CHRISTIANITY AND UTILITARIANISM

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by

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People make numerous decisions throughout every day of their life. Some of these may be quite trivial and pass with little or no thought. Others, however, may have significant moral elements which must be addressed with both care and caution. An ethical agent, who is conscious of the dilemma and desiring to act appropriately, will typically attempt to work through the situation according to a particular moral theory. While numerous theories abound, an individual striving for consistency will attempt to act according to his or her accepted moral theory. This theory, when chosen purposefully and thoughtfully, will adhere to a particular agent’s presuppositions and worldview. Thus, when determining which to adopt, it is important to analyze theories and determine their adherence to an individual’s established views.

Christianity, with all that it entails, is clearly a worldview. By accepting the doctrines of the Christian faith, and, more importantly, receiving the Lordship of Christ, an individual is recognizing and adopting particular views as taught in the Bible and demonstrated in the life of Jesus.1 These beliefs should shape and determine the other philosophies and theories of one’s life, not the least of which is a person’s moral theory. Thus, it is crucial to investigate and weigh the various tenets of moral theories and judge their accordance with the Christian worldview. It is through this investigation that one

1A Christian worldview, or orthodox Christianity, will be defined as accepting the basic tenets of the faith as espoused in the early creeds of the Church. (i.e. Nicene Creed, Apostle’s Creed, and Chalcedonian Creed).
can attempt to find an appropriate method of determining the correct actions to take in multiple circumstances.

It is quite easy to say that it is important to seek out a moral theory which adheres to Christian teachings; it is much more difficult to endeavor to undertake this massive expedition. The theories proposed throughout the centuries of investigation are much too numerous and tedious to even hope to investigate in a project of this nature. Yet, it is beneficial to investigate these theories in relation to the broader categories in which they are placed. While many divisions have been proposed, for the purposes of this paper, deontology should be seen in opposition to teleology. As such, teleology should be understood as entailing those theories which have a metaphysical basis.

Deontological theories, on the other hand, are those which reject metaphysics and place moral determination in the hands of the individual.\(^2\) Within the field of deontology are theories which can be divided into consequentialist and non-consequentialist views. It is of much benefit for a Christian to investigate which theories within teleology and deontology are compatible with the Christian worldview.

There is clearly much value in investigating the merits of all the theories within teleology and deontology. Yet the size of this endeavor is too great for the purposes of this paper. Therefore, this text will be limited to examining facets of only one subcategory of deontology. Thus, focus will be directed toward deontological consequentialism and judging it according to a Christian worldview. While there are numerous consequentialist theories which could be addressed, this paper’s discussion will

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be limited to an analysis of utilitarianism. The arguments herein apply to most, if not all, consequentialist theories, but a study of only one of these theories will make the project easier to handle and limit discussion of particular debatable aspects of theories not vital to a discussion on consequentialism. Thus, it is the purpose of this paper to prove that consequentialism, in general, and utilitarianism, in particular, is incompatible with Christianity. The method for this will be three-fold. First, an explanation of the primary tenets of this theory will be provided. The validity of these tenets will then be judged from a broad workability view. Finally, it will be shown how the proposals of utilitarianism cannot be combined with Christian beliefs. Through this exploration of utilitarianism, it is hoped that the reader will not only thoroughly understand this approach to ethics, but also be able to identify the impossibility of combining this theory with the Christian faith while maintaining faithfulness to God’s word.

**Tenets of Utilitarianism**

Due to the vast number of proponents of Utilitarianism and their varied theories, it is clear that it is no easy task to ascertain the views of utilitarians, as a whole. The plethora of theories and interpretations of these matters makes it impossible to present a precise explanation of all utilitarian perspectives. However, this analysis is not lost, as many, if not most, of these theories hold to some very general positions. While these views will not suffice to explain the intricacies of every utilitarian theory, they will provide an adequate explanation of the broad category into which each of them falls.

One of the first aspects of this theory is that the pursuit of pleasure is central to utilitarianism. Moore describes utilitarians by stating that they “hold that all other things but pleasure, whether conduct or virtue or knowledge, whether life or nature or beauty,
are only good as means to pleasure, or for the sake of pleasure."³ Thus, for the utilitarian, pleasure is the only possessor of intrinsic value.⁴ As has been seen, this theory proposes that the basis of action is the desire to achieve the greatest amount of pleasure possible. As such, it has been described as a “species of hedonism.”⁵ Yet, it should not be understood as the commonly recognized egoistic hedonism, which advocates pursuing maximum individual pleasure. The difference in this form of hedonism and utilitarianism is chiefly found in the recipient of the pleasure. For the egoist, one seeks to gain pleasure for oneself. Contrarily, the focus of the utilitarianism is to maximize pleasure for the whole of humanity. Narveson says, “utilitarianism . . . says that we are to ‘pursue’ the general pleasure, that is, to endeavor to produce as much pleasure as possible, no matter where it is found, nor whose it is.”⁶ Thus, utilitarian theories will have broad objects of pleasure.

Crucial to an understanding of utilitarianism is determining what is meant by the term “pleasure.” Narveson describes a utilitarian understanding of pleasure by stating, “Pleasure is, by definition, good, or perhaps “the good.”⁷ There is much dispute as to how pleasure can be equated with good, if it even can. While a pursuit of this line of discussion can prove beneficial, this subject has been sufficiently belabored by


⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. Emphasis his.
scholars such as G. E. Moore.\(^8\) Thus, for the purposes of this paper, it will be assumed that an adequate explanation as to the nature of pleasure can be provided.\(^9\)

If pleasure is the goal to be pursued in utilitarianism, then the logical consequence of this is that pain is to be avoided. However, many actions produce both pleasure and pain. This presents an obvious dilemma for the utilitarian. Yet, theories of this sort tend to have specific methods for overcoming this problem. Bentham proposed summing up the pleasures and pains to determine whether an action was appropriate.\(^10\) While this process may not be adhered to by all utilitarians, the general principle of summation it is founded upon is appropriate to advocates of this theory.\(^11\) Narveson describes this by stating, “Since in most situations what we do is likely to produce both some pleasure and some pain, we have to settle for the maximum ‘balance’ of pleasure over pain.”\(^12\) This understanding, while not precise enough for some, will suffice for a general explanation of this aspect of utilitarianism.

One aspect of utilitarianism which must be noted at this point is its emphasis on the individual’s role in choosing right actions. Though rule utilitarianism allows for general rules to guide one’s actions, there is no reliance on moral facts. Rather, it is either up to a particular individual to decide the appropriateness of an action or, in the case of some rule utilitarian theories, a rule determined by consensus of individuals to

\(^8\)Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 6-36.

\(^9\)This is hardly a given, but G. E. Moore’s discussion is much more thorough concerning this subject and his writings have been argued at length.


achieve the greatest good. This aspect of utilitarianism stems from the fact that it is a nomalist theory. Utilitarians do not hold to any form of universals, and therefore, are able to place morality in the hands of the individual.

A direct consequence of utilitarians holding to metaphysical nominalism is the fact that utilitarianism is both epistemologically non-cognitivist and relies on motivational externalism. According to the nominalist, universals do not exist. As such, if universals do not exist, moral facts and propositions must also be nonexistent. Thus, the ethicist will have no moral facts whereby he can find truth. The result is that he is classified epistemologically as a non-cognitivist. Shafer-Landau pointedly summarizes this position by saying, “non-cognitivists reject the idea that there are moral propositions, facts, or truths that require reducing.” Certainly, if utilitarians base morality on a system of determining the maximal pleasure of acts as opposed to some type of universals or forms, then they would fall within this epistemological category.

As nominalists and non-cognitivists, utilitarians are necessarily motivational externalists. By definition, motivational internalists hold that moral judgments, based on

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16 Rodriguez-Pereyra, “Nominalism in Metaphysics.”

moral fact, motivate an agent, be it only some form of motivation or sufficient motivation, to right action.\textsuperscript{18} If utilitarianism has no place for moral facts, the only option is for this theory to be classified in the externalist camp. This clearly fits within a practically worked out form of utilitarianism. If one adheres to the previously mentioned methodology, pleasure and pain are clearly the motivators for action. There would be no consideration for moral facts, as they do not exist for the utilitarian.

There might be many more descriptions of utilitarianism which could be presented and might prove beneficial. Yet, the above presentation should suffice to give a general overview of this influential theory. It is in these facets whereby the heart of utilitarianism can be seen. While no synopsis of this theory can adequately lay out all of the tenets of this position, Narveson provides an excellent summary description of utilitarianism in just one sentence. He says, “Our [utilitarians’] duty, at each moment, under any circumstances, is (by definition) to produce the maximum balance of pleasure over pain in as many people as possible.”\textsuperscript{19}

**General Problems with Utilitarianism**

Having laid out a general presentation of the numerous tenets of utilitarianism, it is now time to turn to an analysis of whether this theory is tenable. Before addressing utilitarianism’s compatibility with Christianity, it will be of great benefit to consider whether this theory, as a whole, is a justifiable candidate for morality. It shall be seen that, based on problems dealing with integrity, distributive justice, and value, that


utilitarianism must surmount great difficulties in order to be a viable candidate for morality.

The first critique of utilitarianism relates to its erosion of the personal integrity of an agent. Bernard Williams puts forth this initial concern with this theory and it is reinterpreted in light of objections by Scheffler. In summarizing Williams’ analysis, Scheffler says, “Williams argues that utilitarianism erodes the integrity of individuals by virtue of its strong doctrine of ‘negative responsibility’. On this doctrine, one is as responsible for outcomes one fails to prevent as for outcomes one directly brings about.”\(^\text{20}\) In other words, if an individual is pursuing a particular action and notices evil coming about through another’s actions, and the evil produced will outweigh the good of his own actions, he must abandon his work and seek to impede the evil of the other agent. Williams states his issue with this by saying,

How can a man, as a utilitarian agent, come to regard as one satisfaction among others, and a dispensable one, a project or attitude round which he has built his life, just because someone else’s projects have so structured the causal scene that that is how the utilitarian sum comes out? . . . [This] is to alienate him in a real sense from his actions and the source of his action in his own convictions. It is to make him into a channel between the input of everyone’s projects, including his own, and an output of optimific decision . . . It is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity.\(^\text{21}\)

While Williams’ critique of utilitarianism is correct, it is much too broad and easily refuted. If his analysis is carried out to the full extent, it would undermine all but


egoistic moral theories.\textsuperscript{22} Surely, it is appropriate to forego some personal acts for the greater good. Thus, Williams’ theory, unless it is meant to only allow for egoist theories, must be revamped. Scheffler takes on this challenge and says,

> It [Williams’ objection] should be seen as arising not in response to utilitarianism’s insistence on the in-principle dispensability of the agent’s projects, but rather in response to the discrepancy between the way in which concerns and commitments are naturally generated from a person’s point of view quite independently of the weight of those concerns in an impersonal ranking of overall states affairs, and the way in which utilitarianism requires the agent to treat the concerns generated from his point of view as altogether dependent for their moral significance on their weight in such a ranking.\textsuperscript{23}

It is this sort of impersonal ranking of utilitarianism which proves problematic. This expansion of Williams’ critique allows for some non-egoistic theories to pass through unscathed if they are based on non-consequentialist ideas of the good.\textsuperscript{24} Certainly, Scheffler is accurate in stating that every consequentialist theory “must answer the charge of alienating the agent from his actions and the source of his action in his own convictions, and hence of undermining his integrity.”\textsuperscript{25}

A second critique of utilitarianism, put forth by Rawls and interpreted by Scheffler, concerns the distributive justice found in the theory. Rawls accurately indicts utilitarianism by stating that it “does not take seriously the distinction between persons.”\textsuperscript{26} Scheffler explains the problem by stating, “Because it is concerned to

\textsuperscript{22}Scheffler, \textit{Rejection of Consequentialism}, 8.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., 9. Emphasis his.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 9-10.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 10.

maximize total aggregate satisfaction or utility, classical utilitarianism demands that we channel resources to the relatively well-off whenever that will lead to the required maximization.” The emphasis on total aggregate in utilitarianism clearly puts individuals at risk who may not be able to contribute sufficiently and may thus, lower the aggregate. A theory which has the potential to “sacrifice . . . some people’s life prospects simply in order to increase that sum” is certainly troubled.

The final general difficulty with utilitarianism relates to the issue of value. As previously stated, this theory sees intrinsic value as present only in pleasure and pain. Further, one of the foundational elements of utilitarianism is its reliance on the principle of summation, wherein the sum of the respective parts dictates the value of the whole. However, as Moore and Brentano both show, the principle of summation must be rejected. Instead, they both propose a reliance on the principle of organic unity in the determination of value. According to such a view, the value of the whole stands before the sum of the value of the parts. Moore, in defense of this position, states,

It is certain that a good thing may exist in such a relation to another good thing that the value of the whole thus formed is immensely greater than the sum of the values of the two good things . . . And it seems as if indifferent things may also be the sole constituents of a whole which has great value, either positive of negative.

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27Scheffler, Rejection of Consequentialism, 10. Emphasis his.


Thus, according to Moore’s clearly laid out argument, it appears that theories which rely on the principle of summation, of which utilitarianism is one, should be rejected in favor of those implementing a system which utilizes the principle organic unity.

**Christian Compatibility**

The three previous critiques of utilitarianism are sufficient to undermine confidence in this moral theory. Yet, for some, the importance of these aspects might be debatable. While it is not clear how these can be overcome, a more pointed analysis will prove beneficial. In order to embark on this, it is now appropriate to turn to the specific compatibility of utilitarianism and Christianity. Through this study, it will be seen that, in numerous places, utilitarianism cannot and should not be held by those with a Christian worldview. Though other arguments are meant to undermine this theory for all ethicists, as those above are meant to do, the following will suffice to meet the purposes of this paper in a much less debatable manner.

One of the first problems with utilitarianism, and consequentialism as a whole, is that it is incompatible with the Christian view of God and His creative work. Chappell provides a thorough explanation of this proposition. He proceeds by first laying out three assumptions necessary for his argument.

First, it will be assumed . . . that the preferred way of spelling out the ‘maximize happiness’ slogan is to say that to be a consequentialist in moral action is to be committed to act only so as to maximize the *predominance of happiness over unhappiness* in existence . . . Second, the argument assumes a theological commonplace. That is that, if the God of orthodox Christian belief exists, then He is
in Himself a perfect, infinite, self-sufficient being . . . And third, the argument assumes that, if God exists and is a moral agent, then humans should follow God’s example when shaping their moral agency and theory.  

Based on utilitarian tenets previously described and what is proposed by Chappell concerning Christianity, these assumptions should be recognized and accepted.

At this point, Chappell launches into his proof that “God is not a consequentialist.” If true, this proof will be disastrous to those who believe Christianity is easily compatible with utilitarianism. Chappell’s proof is as follows:

(1) If God exists and is a consequentialist moral agent, then God will act only so as to make it true that the predominance of happiness over unhappiness in existence is maximized. (Definition)
(2) If God exists, then in God’s own existence, the predominance of happiness over unhappiness in existence is maximized. (Metaphysical Premiss)
(3) Therefore, if it is true that God acts, then God will act only so as to make it true that God exists. (1, 2)
(4) Therefore God will not create anything. (3)
(5) But (4) is false: God has created things. (Premiss of observation)
(6) Therefore God, if He exists, is not a consequentialist agent (4, 5) . . .
(7) If God exists, then necessarily, ‘God believes p’ entails ‘p is true’. (Definition)
(8) If God exists, then ‘God is not a consequentialist moral agent’ entails ‘God believes that consequentialism is not true’. (Definition)
(9) Therefore, if God exists, ‘consequentialism is not true’ is true. (6, 7, 8)
(10) Therefore, if God exists, consequentialism is not true. (9)

Chappell continues by pointing out that some might take issue with premise (2). However, he shows that by properly understanding the notion of infinity, this is the only conclusion that can be drawn. He gives two arguments for such an assertion. First, basing his discussion on mathematicians’ use of infinities, he says, “Infinities of the same

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32 Ibid., 240.
33 Ibid.
sort are not seen by them [mathematicians] as being possibly of different sizes.”

Secondly, he goes on to explain that the “predominance of happiness over unhappiness in existence” has been maximized when “there is an infinite amount of happiness in existence, and no unhappiness.” This, he says, would have been achieved before creation and, if God was a consequentialist, then there would have been no need for man to be created. Thus, according to this line of reasoning, utilitarians who propose to hold a Christian worldview are forced to explain why God, who is maximally good, would create mankind.

While he does not believe the above argument to be surmountable, Chappell does conclude his article by giving one further explanation as to why God cannot be a consequentialist. He explains that the presence of theodicy makes this notion incompatible with what is known about the nature of God and the presence of evil in the world. He says,

God presumably knew what He was doing in creating a universe in which the Fall was not only possible, but actually occurred. Yet, according to the consequentialist, in creating it God was aiming, calculating, to maximize the predominance of happiness over unhappiness in existence. Surely this is grossly implausible and hence it seems clear that God could not have created a universe like ours simply with the aim of bringing about any maximally happy state of affairs.

Chappell assumes that some might disagree with this statement based on Romans 8:18, which says, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be

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34Ibid., 241. Emphasis his.
36Ibid.
37Ibid., 242-43.
compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”\textsuperscript{38} Yet, Chappell points out that this verse applies to the question of why God allowed man to fall and not why He created man in the first place.\textsuperscript{39} Thus, this verse is not applicable to the current lines of reasoning.

The thoughts of Chappell are very similar to those of Robert Adams in his article “Must God Create the Best?” In this text, Adams proposes that God is able to create the best possible world, but He chooses not to do so. Yet, he claims that the world created by God is still a perfect world. To argue for this claim, Adams first puts forth a proposition accepted by many philosophers. He says that these individuals hold that “[i]f a perfectly good moral agent created any world at all, it would have to be the very best world that he could create.”\textsuperscript{40} If one holds to this view and to Christian orthodoxy, then it must be concluded that this world is the best possible world. However, based on Chappell’s argument against a consequentialist God, it appears that God would not have created humanity if He was creating the absolute best possible world. Therefore, the proposition accepted by many philosophers is rejected by Adams.

Adams goes on in his essay to argue for this position in a much more detailed manner. However, based on the presentation already given in relation to Chappell, much of these details are not needed at this point. Yet, Adams does provide an interesting argument not previously mentioned. He holds that part of the explanation for this acceptance of the possibility of a better world comes from an understanding of grace.

\textsuperscript{38}I have used the NASB translation throughout this paper, unless otherwise noted.

\textsuperscript{39}Chappell, “Why God is Not a Consequentialist,” 242.

Adams defines grace “as a disposition to love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved.” Assuming the Christian position that God is a gracious God, he goes on to say, “there is nothing in God’s nature or character which would require him to act on the principle of choosing the best possible creatures to be the object of his creative powers.” Thus, according to Adams, a gracious God, though capable of creating the best possible creatures, is not bound to do so.

Adams claims that his position is affirmed by the traditional attitudes toward God by His creation found in scripture. He says,

The man who worships God does not normally praise him for his moral rectitude and good judgement in creating us. He thanks God for his existence as for an undeserved personal favour. Religious writings frequently deprecate the intrinsic worth of human beings, considered apart from God’s love for them, and express surprise that God should concern himself with them at all.

This can be seen in the expressions of numerous followers of God throughout scripture. Of particular note are the writings of the Psalms, in which the author acknowledges the unworthiness of man before God. An example of this is Psalm 8:3-4. It reads:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?

Surely, this is an attitude of thankfulness for the graciousness of God in creating man. As such, it appears that the author recognizes that he is by no means the best possible creation, and yet God still created him. This, implicitly, demands that God did not act in

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41 Ibid., 97-98.
42 Ibid., 98.
43 Ibid.
44 Job (Job 42); Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5); Mary (Luke 1:46-55).
a utilitarian manner. Thus, it seems implausible for man to develop a system in which God did not find it prudent to operate under.

While the above presentation argued that God is not a consequentialist, Meilaender, in his analysis, offers several differing, yet pointed, critiques of this theory in relation to Christianity. Before delving into these, it is important to note that consequentialism seems to be very enticing for those with a Christian worldview. As Meilaender points out, “the power of consequentialist theory – at least within our culture – may be in large part a result of the fact that it sounds like a secularized version of the Christian love command.”45 However, as shall be seen, forcing Christian teachings concerning love into the consequentialist mold is unadvisable, if not heretical. Likewise, similar proposals, such as Christian hedonism, which place an emphasis on enjoyment of God, would also fall under these indictments.46

One of Meilaender’s first difficulties with consequentialist theories is that they give individuals god-like power in determining the correctness of actions. As has previously been stated, if utilitarianism is a nominalist, non-cognitive theory, this assessment is very accurate. Contrary to the position held by Augustine, whereby universal forms exist in the mind of God, utilitarianism places the responsibility for discerning right action on an agent’s, or community’s, determination of what brings about


46John Piper, Desiring God (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003). Though John Piper states that his version of Christian hedonism is not meant to apply to morality (24), the consequences of his proposed theory seem to necessitate some implication for morality. While it may be argued that his version of this theory is non-consequentialist, by definition it appears to be very consequentialist.
maximization of pleasure.\textsuperscript{47} According to a Christian worldview, this seems to be overstepping the bounds of God’s intention for humanity, and ultimately prideful. Meilaender appropriately summarizes this position by stating,

\begin{quote}
But we are not free to try to be like God. And some moral theories seem to seek a standpoint more divine than human \ldots They ask us to will universally or accept responsibility for trying to produce the best overall outcome. Such theories are rooted in a sin still more fundamental than sloth: our \textit{prideful} attempt to free ourselves from our finite location within nature and history.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

Meilaender goes on to present two further critiques of consequentialist theories. First, he echoes and expands Scheffler’s argument that consequentialism limits the autonomy of agents. He notes that “consequentialism demands too much of us, leaves no room for personal autonomy. It moralizes the whole of life – making every decision a moment of obligation and requiring us always to seek what is best overall.”\textsuperscript{49} He goes on to precisely analyze this problem by stating that consequentialism “interposes between us and God a moral theory which destroys our freedom to hear in \textit{different} ways God’s call to delight in the creation and serve the neighbor’s need.”\textsuperscript{50} This elevation of love, at the sacrifice of trust in God, is contrary to orthodox Christian leanings and should be rejected.

A third critique of consequentialism provided by Meilaender concerns whether individuals should, in fact, always “seek the best overall result in their action.”\textsuperscript{51} He

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\textsuperscript{48}Meilaender, “Eritis Sicut Deus,” 399. Emphasis his.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., 404.

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid. Emphasis his.

\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., 407.
\end{flushright}
concludes that Christians ought not to always endeavor to perform acts based on this notion. This is illustrated in the writings of John Henry Cardinal Newman. Newman says, “The Catholic Church holds it better for the sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions on it to die of starvation in extremist agony . . . than that one soul . . . should commit one single venial sin.”\(^5\) While the exact teachings of Newman may be debatable, the point he makes is clear. The Christian is not permitted to do evil in an effort to maximize good. Meileander summarizes this by saying,

The Christian is called in every circumstance of life to trust God . . . But this call does more than free us from the pursuit of good consequences; it also limits the ways in which we may do so. We are not to seek the good by doing evil, by acting in ways which manifest our failure to trust God to care for us and the world, by seeking to take upon ourselves the burden of a divine providential governance.\(^5\)

Meilaender’s three critiques of consequentialism certainly provide much help in assessing whether utilitarianism is compatible with Christianity. Yet, there is one further line of argument, alluded to previously, that must be addressed in this discussion. This relates directly to the metaphysical and metaethical presuppositions of utilitarian theory. As mentioned above, utilitarianism demands nominalism, non-cognitivism, and motivational externalism. It is necessary, for the present task, to analyze whether these three facets are harmonious with the metaphysical and metaethical demands of Christianity. It will be shown that they are, in no uncertain terms, incompatible.


\(^{5}\)Meileander, “Eritis Sicut Deus,” 409-10.
As has been seen, Augustine has great difficulty with the above positions. For him, and many subsequent theologians, moral facts do exist.\(^4\) In defining realism, Shaffer-Landau says,

> Realists believe that there are moral truths that obtain independently of any preferred perspective, in the sense that the moral standards that fix the moral facts are not made true by virtue of their ratification from within any given actual or hypothetical perspective.”\(^5\)

If this definition is granted, and Christianity stands in agreement with Augustine that universals do exist, then these two systems cannot be combined. Granted, while some theologians might not agree with the precise teachings of Augustine, Christian orthodoxy, based on scriptural teachings, demands agreement with the existence of universals.

William Murphy explains:

> The nominalist and modern rejection of ontological change undermines what we might call the theological foundations of Christian ethics. The NT emphasizes theological foundations for moral action through reference to realities such as the fulfillment of the Law and prophets in the person of Christ (Mt 5:17-20), christological transformation of human persons through the “renewal of the mind” as the foundation for Christian moral action (Rom 12:102), and the perfection of human freedom (Gal 5:16-25; Rom 8:1-17) in the truth (Jn 8:32), through the Holy Spirit.\(^6\)

This line of reasoning is echoed in Oliver O’Donovan’s work *Resurrection and Moral Order*. In this text, he says,

> The order of things that God has made is there. It is objective and mankind has a place within it. Christian ethics, therefore, has an objective reference because it is


concerned with man’s life in accordance with this order. . . Thus Christian moral judgments in principle address every man.\textsuperscript{57}

O’Donovan pointedly concludes: “Since creation, and human nature with it, are reaffirmed in the resurrection, we must firmly reject the idea that Christian ethics is esoteric, opted into by those who so choose, irrelevant for those who do not choose.”\textsuperscript{58}

Thus, it appears from these clear statements, that scriptural teachings demand universals. As such, those with a Christian worldview, by necessity, should be metaphysical realists.

If it is granted that metaphysical realism is a Christian position, the logical consequence of this seems to be epistemological cognitivism. Shaffer-Landau says that “a view is cognitivist if it allows for a central class of judgements within a domain to count as beliefs, capable of being true or false in virtue of the more or less accurate representation of the facts within the domain.”\textsuperscript{59} Taken as such, one possessing a Christian worldview should be classified as a cognitivist if he is a moral realist. Shaffer-Landau again explains: “Realists see moral judgements as beliefs, some of which are true, and true in virtue of correctly reporting moral facts.”\textsuperscript{60}

In relation to motivation, ethical theories are described as being either internal or external. Internalism holds that moral judgments are motivating. These theories promote the idea that there is something within the judgment, namely moral fact, that motivates the agent. There are various understandings of this relationship, some stating


\textsuperscript{58}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59}Shaffer-Landau, \textit{Moral Realism}, 17.

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid.
that the judgments are motivating, but defeasible, while others claim that judgments are indefeasibly motivating. Externalism, on the other hand, holds that judgments are not necessarily motivating. Rosati explains:

Because the externalist denies the existence of a necessary connection between moral judgment and motivation, the externalist thesis leaves us in need of an independent explanation of moral motivation. The internalist maintains that any such explanation will fall short.  

With this understanding, combined with the moral realism and cognitivism, it only seems appropriate that Christianity be classified in the internalist camp. If a person possesses a Christian worldview, acknowledging the existence of moral facts, these facts will be seen as motivating. They will not be reliant, in any way, on contingent theories to produce motivation.

With this understanding of the Christian position concerning metaphysics, epistemology, and motivation, an ethicist with a Christian worldview must reject utilitarianism in order to be coherent. Utilitarianism, as previously shown, places morality in the hands of man, rather than basing it on metaphysics. Thus, this theory cannot be cognitive and is motivationally contingent on external explanations. Thus, it should be clear that utilitarianism is not compatible with the Christian worldview. The only way to make utilitarian theories harmonious with the demands of Christianity is to adjust, at minimum, these three presuppositions. Yet, if such an attempt was endeavored upon, the results would be an entirely different species than utilitarianism.

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Conclusion

Utilitarian theories have had a long and tumultuous journey to their present forms. Yet, throughout its history and many adaptations, utilitarianism is, at the core, a theory concerned with bringing about the greatest amount of pleasure for the greatest number of people. While this may seem a plausible view for many within Christendom, it is, in fact, contrary to the teachings of scripture. The numerous reasons for this statement have been seen briefly above and should be clear to the reader at this point. Thus, it can only be concluded that utilitarianism be rejected by those adhering to a Christian worldview, if not generally by all ethicists.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


**Articles**


