

Can a Utilitarian respect rights?

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Article 1 “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

Most philosophers are of the view that the institution of rights are either from God, nature, or from a social contract. Seemingly, Utilitarianism isn't objectively compatible with this view because if ignoring such rights could bring greater happiness to the greater number, such rights *should* be ignored.

When the civilized world scripts human rights, it attempts to do so *objectively* not *subjectively*. For instance if a man is arrested for murder, though he'd been previously convicted for another murder, the law demands that he be given a fair trial. This is the true meaning in the true sense of true rights.

Human rights are instituted for the purpose that a minority (blacks) do not suffer so that a greater number (whites) would be hedonistic at the cost of innocent lives. Seemingly, true human rights cannot be found in the view of utilitarianism as its calculus is ambitiously ambiguous.

If ignoring rights brings about more happiness to the greatest number, should we ignore so-called rights? India being the youngest Democracy in the world amounts to 68% percent of youth with a population of 1.3 billion. If all the youth in India demand that marijuana be legalized so that all youth are happy, should the government then legalize marijuana? According to the utility calculus, the government must not only legalize marijuana, it must also subsidize it.

Bernard Williams criticizes the implied “doctrine of negative responsibility” in Utilitarianism. For example, a thug breaks into my home and holds six people hostage, telling us he will kill all of us. “However,” the thug says, “if you will kill two of your family, I will let you and the other three live.”

With Utilitarianism, the *good* thing to do is to kill two members of my family.

Utilitarianism plays fast and loose with God's commandments. If lying, stealing, or killing could lead to an increase of happiness for the greatest number, Act Utilitarianism says we *should* lie, steal or kill. Isn't that a rejection of Gods commands? Utilitarianism is a secular alternative to Divine Command theory; therefore, the concept of Utilitarianism seems to be on borrowed ethics which is post facto, not rational or reasoning. According to classical utilitarianism, the sole moral obligation is to Maximize utility (= happiness = pleasure).

The Holy Bible says in Colossians 2:8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” This does not mean to reject philosophy but to be *careful* of the theories we endorse. That is why C.S. Lewis said, “Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.

Philosopher Robert Nozick, a critic of utilitarianism introduced the "utility monster" a thought experiment of ethics. He states that "Utilitarian theory is embarrassed by the possibility of utility monsters who get enormously greater sums of utility from any sacrifice of others than these others lose ... the theory seems to require that we all be sacrificed in the monster's maw, in order to increase total utility." [1] In politics, utility monsters are called "special interest groups."

History has proven that governments most often implement a flavor of utilitarianism simply because of a "**summary rule**" *which can be broken whenever the GHP suggests it should* as Syria violated a Geneva Protocol, signed by the League of Nations and United States in 1925, and by Syria in 1968, against the use of chemical or biological weapons.

When Oliver North was asked during the 1980s to explain why he lied to congressional committees about his role in the Iran-Contra affair, he replied, "*Lying does not come easily to me. But we all had to weigh in the balance the difference between lies and lives.*" North's method of justifying his acts of deception is a form of moral reasoning that is called "utilitarianism." Stripped down to its essentials, utilitarianism is a moral principle that holds that the morally right course of action in any situation is the one that produces the greatest balance of benefits over harms for everyone affected. So long as a course of action produces maximum benefits for everyone, utilitarianism does not care whether the benefits are produced by lies, manipulation, or coercion. Many of us use this type of moral reasoning frequently in our daily decisions. When asked to explain why we feel we have a moral duty to perform some action, we often point to the good that will come from the action or the harm it will prevent. Business analysts, legislators, and scientists weigh daily the resulting benefits and harms of policies when deciding, for example, whether to invest resources in a certain public project, whether to approve a new drug, or whether to ban a certain pesticide. [2]

The quandary with utilitarianism is its reminiscence of water; it takes the shape of the container that it is deposited into. If it's applied within a Church & State locale, it takes that form, if it's poured into democratic scenery, it takes that form. Utility is in one sense a relativist, and then claims to be a particularist absolutist - this is conflicting. Ravi Zacharias said "If God is the author of life, there must be a script." [3]

The supreme author is God and His script is engraved into every laminin in our bodies so that we don't utilize theories according to the greater number.

[1] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974)

[2] *Calculating Consequences: The Utilitarian Approach to Ethics* Developed by Manuel Velasquez, Claire Andre, Thomas Shanks, S.J., and Michael J. Meyer *Issues in Ethics* V2 N1 (Winter 1989)

[3] Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian*