
Consequentialist Decision Theory And Utilitarian Ethics

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LAMBERT DECKER

[Utilitarianism](#) Oxford University Press

This book introduces a new, multidimensional consequentialist theory, according to which an act's rightness depends on several irreducible dimensions.

Ethical Decision-making from a Consequentialist Perspective Bloomsbury Publishing

Prioritarianism holds that improvements in someone's life (gains in well-being) are morally more valuable, the worse off the person would otherwise be. The doctrine is impartial, holding that a gain in one person's life counts exactly the same as an identical gain in the life of anyone equally well off. If we have some duty of beneficence to make the world better, prioritarianism specifies the content of the duty. Unlike the utilitarian, the prioritarian holds that we should not only seek to increase human well-being, but also distribute it fairly across persons, by tilting in favor of the worse off. A variant version adds that we should also give priority to the morally deserving – to saints over scoundrels. The view is a standard for right choice of individual actions and public policies, offering a distinctive alternative to utilitarianism (maximize total well-being), sufficiency (make everyone's condition good enough) and egalitarianism (make everyone's condition the same).

Responsibility Springer Science & Business Media

Consequentialism is the view that the rightness or wrongness of actions depend solely on their consequences. It is one of the most influential, and controversial, of all ethical theories. In this book, Julia Driver introduces and critically assesses consequentialism in all its forms. After a brief historical introduction to the problem, Driver examines utilitarianism, and the arguments of its most famous exponents, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, and explains the fundamental questions underlying utilitarian theory: what value is to be specified and how it is to be maximized. Driver also discusses indirect forms of consequentialism, the important theories of motive consequentialism and virtue consequentialism, and explains why the distinction between subjective and objective consequentialism is so important. Including helpful features such as a glossary, chapter summaries, and annotated further reading at the end of each chapter, Consequentialism is ideal for students seeking an authoritative and clearly explained survey of this important problem.

[Consequentialism](#) Oxford University Press

Utilitarianism is the idea that ethics is ultimately about what makes people's lives go better. While utilitarian ideas remain highly influential in politics and culture, they are subject to many well-developed philosophical criticisms, such as the claim that utilitarianism requires too much of us and the view that it does not respect individuals' rights. The theory is widely thought by philosophers to be the least plausible form of consequentialism, hampered by its excessive simplicity. In *Taking Utilitarianism Seriously*, Christopher Woodard argues that it is not defeated by the standard

objections. He presents a new and rich version of utilitarianism that can answer all six common objections plausibly and, in doing so, launches a state-of-the-art defence of the utilitarian tradition, which has greater resources than its critics have often assumed. Far from being excessively simple, utilitarianism is able to account for much of the complexity and nuance of everyday ethical thought. And rather than being quickly dismissed, utilitarian approaches to moral and political philosophy are due for renewed development and discussion.

A New Approach to Utilitarianism Harvard University Press

The philosophical tradition has given rise to many competing moral theories. Virtue ethics encourages the flourishing of the person, theories of justice and rights tell us to act according to principles, and consequentialist theories advise that we seek to bring about good ends. These varied theories highlight the morally relevant features of the problems that we encounter both in everyday personal interactions and on a broader social scale. When used together, they allow us to address moral conflicts by balancing a plurality of reasons in order to reach nuanced ethical decisions. In *Ethical Reasoning: Theory and Application*, Andrew Kernohan guides the reader through the basics of these moral theories, showing their strengths and weaknesses and emphasizing the ways in which competing moral reasons can be collectively employed to guide decision-making. Throughout, the focus is on practical applications and on how each theory can play a role in solving problems and addressing issues. Numerous questions and exercises are provided to encourage active reflection and retention of information.

Utilitarianism: A Guide for the Perplexed Dartmouth Publishing Company

We are often uncertain how to behave morally in complex situations. In this controversial study, Ted Lockhart contends that moral philosophy has failed to address how we make such moral decisions. Adapting decision theory to the task of decision-making under moral uncertainty, he proposes that we should not always act how we feel we ought to act, and that sometimes we should act against what we feel to be morally right. Lockhart also discusses abortion extensively and proposes new ways to deal with the ethical and moral issues which surround it.

A Utilitarian General Theory of Value Routledge

1.1 Utilitarian Theories This book is a monograph on moral philosophy and social philosophy, particularly the part of the philosophy of economics that is related to the general distribution problem. It presents a comprehensive ethical theory, together with an application of the theory to distributive justice. The viewpoint of this theory is utilitarian. However, this theory is different in some crucial points, as well as in minor details, from all existing forms of utilitarianism. Moral philosophy deals essentially with the moral judgment of actions, i. e., whether a moral action is right or wrong, good or bad. The judgment is usually based on a line of logical reasoning, which can be traced to a final reason called the justification or ultimate principle. An ethical theory is a self-consistent system built upon a basic, or ultimate, principle. An ultimate principle can never be rigorously proven, and is not unique. Different philosophers establish different ethical theories upon different principles. Therefore, in the history of development of moral philosophy, there have been a large number of ethical theories and schools. Even within the same school having the same ultimate principle, different philosophers may have different versions of the theory, because of small variations in the interpretation of the ultimate principle or in the elaboration of the details.

A New Approach to Utilitarianism Oxford University Press

Utilitarianism is the ethical theory advanced by Jeremy Bentham, J.S. Mill, and Henry Sidgwick and has contributed significantly to contemporary moral and political philosophy. Yet it is not without controversy and is a subject that students can often find particularly perplexing. *Utilitarianism: A Guide for the Perplexed* offers a concise, yet fully comprehensive introduction to utilitarianism, its historical roots, key themes, and current debates. Krister Bykvist provides a survey of the modern debate about utilitarianism and goes on to evaluate utilitarianism in comparison with other theories, in particular virtue ethics and Kantianism. Bykvist offers a critical examination of utilitarianism, distinguishing problems that are unique to utilitarianism from those that are shared by other moral theories. Focusing on the problems unique to utilitarianism, the book provides a well-balanced assessment of where the theory goes astray and is in need of revision. Geared towards the specific requirements of students who need to reach a sound understanding of utilitarianism, this book serves as an ideal companion to study of this influential and challenging of philosophical concepts.

Taking Utilitarianism Seriously BRILL

This work deals with all aspects of consequentialism, encompassing utilitarianism, alienation and the demands of morality, restrictive consequentialism, alternative actions, an objectivist's guide to subjective value, recent work on the limits of obligation and more.

Moral Uncertainty and Its Consequences Cambridge University Press

Consequentialism is a major moral theory in contemporary philosophy: it is the view that the only thing that matters when making moral decisions is the outcome of those decisions. Consequentialists hold that to morally assess an act, we must first evaluate and rank the various ways that things could turn out depending on whether it or some alternative act is performed. Whether we should perform that act thus depends on how its outcome ranks relative to those of its alternatives. Consequentialism rivals deontology, contractualism, and virtue ethics, but, more importantly, it has influenced contemporary moral philosophy such that the consequentialist/non-consequentialist distinction is one of the most central in normative ethics. After all, every plausible moral theory must concede that the goodness of an act's consequences is something that matters, even if it's not the only thing that matters. Thus, all plausible moral theories will accept that both 1) an act's producing good consequences constitutes a moral reason to perform it, and 2) the better its consequences, the more of a moral reason there is to perform it. In this way, much of consequentialist ethical theory is important for normative ethics in general. This *Oxford Handbook* contains thirty-two previously unpublished contributions by top moral philosophers examining the current state of play in consequentialism and pointing to new directions for future research. The volume is organized into four major sections: foundational issues; objections to consequentialism; its forms and limits; and consequentialism's implications for policy, practice, and social reform.

Utilitarianism and the Ethics of War Routledge

The connection between economics and ethics is as old as economics itself, and central to both disciplines. The essays included in the present volume provide an analysis of the connections between ethics and economics as viewed from several different - oft

The Cambridge Companion to Utilitarianism Harvard University Press

Utilitarianism is the idea that ethics is ultimately about what makes people's lives go better. While utilitarian ideas remain highly influential in politics and culture, they are subject to many well-developed philosophical criticisms, such as the claim that utilitarianism requires too much of us and the view that it does not respect individuals' rights. The theory is widely thought by philosophers to be the least plausible form of consequentialism, hampered by its excessive simplicity. In *Taking Utilitarianism Seriously*, Christopher Woodard argues that it is not defeated by the standard objections. He presents a new and rich version of utilitarianism that can answer all six common objections plausibly and, in doing so, launches a state-of-the-art defence of the utilitarian tradition, which has greater resources than its critics have often assumed. Far from being excessively simple, utilitarianism is able to account for much of the complexity and nuance of everyday ethical thought. And rather than being quickly dismissed, utilitarian approaches to moral and political philosophy are due for renewed development and discussion.

The Oxford Handbook of Consequentialism Westminster John Knox Press

The standard rationality hypothesis is that behaviour can be represented as the maximization of a suitably restricted utility function. This hypothesis lies at the heart of a large body of recent work in economics, of course, but also in political science, ethics, and other major branches of the social sciences. Though this hypothesis of utility maximization deserves our continued respect, finding further refinements and developing new critiques remain areas of active research. In fact, many fundamental conceptual problems remain unsettled. Where others have been resolved, their resolutions may be too recent to have achieved widespread understanding among social scientists. Last but not least, a growing number of papers attempt to challenge the rationality hypothesis head on, at least in its more orthodox formulation. The main purpose of this *Handbook* is to make more widely available some recent developments in the area. Yet we are well aware that the final chapter of a handbook like this can never be written as long as the area of research remains active, as is certainly the case with utility theory. The editors originally selected a list of topics that seemed ripe enough at the time that the book was planned. Then they invited contributions from researchers whose work had come to their attention. So the list of topics and contributors is largely the editors' responsibility, although some potential contributors did decline our invitation. Each chapter has also been refereed, and often significantly revised in the light of the referees' remarks.

Dilemmas Springer Science & Business Media

Though the revised edition of *A Theory of Justice*, published in 1999, is the definitive statement of Rawls's view, so much of the extensive literature on Rawls's theory refers to the first edition. This reissue makes the first edition once again available for scholars and serious students of Rawls's work.

Handbook of Utility Theory Springer Science & Business Media

This compelling book advances utilitarianism as the basis for a viable public philosophy, effectively rebutting the common charge that, as moral doctrine, utilitarian thought permits cruel acts, justifies unfair distribution of wealth, and demands too much of moral agents. James Wood Bailey defends utilitarianism through novel use of game theory insights regarding feasible equilibria and evolutionary stability, elaborating a sophisticated account of institutions that real-world utilitarians would want to foster. If utilitarianism seems in principle to dictate that we make each and every choice such that it leads to the best consequences overall, game theory emphasizes that no choice has consequences in isolation, but only in conjunction with many other choices of other agents. Viewing institutions as equilibria in complex games, Bailey negotiates the paradox of individual responsibilities, arguing that if individuals within institutions have specific responsibilities they cannot get from the principle of utility alone, the utility principle nevertheless holds great value in that it allows us to identify morally desirable institutions. Far from recommending cruel acts, utilitarianism, understood this way, actually runs congruent to our basic moral intuitions. A provocative attempt to support the practical use of utilitarian ethics in a world of conflicting interests and competing moral agents, Bailey's book employs the work of social scientists to tackle problems traditionally given abstract philosophical attention. Vividly illustrating its theory with concrete moral dilemmas and taking seriously our moral common sense, *Utilitarianism, Institutions, and Justice* is an accessible, groundbreaking work that will richly reward students and scholars of political science, political economy, and philosophy.

Taking Utilitarianism Seriously Oxford University Press

Utilitarianism - a philosophy based on the principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people - has been hugely influential over the past two centuries. Beyond ethics or morality, utilitarian assumptions and arguments abound in modern economic and political life, especially in public policy. An understanding of utilitarianism is indeed essential to any understanding of contemporary society. "Understanding Utilitarianism" presents utilitarianism very much as a living tradition. The book begins with a summary of the classical utilitarianism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Subsequent chapters trace the development of the central themes of utilitarian thought over the twentieth century, covering such questions as: What is happiness? Is happiness the only valuable thing? Is utilitarianism about acts or rules or institutions? Is utilitarianism unjust, or implausibly demanding, or impractical? and Where might utilitarianism go in the future?

Morality and Rational Choice Cambridge University Press

The work analyzes the descriptive content of the concepts of 'what is fair' and 'what is best.' This author presents an account of ethical decision-making from a consequentialist perspective when a fairness constraint is placed on a utilitarian ethical theory. The work begins by analyzing both the perspective and descriptive content and the concepts of 'what is fair' and 'what is best.' The concept of 'fairness' is then analyzed along completely consequentialist lines and a constraint, based on this analysis, is placed on a version of negative cooperative utilitarianism which is developed in detail.

The Handbook of Rational and Social Choice Routledge

This book argues that critics of consequentialism have not been able to make a successful and comprehensive case against all versions of consequentialism because they have been using the wrong methodology. This methodology relies on the crucial assumption that consequentialist theories share a defining characteristic. This text interprets consequentialism, instead, as a family resemblance term. On that basis, it argues quite an ambitious claim, viz. that all versions of consequentialism should be rejected, including those that have been created in response to conventional criticisms. The book covers a number of classic themes in normative ethics, metaethics and, particularly, ethical methodology and also touches upon

certain aspects of experimental moral philosophy. It is written in clear language and is analytic in its argumentative style. As such, the book should appeal to students, graduate students as well as professional academics with an interest in analytic moral philosophy.

Utilitarianism, Institutions, and Justice Routledge

Begins by explaining and arguing for certain criteria for assessing normative moral theories. Then argues that these criteria lead to a rule-consequentialist moral theory.

Self-effacing Consequentialism Springer Science & Business Media

Philosophy, economics, and decision theory have long been dominated by the idea that rational choice consists of seeking or achieving one's own greatest good. *Beyond Optimizing* argues that our ordinary understanding of practical reason is more complex than this, and also that optimizing/maximizing views are inadequately supported by the considerations typically offered in their favor. Michael Slote challenges the long-

dominant conception of individual rationality, which has to a large extent shaped the very way we think about the essential problems and nature of rationality, morality, and the relations between them. He contests the accepted view by appealing to a set of real-life examples, claiming that our intuitive reaction to these examples illustrates a significant and prevalent, if not always dominant, way of thinking. Slote argues that common sense recognizes that one can reach a point where "enough is enough," be satisfied with what one has, and, hence, rationally decline an optimizing alternative. He suggests that, in the light of common sense, optimizing behavior is often irrational. Thus, Slote is not merely describing an alternative mode of rationality; he is offering a rival theory. And the numerous parallels he points out between this common-sense theory of rationality and common-sense morality are then shown to have important implications for the long-standing disagreement between commonsense morality and utilitarian consequentialism. *Beyond Optimizing* is notable for its use of a much richer vocabulary of criticism than optimizing/maximizing models ever call upon. And it further argues that recent empirical investigations of the development of altruism and moral motivation need to be followed up by psychological studies of how moderation, and individual rationality more generally, take shape within developing individuals.

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