# Utilitarianism and democracy

The brute fact of democracy is that it is not compatible with utilitarianism unless one bundles it with specific empirical assumptions. To see this clearly it is worth expounding why this is the case.

Democracy is a process. By a process I mean that it is a certain method of doing achieving goals. When one says something akin to ‘we decided democratically’, they are not describing anything about what was decided but instead they are describing the process by which it was arrived at.

A process is not a consequence. This should need no expounding upon, the distinctions between means and ends has been expounded upon at length in various places. This is not to deny that the process and consequence don’t have an empirical relationship of sorts. But this will be expounded upon in the chapter about how utilitarian’s valuing consent.

# Utilitarianism and doctors

Utilitarianism has always been the method of optimization of doctors, yet it used to be that they took the Hippocratic oath rather seriously. The oath entails that maximizing utility is only acceptable if consent is present. This was historically not only a reasonable rule to follow but it also allowed doctors to avoid the accusation that they did not respect the autonomy of individuals. Ever since the state has been involved in medicine, the Hippocratic oath has gradually been transposed with unconstrained ideas like ‘public health’.

# Utilitarianism and the economists

When economists used to entail a sort of politics and philosophy to go with it, the was much more temperance on interpersonal comparisons of utility. Yet as the profession adopted an increasingly wider array of mathematical techniques it soon became clear that most of these techniques could only yield insights within the context of interpersonal comparisons. As such, utilitarianism was not adopted because it was found to be ethically correct or intuitive but because economists wanted to optimize something. When you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

Economists have also done the impossible, they even managed to convinced lawyers. The ideology has leaked into the legal profession, a whole generation of judges and lawyers received training in law and economics, most of these trainings came from the Chicago school of economics. It is also routine in France to use the judicial system to inflict damage on ones opponents.

# Utilitarianism and public health

During the COVID pandemic, endless constitutional guarantees were violated in the name of ‘public health’, which is really just another way of saying utility. Try and think of a case where the two don’t entail the same thing.

Finally, the historical examples of interpersonal comparisons of utility are found in more or less every ideological regime, soviets, Nazi’s etc.

The reality is that justifying rights by the method of utility, in fact, degrades rights. Right wingers in the US know very well that for every piece of legislation that creates rights as a means to increase utility, their own rights to hold a gun are being debased.

# Utilitarianism as brainwashing

A subtle form of brainwashing that goes on in modern discourse is to present information in such a way such that begin to doubt your own sanity. This occurs everyday and isn’t only a question of the language that is employed or the frequency of the employed message. The most common way this propagates is by skipping ten steps ahead of the conversation. By instilling utilitarianism into the minds of the populace, it is possible to avoid having a conversation about fundamentals or traditional morality altogether. Take some from modern politics:

1. How can we make things more democratic? (Assume things ought to be more democratic)
2. How can we increase voter turnout? (Assumes that people who can vote, should vote)
3. How do we abide closer to the one person, one vote ideal? (Assume that everyone should have equal weight)

For juxtaposition let’s look at some framing

1. Why should this community use the democratic process? (A more open invitation to give reasons for democracy vs other systems, even anarchy)
2. What weight should voices outside of the community have in how this community organizes? (more open because the weight could be zero)

Note that these two questions are assumed to have been answered when one answers the former two. We could also frame this tactic as fixing the END and then leaving the process of arriving at this end up for discussion. This is exactly the kind of logic that utilitarianism has introduced into the public discourse.

The effectiveness of different mediums in using this tactic vary widely.

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There are various

The least effective way to gaslight you is books. When something is written down, it is usually much more obvious to detect the error. It is possible to convince people of a narrative that is faulty and broken but it is much harder to skip steps in the argument.

The written form, when it aims to gaslight is requires repetition and must avoid presenting reasons but instead presents facts. The facts themselves are most often irrelevant to the point being made, they instead attack positions which sound tangentially similar.

A more effective way to gaslight is education. You are exceedingly unlikely to have a lawyer who doesn’t believe in the rule of law or a doctor who does not believe in the efficacy of medicine. This is because when education is institutionalized, what is effectively being done is that those who go through the institutionalized process are in fact tying their own wellbeing to the wellbeing of that institution. Those who do international politics have a vested interest in the existence of the international community, those who study business have a vested interest in a thriving business community. Nobody wishes to believe that their educational skills are rooted in memorization or conformity.

## In media

The most obvious way to achieve this kind of gaslighting is through movies and series. I do not think it worthwhile to mention any specific one since I believe all of these series will be forgotten shortly. Since the stickiness of this gaslighting is so low, the only way to maintain the norms that are propagated through media is through a continuous production said content. The attitude towards voting and LGBTQ and the rest would quickly revert back to what they were 60 years ago, perhaps in less than 20 years, if this gaslighting would end. This normative culture is highly dependent on a continuous stream of propaganda encouraging such attitudes. There are some rather idiotic attacks on this trend to include more women or LGBTQ characters in from what is dubbed ‘classical’ liberal. These attacks take the form of ‘But there really aren’t that many black lesbians you are over representing them’ or “but ancient greeks never represented Zeus as a black guy” and “It was probably exceedingly rare to have a black centurion in Rome” but these critiques are simply missing the point. The goal of these representations is not historical accuracy but to maintain control of the culture. Any culture which is degenerate, has fewer children, has no capacity to create independent communities, can only propagate itself through a continuous stream of propaganda.

The most common form of gaslighting is done through visual artistic representations. In 2021 this takes the form of movies and tv series. Gaslighting is done by creating characters who have likeable character traits, such as generosity, , suffering, heroism, intelligence and selflessness and then transposing some attributes to them which the propagandist wants the public to accept. The way this propaganda works is as following:

1. You like/dislike this character.
2. This character has Y attribute.
3. Therefore, you can/dislike like characters with this attribute.

If someone was trying to attack Christianity, and support LGBTQ lifestyles, then they would simply attempt to make you like the LGBTQ character and dislike the Christian one. Notice that this artistic form has no relationship to reality at all. These arguments are all irrelevant because they completely miss the more relevant question of the causal relationship of attributes to the wanted or unwanted behavior. In other words, you could portray a fox as grizzly bear as charitable and intelligent, even if all grizzly bears are dumb and greedy.

All artists have a certain vision of the world they wish to convey. The relevant question isn’t whether their art is a form of gaslighting or not, but whether the gaslighting is in service to some political agenda. Perhaps the best heuristic is whether the art IS reducible to some words of political propaganda. For example, a movie like the Godfather or Taxi driver, though they may be politically motivated, are not reducible to political propaganda. In Taxi driver, much of the theme is a sort of alienation from society one finds and that the attempts to ease this feeling of alienation have an erratic character to them.

Even a movie like American beauty, which is also filled with political propaganda is not in itself gaslighting. For example, it attempts to portray two girls, a girl who is pretty on the outside but boring on the inside and vice versa for the second. The film tries to convince us that the one who is pretty on the inside is more beautiful. Or at the same time, there is an attack on the notion of marriage by portraying these marriages are broken. It should be no surprise to learn that the creator of this film is an LGBTQ activist.

## Utilitarianism

When it comes to political and economic questions there is another, form of gaslighting that is even more common, utilitarianism. In academic circles, there is sometimes discussion of maximizing the min instead of utilitarianism but in fact maximizing the minimum, as an end, is merely a special case of utilitarianism.

It is often assumed that the goal of foreign policy is to maximize the sum of pleasures and pains. In fact, the way anti-war activists often attack is by trying to reclaim the banner of utilitarianism. For instance, somebody may say that Afghanistan was invaded so that we could give them women’s rights and make their people happier as a result. The utilitarian counter arguments take the form of: We don’t have the capacity to make them happier in the long run because our administrative capabilities are overrated. Or they take the form of denying the utilitarian motives in the first place: “Don’t bullshit me, you only want us to there for the petrol”.

But this whole discussion just SKIPS over whether it is the GOAL of foreign policy to go around maximizing utility in the first place. As such, the gaslighting of utilitarianism is fairly straightforward, it makes it so that everybody can join in the argument and assumes that whoever has the best argument ought to win. Naturally, people who specialize in arguments will tend to be the winners, which means the entailment of utilitarianism is that academics should rule.

On the one hand this resembles Plato’s philosopher king but this resemblance is only fleeting because Plato’s philosopher king was not in fact somebody who specialized in arguments but somebody who understood that everything has it’s place.

Similarly, the only economic debate that slips into politics is the divide between Keynesians and Chicago style economics. That is, the goal is to maximize GDP growth (which is taken as a proxy of utility), and the only question is which school best maximizes it. In fact, without utilitarianism, these debates have no relevance.

There is only a disagreement about the long run. The Keynesians say that without stimulus, the economy will stay in crisis for a longer time and that this will have a much higher effect on long term GDP, and the Chicago school says that the market is efficient and that intervention will likely get in the way of this efficiency. Of course, the Chicago argument is purposefully weak so as to justify the political intervention.

The utilitarian has no room for unjustified hierarchies in his framework. If the obstacle to increasing the unemployment rate is making a class of people extremely wealthy, then a utilitarian will happily make that class extremely wealthy. For example, Elon Musk, before government intervention, was worth less than a billion. Through a combination of subsidies, in the forms of grants, carbon taxes, lower interest loans, he was made one of the richest people in the world.

A rather strange feature of this form of arguing is that everybody is tempted to structure their argument within this language. Instead of questioning the authority or relationships that are in place, you are pushed to question their reasons for belief.

Perhaps these questions would be less controversial if we only imagined that there is some person who is looking for work and absence our intervention they would take years to find it, but with out intervention they would take a month.

Of course, it may be that intervention will cause markets to become more centered around a few firms, which will give them market power, which will leave very low surplus for local producers, which will cause a mass urbanization.

The question in all these economic policy questions, instead of being, do I have a right

A lot has been made of economic disagreements, freshwater vs saltwater or Keynesians vs Chicago vs Post Keynesian. Yet these arguments are all a sort of gaslightning.

Very clever things can be said. To say clever things, you must take a familiar situation and give the reader a new way of thinking about it. Doing this exercise will make the reader have to stop and think and be in awe as to why they did not think of that. The goal of saying clever things is