure of the basic reasoning for these conclusions has already been explained in our discussion of promise keeping. Often it is the case that we better promote the overall utility by following principles and respecting rights that work to advance the common good of all.

The Personal Point of View and the Demands of Consequentialism

One of the most important objections to consequentialism is that it is too demanding and out of synch with human nature. As individuals, we have personal goals and interests, we care about particular people, and we are embedded in a particular community. Our values and goals arise from a personal, not impersonal and impartial, point of view. In contrast, the consequentialist conception of the right requires that our goals and values maximize the overall, impersonal and impartial good. The concern here is that the impersonal conceptions of the good will overwhelm and indeed snuff out the personal point of view.

There are two distinct problems here. The first problem is that there is so much serious need in the world that aiding the needy could easily take all of my energy and capital. From a common sense point of view, devoting oneself to doing as much good as is possible, however admirable, is beyond the strict call of duty. Of course, morality can be demanding but it is not

supposed to be all consuming. The second problem is that our commitments and desires are unmediated and direct, they aren't filtered through impersonal and impartial considerations. Indeed, we don't (and shouldn't) measure the concern and love that we show to family and friends on a scale of impersonal utility calculation. Even if loving concern promotes the overall good, love is not based on the overall good it does.

How should the consequentialist reply? Consider our relationships first. Since personal projects and commitments are the source of much happiness, of course, a consequentialist would agree that we want to promote their flourishing. From a consequentialist perspective, we should constrain the pursuit of our own commitments when it undermines the possibility of others realizing their projects and commitments. The commitments of others matter just as much as my own, and others should reciprocally constrain the pursuit of their ends with respect for mine. In this way the personal commitments of each are treated with equal concern and respect.

The objection emphasizes, however, that our concerns and relationships arise from a personal, first-person perspective, and not from an impersonal standpoint. Some think that consequentialism should be rejected because it requires that concern for the impersonal or impartial good must come between me and my concerns, alienating me form that which I value and cherish (Williams 1973). Other non-consequentialists argue that since the values that give meaning to life arise out of the personal point of view, morality includes an agent-centered option (or prerogative) to give disproportionate moral concern to our own projects and relationships (see AGENT-CENTERED OPTIONS; Scheffler 1982).

The consequentialist responds once again by emphasizing that consequentialism is a theory of the right and not a decision-making procedure. In helping one's children, it is perfectly fine to be motivated by direct concern and love. My personal projects and commitments are

indeed a source of happiness, or intrinsic value. Nonetheless, our shared moral code must balance the value of each of us pursuing and realizing our individual commitments, and this balance will determine the manner in which we can legitimately pursue our ends. But we can, and indeed should, still care immediately for those we love and directly value the projects that we find worthwhile (Railton 1984).

Maximizing the good is the standard of rightness, but it is not my goal in helping my children grow and flourish. Instead, the moral code, which maximizes the good of all, is a regulative constraint on how I can legitimately pursue my ends, but it does not need to be the source of the value of my ends to me. Indeed, from an impartial point of view, it is best if we are partial to, and especially responsible for, our family and friends. (In addition, however, it is also important that we try to insure that those who otherwise have no one to care for them are also cared for.)

Consequentialists insist that they recognize and embrace the value of personal relationships and other commitments, Nonetheless, the tension between consequentialism as an impersonal theory of rightness and the personal values and projects that give life meaning remains a matter of controversy and a subject of ongoing debate in contemporary moral theory (Hurley 2010).

The demandingness problem raises a different issue. If my projects must be balanced against the needs of others, global poverty alone seems to require that I completely devote myself to alleviating this enormous evil. How can I justify going to movies, taking vacations, buying a nice house, when others die of preventable causes? The problem of demandingness typically assumes the deliberative perspective of the fortunate and affluent (and thus seems to

ignore the perspective of those in dire need of aid). There are several possible replies that the consequentialist might make to this objection.

The first response focuses on the source of the problem of demandingness. Most people do not embrace consequentialism and they think that it is permissible to do little or nothing to help strangers in serious need. Notice that if everyone pitched in and helped those in need, the marginal cost to any particular person would be minor. Indeed, ending serious poverty is easily within the reach of the peoples of the developed economies. In a world of consequentialists, with everyone committed to helping the needy, there would be no great burden.

The demandingness problem arises in a world of non-compliance: when others do not help, must I make up for their bad behavior and devote all of my energy to saving lives? This question raises complex issues, which have received a significant amount of philosophical attention (Murphy 2000; Mulgan 2001). Consequentialism is a demanding moral theory because so many people do not do their fare share. Some argue that we should focus on determining our fair share in a world of non-compliance and this fixes our duty to aid. It does seem that persons doing their fair share should be subject to a lesser degree of moral reproach than the slackers at the root of the problem. If I am doing more than my fair share but I could do even more, am I still blameworthy? Other consequentialists respond that one ought to do all one can do, and anything less is a moral failure. Intuitions about fairness are not easily accommodated by the maximizing demands of consequentialism. As long as I can do more good, consequentialism implies that I should do so.

A consequentialist can argue that, in evaluating oneself and others, there are common psychological limits to the sacrifices people can make. Actions that are beyond the bounds of ordinary psychological profiles are better thought of as heroic and supererogatory. The non-

consequentialist will press this point, however, and emphasize that from a consequentialist perspective, there really are no significant limits to duty. However difficult an action, whatever the personal hardship or sacrifice, if an action is indeed optimal, then a consequentialist ought to do it. Indeed, if I am required to do all that I can do, there is no such thing as a supererogatory action: nothing is beyond the call of duty.

The demandingness of maximizing consequentialism leads some to argue for satisficing consequentialism, which rejects maximization (see SATISFICING). On this view, we should promote the good by choosing satisfactory outcomes, but we are not required to choose the optimal outcome (Slote 1985). Alternatively, many maximizing consequentialist simply "bite-the bullet" and agree that, in a world with such enormous suffering, the right thing to do is to devote oneself to ending poverty. No other decision is impartially justifiable (Singer 1972 & 2010; Kagan 1989).

Of course, there are still many things that maximizing consequentialists can do with their lives. There is no reason to think that charity or non-profit work is the best way to maximize the good. Depending on one's talents and interests, perhaps one will do the most good by getting an MBA, becoming a hedge fund manager, and giving away most of one's earnings. Alternatively, one might in fact maximize the good by working on technological or scientific advances, or by teaching philosophy or political theory. Of course, after my basic needs (and the needs of my dependents) are accounted for, my remaining discretionary spending should go towards alleviating serious suffering. Although consequentialists should give up luxuries, their lives would still include meaningful work, friendship and family. The consequentialist might ask, as we work collectively to relieve incredible suffering, and strive to make the world a better place for all, do we really need more?

Consequentialism is a demanding moral theory. It also challenges our common sense moral intuitions, and provides only indirect justifications for the rightness and wrongness of actions: actions that seem to be immediately and intrinsically right or wrong. Consequentialists instead insist that moral rules, virtues, and our moral intuitions are justified when they promote good outcomes. For consequentialists, it is never wrong to do as much good as possible.

Cross-References

AGENT-CENTERED OPTIONS; AGENT-CENTERED RESTRICTIONS; AGENT-RELATIVE VS AGENT-NEUTRAL; BENTHAM, JEREMEY; CONTRACTUALISM; DEONTOLOGY; DESIRE THEORIES OF THE GOOD; DIFFERENCE PRINICIPLE HARE, R. M.; HEDONISM; INTUITIONISM, MORAL; INTUITIONS, MORAL; JUSTICE; KANT, IMMANUEL; KANTIAN PRACTICAL ETHICS; MILL, JOHN STUART; PARADOX OF DEONTOLOGY; PRIORITARIANISM; RAWLS, JOHN; RELATIVISM, MORAL; ROSS, W.D.; RESPECT; SATISFICING; UNIVERSALIZABILITY; UTILITARIANISM; VALUE PLURALISM; VIRTUE ETHICS

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