

Ethics
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Module No. #01
Lecture No. #04
Consequentialism Rule & Act

Let us now talk about, Rule and Act Consequentialism. Before that, let us come to the situation, why we need to make a distinction between, as you mention on the slide, between Rule and Act Consequentialism.

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- Actual consequence or expected consequence? what if there is a difference between the two? Leads to the distinction between act-consequentialism and rule-consequentialism
- Explain 'justice' and 'rights' in consequential terms
- The role of agent in consequentialism: agent relative or agent neutral - consequences for whom?
- Relation between equality and consequentialism:
- Intention and foresight:

Now, very often, we have a difference between, the actual consequence, and the expected consequence. Now, considering this, we see that well, let me take an example. Say, a government policy has been formed, with certain expectations. Let us say, to uplift the minimal sustenance salaries paid, or to provide minimum emoluments to the country men at large, who are perhaps unemployed.

Now, this is the expected consequence. But, what happens. Let us assume that, it is the actual consequence happens that, it increases indolence, it kills entrepreneurship, it kills enterprise, and it encourages sloth amongst people. Now, there is clearly a distinction between therefore, actual and expected consequences. Now, in such a case, how do we judge between, the difference

between actual. Which consequence is to be taken, as the primary consequence, for judging the moral character of this action.

Is it the actual consequence, or the expected consequence? There are many questions, that Consequentialism raises. One of them is perhaps that well, do we actually sit and meditate upon the consequence of each act, that we do. Now, when we talk about Act Consequentialism, we talk about such a way of taking decisions, where each act is meditated upon, as to what consequences it would bring along.

And thereby, those consequences are the motivators, for the action. Now this, as we see is, generally not the usual way, we go about. We go about, something called Rule Consequentialism. Rule Consequentialism is when, each agent or decision making entity, be it a person, be it a body, be it a collective, or be it an association, or be it an entire government. Well, they have seen that, certain kinds of acts, have led to a certain kind of consequences, in the long run.

And therefore, it is better to follow this pattern, which is framed under a rule. And there of, Rule Consequentialism comes into existence. Now, let me give you an example. Now, if we have seen that well, in a particular instance, if lying is more profitable to me, than speaking the truth. I would, as an Act Consequentialist, decide that well, let me lie for this instance, and I get the consequence, that I desire.

Suppose, I have taken a loan. And, I have knowingly lied that, I will be returning it. Whereas, I know that, I have no means of returning it. Now here, the consequence is good for me. So, as an Act Consequentialist, I decide that well, I will lie now. Because, this act brings me a desirable consequence. So, as a Consequentialist, and deciding that by Consequentialism. I mean, the Happiness that brought about you by it. So, strictly a Hedonist, or a Utilitarian, I would take a loan, falsely promising to repay it.

Now, is surely Consequentialism, is in this fallacious, or though so easy to falsify. The Consequentialist answer that well, we need to frame something called, Rule Consequentialism. We need to frame that well. If I take this loan, just this time, and I see that, I get the Happiness

that I seek, without repaying the loan. I get happy this time. But, surely next time, nobody is going to loan anything to me.

So, in the long run, when these cycles are repeated, I find that, I am actually having consequences, that I do not desire. Because, no more, no one is giving me loans, anymore. So, the Rule Consequentialist would say that well, I need to stick to my promise. Because, the desirable consequence is that I require, are not just for this act, but for the series of acts, that I would ever take place. The same thing is with government policies. That, we frame rules.

Because, these rules would bring us consequences, that we desire. And, Act Consequentialist perhaps is seeing the act, in isolation of the continuity of facts, that take place. So, Rule Consequentialist in a way, brings about rationalisation, and brings about a claim, that well. There are certain rules, that are to be followed, to bring about consequences, that we desire. Now, then again, certain other questions, that Consequentialism faces.

That, how does the Consequentialist explain, justice, or rights, notions like these, in their paradigm. That well, what is it to be just. Just is to have, just consequences. But, what is again, just consequences. We will talk about it, in the next slide, when we talk about that. Does Consequentialist actually assume naturalism, or does it deny Moral Atomism. We will talk about that, in the next slide.

So, apart from that, the Consequentialist also faces this dilemma, when he wants to talk about, consequences for whom? Is it for the agent? Or, is it for consequence, which are independent of the agent? Now, that the Rule of the agent in Consequentialism, is it agent relative, or agent neutral. Now, if it is agent relative, then it is my consequences, or consequences for us. So, this would actually be, consequences for me.

Now, which of these two, do we mean. Whether, it is consequences for me, or consequences for us, or for a more inclusive Consequentialist consequence for everyone. This is just a state, that well. Consequentialism is not denying a good motive, as we talk about. When we talk about, say, why do you want to save the planet. Well, if there can be a Consequentialist answer to that, the

Consequentialist would say that well, I want to save this planet, because it would bring Happiness to all.

All, who are existing now, and all who work to exist in the future. So, here the domain is the largest. So, a kind of universal concern, can also be understood, in the Consequentialist framework. Consequences for me. Suppose, I want something for myself. So, that is the reason, for doing something now. We want the future generations, to relish the fruits of science and technology. So, we try not to overuse nature, to cause its end.

And thereby, preventing the future generations, from enjoying the planet. So, this is an example of having consequences for everyone, of being concerned for everyone. So, it depends, that how we understand Consequentialism. Will it be for me. Or, will it be for us. Or, will it be for everyone. So, Consequentialism has a various stream. Now, coming back to relation between, Equality and Consequentialism. Does, is Equality a consequence.

As we talked about earlier, that what is the content of the consequence. Now, one of the content of the consequences, we talked about was Perfectionism. That, we keep trying till, we attain Perfectionism. Other one was Happiness. And now, there can be a third one, which is Equality. We act, so that, there is in, Equality achieved between the ends. Now, let us go further, to find out, what is meant by a Consequentialism. Okay

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Okay, now we will talk about that. Are there any fundamental issues, that we are left with? Now,

Fundamental issues

- Is there any ultimate/sustainable distinction between consequentialists & deontologists?
- Can consequentialists regard any moral property as fundamental?

Handwritten notes:
 Rule consequentialism \equiv Deontologism
 NON-CONSEQUENTIALISM
 Deontological claims are nothing but the socialized/internalized
 questions to a society which originates from RC
 why?
 MORAL JUDGEMENT \rightarrow ACT \rightarrow CONSEQUENCE
 Judgment \rightarrow WRONG
 CONSEQUENCE \rightarrow NATURAL FACT
 NATURALISM
 Reducing Moral prop. to natural prop.
 Consequentialism

there are two fundamental issues, that I would like you to dwell upon. That, is there any ultimate, or sustainable distinction between, Consequentialist, and Deontologist? Now, Consequentialist and Non-Consequentialist are supposed to be, two separate domains. How are we going to agree with? How is this confusion arising that, well there is a difference between, when we question that, is there really a difference between, Consequentialist and a Non-Consequentialist.

This, we will take up this issue further, when we talk about Deontologist, or Non-Consequentialist. But, for the moment, let me give a brief remark on this issue. That, are we seeing that well, we took the example of the person, keeping his promises, while taking a loan. Now, the reason for that, keeping promises entails, higher credit rating for future, or better credit rating for future requirements. Now, even a Deontologist would claim that, one should not break, one's commitment.

Now, the Rule Consequentialist could say that well, this is exactly the same Rule, that Rule Consequentialist subscribes too. Only the justification being that, these kind of rules become essential, for a good life. So, that one should not steal. The usual dictums, that we come across, that one should not steal, one should not lie. Or, usual dictums, for having a better life for all. Now, the Deontologist also says that well, these are some things, which are intrinsically right, and should not be violated.

Now, point can be made, that perhaps Consequentialist, or more appropriately, Rule Consequentialists, are saying the same thing, as Deontologists or Non-Consequentialists. Now, their claims could be that well, the Deontological claims are nothing but, the socialisation and internalisation of Rule Consequentialism. Let me, write that down. Deontological claims are nothing but, the socialised, internalised, practices in a society, which originate from Rule Consequentialism.

So, Rule Consequentialism says that, it is more profitable, not to break one's commitment. And, this becomes internalised, as a Deontological claim that, one, it is simply deniably wrong, to break one's commitments. Now, we come to another question that, can Consequentialist regard any moral property as fundamental. Now, if the Consequentialist regard any moral property as fundamental, why does this question arise.

Well, this question arises because, now whatever be the act, it leads to a consequence. And, we judge the act, by the consequence. Now, the judgement on the act. Moral quality. This is a moral judgement. But, this consequence seems to be a natural fact, right. Now, let me simplify. Now, if this act is that, it is wrong to break once commitments. Or, this act is breaking, once commitments. The consequence is, a denial, or a fall in trust levels, right, and a reduction in Happiness.

Now, reduction in Happiness, is a natural fact. That well, there is a reduction in Happiness. And therefore, that is wrong. The act itself is wrong. Or, whatever moral judgement, that we make on it. So, this is an example, where Consequentialist is a Naturalist. We will talk about it, in further details. But, we should be mildly aware of it that, Naturalism is reducing moral properties, to natural properties. Now, when moral properties are reduced to natural properties, that is called Naturalism.

Now, very often, Consequentialist or Naturalist. But, that does not mean that, Consequentialism requires, one to be Naturalist. If the consequence itself, is a conformity to a law book, or a conformity to a moral claim. Or, any other non-natural conformity, it comes out to be a

Consequentialist act. Now, when somebody follows a rulebook, with the aim being that well, I should conform to the followings of a rulebook.

And, I am doing the said, because the consequence of which is that, it conforms to the law books. So, that is an example of a Consequentialist, who is not a Naturalist. We will talk about this in detail, when we talk about Meta Ethics. So, for now, we have seen the basic issues, that concern Consequentialism. And now, we go ahead in talking about, the first domain of Consequentialism, or first description of what consequences are, that is Hedonism.