CHAPTER 5

Consequentialism

Here we begin our extensive investigation into normative ethical theory, the area of philosophy that tries to identify the fundamental principles of morality. First up: **consequentialism**, a family of theories that places the emphasis on the consequences of our actions as the way to determine whether they are right or wrong.

A. THE NATURE OF CONSEQUENTIALISM

Consequentialism says that *an action is morally required just because it produces the best overall results*. Economists have coined a special word for this feature—being **optimific**. But how can we determine whether an act is optimific (i.e., whether it yields the best results)? It won't always be an easy thing to do in practice. But in theory, it's pretty straightforward. There are five steps to this process:

1. First, identify what is **intrinsically good**—valuable in and of itself, and worth having for its own sake. Familiar candidates include happiness, autonomy, knowledge, and virtue.
2. Next, identify what is intrinsically bad (i.e., bad all by itself). Examples might include physical pain, mental anguish, sadistic impulses, and the betrayal of innocents.
3. Then determine all of your options. Which actions are open to you at the moment?
4. For each option, determine the value of its results. How much of what is intrinsically good will each action bring about? How much of what is intrinsically bad?
5. Finally, pick the action that yields the greatest net balance of good over bad. That is the optimific choice. That is your moral duty. Doing anything else is immoral.

We can develop dozens of different versions of consequentialism, depending on which things we regard as intrinsically valuable. The many consequentialist alternatives include, for instance, views that state that acts are right if and only if they yield the greatest improvement in environmental health, or best advance the cause of world peace, or do more than any other action to increase the amount of knowledge in the world. Each of these is a version of consequentialism.

Thus consequentialism isn't just a single theory, but is rather a family of theories, united by their agreement that results are what matter in ethics. We can't discuss every member of the family here, so I will restrict my attention, for the most part, to its most prominent version—**act utilitarianism**.

According to act utilitarianism, well-being is the only thing that is intrinsically valuable. And faring poorly is the only thing that is intrinsically bad. Thus this view states that *an action is morally required if and only if it does more to improve overall well-being than any other action you could have done in the circumstances*. Philosophers call this ultimate moral standard the **principle of utility**. The focus, importantly, is on maximizing the *overall* amount of well-being in the world—not just yours, not just mine, but that of everyone affected by our actions. When we fail to maximize good results, we act wrongly, even if we had the best intentions. Though good

intentions may earn us praise, they are, according to utilitarians, irrelevant to an action's morality.

B. THE ATTRACTIONS OF UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarianism has garnered a lot of followers, not only among philosophers but also, especially, among economists and politicians. Let's consider some of its major selling points here, before turning our attention to some of its potential drawbacks.

Utilitarianism is a doctrine of impartiality, and this is one of its great strengths. It tells us that the welfare of each person is equally morally valuable. Whether rich or poor, white or black, male or female, religious or not, your well-being is just as important as anyone else's. Everyone's well-being counts, and everyone's well-being counts equally.

A second attraction is utilitarianism's ability to justify our basic moral beliefs. Consider the things we regard, deep down, as seriously immoral: slavery, rape, humiliating defenseless people, killing innocent victims. Each of these clearly tends to do more harm than good. Utilitarianism condemns such acts. So do we.

Now consider the things we strongly believe to be morally right: helping the poor, keeping promises, telling the truth, bravely facing danger. Such actions are highly beneficial. Utilitarianism commends them. So do we.

A third benefit of utilitarianism is its ability to provide advice about how to resolve moral conflicts. Because it has just a single ultimate rule—maximize well-being—it can offer concrete guidance where it is most needed.

Consider this familiar moral puzzle. I overhear some nasty gossip about my friend. She later asks me whether people have been spreading rumors about her. I know that she is extremely sensitive, and that if I answer honestly, it will send her into a downward spiral for several days. I also know that the source of this gossip is someone who actually likes my friend, and was acting impulsively and out of character. She's probably feeling bad about it already, and probably won't repeat this unkindness.

Of course, we need to know a lot more about the situation before we can be confident about a recommendation, but if we just stick with the details given here, the utilitarian will advise me not to reveal what I have heard. Honesty may be the best *policy*, but that doesn't mean that full disclosure is always called for. When we consider our options, utilitarians tell us to pick the one that increases overall well-being. Telling the truth won't always do that.

Utilitarianism is also a doctrine that provides great moral flexibility—a fourth benefit. For utilitarians, no moral rule (other than the principle of utility) is **absolute**. An absolute rule is one that is not to be violated under any conditions. According to utilitarianism, it is morally okay to violate any rule—even one that prohibits cannibalism, or torture, or the killing of innocents—if doing so will raise overall well-being.

Most of us think that moral rules must allow some exceptions. But where to draw the line? How do we know whether to follow a moral rule or to break it? Utilitarianism gives us an answer. Morality is not a free-for-all. It is not a case of "anything goes." We ordinarily do best when we obey the familiar moral rules (don't steal, lie, kill, etc.). But there are times when we must stray from the conventional path in order to improve overall welfare. When we do this, we do right—even if it means breaking the traditional moral rules.

A fifth benefit of utilitarianism is its insistence that every person is a member of the **moral community**. To be a member of the moral community is to be important in your own right. It is to be owed a certain amount of respect. Membership in the moral community imposes a duty on everyone else to take one's needs seriously, for one's own sake.

Importantly, utilitarians also argue that nonhuman animals are members of the moral community. The reasoning behind their inclusion is recorded in a famous slogan by the pioneering

utilitarian Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832): "the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?"[1] According to utilitarians, animals are important in their own right. Their importance does not depend on whether we happen to care about them. And the utilitarian explanation of this is very plausible: animals count because they can suffer.

Just to be clear, utilitarians allow that it is sometimes okay to harm members of the moral community. There are many cases in which maximizing overall well-being comes at a price. For instance, it may be acceptable to conduct certain intensely painful animal experiments, provided that they bring about very beneficial results. The point here is that, from the utilitarian perspective, we are not allowed to ignore the suffering of others. It doesn't matter whether the victims are human beings or not.

C. SOME DIFFICULTIES FOR UTILITARIANISM

One problem for utilitarianism is that it seems like a very demanding theory, in two respects. A plausible moral theory is one that most of us can live by. But asking us to be constantly benevolent, never taking more than a moment or two for ourselves—how many of us can be so altruistic? If no one but a saint can meet its standards, then utilitarianism is in deep trouble.

Utilitarians would agree with this. They do *not* believe that we must always be strategizing about how to improve the world. The reason is simple. People motivated in this way usually fail to achieve their goal.

The idea is that those who are always trying to get the best outcome are often bound to miss it. This isn't as strange as it sounds. Think of people whose sole purpose in life is to be as happy as they can be. Such people are rarely very happy. Constantly striving for this goal only makes it more elusive.

1. Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1781), ch. 17.

Utilitarians insist that we distinguish between a **decision procedure** and a **standard of rightness**. A decision procedure is just what it sounds like—a method for reliably guiding our decisions, so that when we use it well, we make decisions as we ought to. A standard of rightness tells us the conditions that make actions morally right.

Utilitarianism is, above all, a standard of rightness. It says that an action is right if and only if it is optimific. Importantly, a standard of rightness need not be a good decision procedure. Indeed, most consequentialists think that their standard of rightness—the principle of utility—fails as a decision procedure. Unless we find ourselves in very unusual circumstances, we should *not* be asking ourselves whether the act we are about to do is optimific.

The reasons given earlier explain this. Using the principle of utility as a decision procedure would probably *decrease* the amount of good we do in the world. That's because we would probably spend too much time deliberating or second-guessing our motivations, thereby reducing our chances of doing good. Whenever that is so, utilitarians require that we use something other than the principle of utility to guide our deliberations and motivations.

But mightn't utilitarianism demand too much of us in the way of self-sacrifice? Even if we needn't always deliberate with an eye to doing what is optimific, and even if we needn't always have a saint's motivations, we really must act so as to achieve optimific results. Whenever we fail, we are behaving immorally. That is bound to strike most people as excessive.

It appears that a consistently utilitarian lifestyle would be one of great and constant self-sacrifice. Anytime you can do more good for others than you can for yourself, you are required to do so. If you are like most readers of this book—in no danger of starvation, able to afford a night out, a new pair of jeans, a vacation every so often—then utilitarianism calls on you to do a great deal more for others than you are probably doing.

If I have a choice between spending $1,000 on a beach vacation and sending that money to UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund), it's an easy call. UNICEF literature claims that $1,000 can provide 100 families with a basic water kit for use during emergencies, immunize 1,000 children against polio, or provide enough woolen blankets to cover 250 children during winter-weather emergencies. I'd be unhappy if I had to give up my vacation. But my unhappiness pales in comparison to the suffering of those whose lives could be saved if I spent my money on them, rather than myself. If utilitarianism is correct, then no more vacations for me (or you, probably).

There is an important lesson here: utilitarianism cannot make room for **supererogation**—action that is "above and beyond the call of duty." Such behavior is admirable and praiseworthy, but is not required. A classic case of supererogation is that of a bystander dashing into a burning building in order to rescue strangers trapped inside. Utilitarians must deny that even this is a case of supererogation, because they deny that *any* actions are above and beyond the call of duty. Our moral duty is to do the very best we can do. If, among all of the options available to you at the time, dashing into the building is going to minimize harm, then this is what you must do. Attempting the rescue isn't optional. It is your duty.

Another worry about utilitarianism, ironically, is its attachment to impartiality. The impartiality required by utilitarianism really is a substantial benefit of the theory. The happiness of a celebrity or a billionaire is no more important than that of a homeless person or a refugee. From the moral point of view, everyone counts equally; no one's interests are more important than anyone else's.

Yet there is also something worrying about impartiality, since morality sometimes seems to recommend *partiality*. It seems right, for instance, that I care about my children more than your children, that I care more for friends than strangers, more for my fellow citizens than those living halfway around the world. And it also seems right to translate my care into action. If I have saved a bit of money, and it could either pay for my son's minor surgery or relieve the greater suffering of famine victims, most of us will think it at least permissible to pay the surgeon. But to do that is to be partial to the interests of my son. Utilitarianism does not allow that. It rejects the idea that a person, just because he is my son, my dear friend, or my fellow citizen, is more deserving of my help and attention.

Utilitarians can argue that there are many situations in which we should give preference to our near and dear—not because they deserve it or are more important than strangers, but because that is what is most beneficial. They could argue, for instance, that the results of sending my money overseas would actually be worse than relieving my son's suffering. Utilitarians will remind us that we must consider all consequences, not just short-term ones. If I were to sacrifice my son's interests so readily, he would feel hurt, and less secure in my love for him. These feelings are bad in themselves and would probably cause further harm in the long run. By contrast, famine victims who don't even know me won't feel slighted by my passing them over so that I can care for my son's needs. So if we take a sufficiently broad view of things, we can see that being partial to the interests of family and friends is usually optimific after all.

This sort of reasoning is sometimes correct. When all is said and done, we often get better results when focusing on family, friends, and fellow citizens. But not always. After all, in the tale just told, the long-term result of my not sending famine aid is that some people actually die, whereas my son, though in pain and perhaps resentful of my sending the money abroad, would still be very much alive. From an impartial point of view, the death of famine victims is surely worse than my son's medical problems. When minimizing harm means giving one's time or money to strangers, utilitarianism

requires that we do so—even if that means sacrificing the important needs of friends and family.

This emphasis on impartiality leads to another problem. We are to count everyone's well-being equally. But suppose that nearly everyone in a society has a deep-seated prejudice against a small minority group. And suppose, further, that they use this prejudice to defend a policy of enslavement. Depending on the circumstances, it could be that utilitarianism *requires* slavery in this society.

When deciding the matter, we must take all of the harms to the slaves into account. But we must also consider the benefits to their oppressors. Everyone's interests count equally. Rich or poor, white or black, male or female. So far, so good. But also: ignorant or wise, just or unjust, kind or malicious—everyone's interests count, equally. If enough people are sufficiently mean and ignorant, then utilitarianism can require that we allow the sufferings they cause. Though such cases are not likely to occur that frequently, they can. And when they do, utilitarianism sides with the oppressors. That is a serious problem for any moral theory.

Perhaps the greatest problem for utilitarianism can be simply put: we must maximize well-being, but sometimes we can do this only by committing some serious injustice. Moral theories should not permit, much less require, that we act unjustly. Therefore, there is something deeply wrong about utilitarianism.

To do justice is to respect rights; to commit injustice is to violate rights. If it is ever optimific to violate rights, then utilitarianism requires us to do so.

Consider an example from wartime: **vicarious punishment**, which targets innocent people as a way to deter the guilty. Such a tactic often backfires. But it can sometimes be extremely effective. You might stop terrorists from their dirty work by abducting and threatening to torture their relatives. You might prevent guerilla attacks by killing the residents of the villages that shelter them. Though the torture and deliberate killing of innocent civilians certainly infringes their rights, the utilitarian will require that it be done if it prevents even greater harm.

Cases of vicarious punishment are cases in which people do not deserve to be harmed. There are also many examples in which people do deserve some sort of penalty or punishment, but it is not optimific to give them their just deserts. Think of situations in which a student rightly receives a failing grade and appeals for a better one. Sometimes it really would be most beneficial to give the student the grade he wants, rather than the grade he has earned. Perhaps a job or a scholarship is on the line. If the benefits outweigh the costs, utilitarianism requires that the professor change the grade.

There are more serious cases. After World War II, US officials determined that it was beneficial to allow many Nazi scientists to escape punishment, so long as they agreed to share their weapons intelligence. Prosecutors sometimes let acknowledged murderers go free, if the killers testify against the crime bosses who once hired them. Political leaders with blood on their hands are often allowed to retire peacefully, so as to avoid the civil strife that would result were they prosecuted for their crimes. If utilitarianism is correct, then we must minimize harm—even if doing so means letting the guilty escape justice.

For as long as utilitarianism has been around, its fans have had to deal with the objection that it shortchanges justice. They have had ample time to develop replies. Let's consider these replies by framing each of them as a response to

The Argument from Injustice

1. The correct moral theory will never require us to commit serious injustices.
2. Utilitarianism sometimes requires us to commit serious injustices.
3. Therefore utilitarianism is not the correct moral theory.

There are four replies that are especially important. The first is that justice is also intrinsically valuable. It might sound puzzling, but those who make this first reply accept this argument in every respect. Utilitarianism cannot allow for the independent importance of justice, and that disqualifies it from being a good moral theory. Strictly speaking, then, utilitarianism is false. But if we make a small change to the doctrine, then all will be well.

A defining feature of utilitarianism is its view that well-being is the only thing that is intrinsically valuable. Suppose we amend that, and say that justice is also important in its own right. So we should maximize well-being *and* maximize justice in the world. That will solve the difficulty.

Or will it? If we are to maximize happiness and justice, what happens when we can't do both? Which should we give priority to?

We could say: always give priority to justice. But this isn't very plausible. Suppose that there has been gridlock in the state legislature. For months, lawmakers have been unable to pass a spending bill. Finally, a compromise package comes to the floor. If it doesn't get passed, there is no telling when another spending package will be voted on. In the meantime, government will shut down, and tens of thousands of people will not receive paychecks, medical assistance, or welfare support. Furthermore, the spending bill looks *terrific*. It solves a great number of the state's problems, gives aid to the neediest, and sponsors projects that will do genuine good for most communities. There is only one problem: it includes a clause that unfairly denies a small community the agricultural subsidies that the governor had promised it. Still, given the alternatives, a legislator should definitely vote for the spending bill, even though this means a minor injustice. As a general matter, if the stakes are extremely high, and the injustice very small, then it *may* be right to perpetrate injustice.

Rather than always giving priority to justice, we might instead always give priority to well-being. But then we are right back to the original theory, and so have made no progress in solving the problem of injustice.

What seems right to say is this: sometimes it's best to prefer well-being to justice, and sometimes not. But without any principle to sort this out, we don't really have a coherent theory at all.

In the face of this problem, some utilitarians opt for a second reply, and claim that injustice is never optimific. This amounts to denying premise 2. Those who favor this second reply say that if we carefully consider all of the results of unfair actions, we will see that those actions aren't really optimific. A policy of vicarious punishment, for instance, may work in the short run. But it will cause such anger among the target population that an even greater number of them will join the opposition. And that will mean more innocent bloodshed over time.

Such a calculation is certainly true in many cases. But it is unwarranted optimism to suppose that things will always work out so fortunately. Sometimes, for instance, terror movements do lose support when the surrounding civilian population is forced to take the hit. Injustice can sometimes prevent great harm. It can, on occasion, also produce great benefits. We can't tell the many stories of the criminals who have gotten away with it, because their happiness depends on their crimes remaining secret. In some of these cases, there is substantial benefit and little or no harm. Utilitarianism must approve of such actions.

A third reply to the problem of justice denies premise 1 of the Argument from Injustice. Those who offer this reply allow that well-being and justice sometimes conflict. But when they do, it is justice, and not well-being, that must take a backseat. Justice is only a part, not the whole, of morality. Of course it is important to respect people's rights, but that is because doing so is

usually optimific. When it isn't, rights must be sacrificed. So premise 1 of the Argument from Injustice is false.

Utilitarians who defend this strategy know that their recommendations will sometimes clash with conventional wisdom. But as we have seen, this is not a fatal flaw. Received opinion is not the final word in ethics. Utilitarianism began its life as a radical doctrine. That legacy remains.

Utilitarians can claim that our deepest moral convictions, including those that require us to do justice, reflect a utilitarian framework. We are socialized to tell the truth, protect the weak, keep our promises, and so on, *because doing so tends to be optimific*. But when it is not, utilitarians ask us to look at morality's ultimate standard, and to set aside our ordinary scruples in favor of the principle of utility.

Most of us agree that justice can sometimes be outweighed by other moral concerns. If, in a previous example, a legislator must authorize a minor injustice in order to pass an immensely beneficial spending bill, then morality gives the go-ahead. If you can administer CPR to a stricken passerby, and so save his life, then it is worth committing a minor injustice to do so. So justice may sometimes be sacrificed. But when? Utilitarians have an answer: whenever the results of doing so are optimific. If you don't like that answer, you need to supply a better principle that tells us when injustice is, and is not, permitted.

A fourth reply enables us to develop a closely related moral theory that deserves special mention here, because it promises to handle a number of objections to utilitarianism, while keeping much of its spirit. This is **rule consequentialism**—the view that *an action is morally right just because it is required by an* ***optimific social rule***.

An optimific social rule is a rule that meets the following condition: if (nearly) everyone in a society were to accept it, then the results would be optimific.

The basic idea is this. Rather than determine an action's morality by asking about its results, we ask instead about whether the action conforms to a moral rule. This is a familiar model in ethics. Most moral theories operate this way. What distinguishes them from one another is their different claims about what makes something a moral rule. Rule consequentialists have a specific view about this. The moral rules are the optimific social rules.

To know whether a rule is an optimific social rule, follow these three steps:

1. Carefully describe the rule.
2. Imagine what a society would be like if just about everyone in it endorsed the rule.
3. Then ask this question: will that society be better off with this rule than with any competing rule?

If the answer to this question is *yes*, then this rule is an optimific social rule. If the answer is *no*, then it isn't an optimific social rule, and so is not a genuine moral rule.

Rule consequentialism will probably instruct professors to give their students the grades they deserve, rather than those they would like to have. It will condemn the actions of thieves, even if they don't get caught and their victims suffer in only minor ways. It will likely prohibit such practices as vicarious punishment. When we focus on what is optimific as a general policy, we repeatedly get advice that agrees with our notions of justice. Even rule consequentialists who reject the intrinsic value of justice, and insist that well-being is the only thing of ultimate value, will almost always defend policies that are just. That's because in the long run, and as a general matter, just *policies* maximize well-being, even if, in isolated cases, just *actions* do not.

Rule consequentialism also solves other problems with act utilitarianism. It supports our belief that morality permits a certain degree of partiality, because policies that allow

us to give preference to friends, loved ones, and fellow citizens will very often be highly beneficial.

Rule consequentialism can also say that certain actions are simply forbidden, even if they will sometimes achieve very good results. For instance, even if it would be optimific here and now to torture a prisoner, there may well be an optimific rule that forbids political torture. In most cases and over the long run, societies that ban torture may be much better off, in terms of both happiness and justice, than those that allow their officials to torture prisoners. If that is so, then torture is immoral—even if, in unusual cases, it yields real benefits.

So rule consequentialism has a lot going for it. And yet very few philosophers accept it. The reason was given over fifty years ago, by a prominent Australian philosopher, J. J. C. Smart.[2] In defending act utilitarianism, Smart accused rule consequentialists of irrational rule worship. That charge has stuck.

The basic worry is simple. Rule consequentialists demand that we obey moral rules, *even when we know that breaking them would yield better results*. But that is irrational, since in these cases, consequentialists know in advance that their ultimate goal (making the world the best place it can be) will not be fulfilled. It is irrational to knowingly defeat your own goals. Rule consequentialists do this whenever they issue a recommendation that differs from act utilitarianism.

Act utilitarianism demands that we always to do what is optimific. So, by definition, whenever rule consequentialists give us different advice, we are required to act in a way that fails to yield the best results. Rule consequentialists would forbid torture and embezzlement and vicarious punishment—even when specific instances of such action would be most beneficial. This is self-defeating, since a consequentialist's ultimate aim is to produce the best possible results.

No matter what your ultimate goal is, the rules that *generally* achieve that goal will sometimes fail to do so. If you know that you are in one of those exceptional situations, then why follow the rule? Suppose that justice, not happiness, is the ultimate value. Suppose, too, that justice would be best served if everyone were to follow a certain rule, such as one that prohibits tampering with evidence. But why follow that rule if you know that this time, unusually, breaking the rule will yield the most justice?

If the ultimate purpose of morality is to make the world a better place, then it is irrational to knowingly behave in ways that fail to do this. And yet that is what rule consequentialism sometimes requires. That is why most consequentialists have rejected it.

D. CONCLUSION

Consequentialism is a perennial favorite with moral philosophers. Its emphasis on impartiality, its moral flexibility, its inclusion of nonhuman animals within the moral community, its orientation to the future, and its emphasis on results have great appeal for many ethical thinkers.

But we have also seen that there are worries for consequentialism, and these are not easily solved. We usually admire impartiality but sometimes think that partiality is what morality demands. Consequentialism can require a degree of self-sacrifice that strikes many people as extreme. And it sometimes calls on us to commit injustice. We reviewed the four most prominent replies to this concern, but we saw that each of them encountered difficulties. It's natural, then, to turn our attention next to a view that places primary importance on doing justice: the moral theory of Immanuel Kant.

2. See J. J. C. Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism," *Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1956): 344–354.

ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS

Absolute rule: a rule that may never permissibly be broken.
Act utilitarianism: The moral theory that says that an action is morally required just because it does more to improve overall well-being than any other action you could have done in the circumstances.
Consequentialism: The family of moral theories that say that an action or a policy is morally required just because it produces the best overall results.
Decision procedure: a method for reliably guiding our decisions, so that when we use it well, we make decisions as we ought to.
Intrinsically good: valuable in and of itself, and worth having for its own sake
Moral community: that group of individuals who are morally important in their own right and, as such, are owed a certain amount of respect. Membership in the moral community imposes a duty on everyone else to take one's needs seriously, for one's own sake.
Optimific: producing the best results.
Optimific social rule: a social rule which, if nearly everyone accepted it, would yield better results than any competing social rule.
Principle of utility: the central doctrine of act utilitarianism.
Rule consequentialism: the view that an action is morally right just because it is required by an optimific social rule.
Standard of rightness: a principle that tells us the conditions under which actions are morally right.
Supererogation: action that is "above and beyond the call of duty."
Vicarious punishment: punishment that targets innocent people as a way to deter the guilty.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Most utilitarians think that sometimes people are not to blame for performing actions that are very wrong, and that sometimes people should not be praised for doing the right thing. Why do they think this? Do you agree?
2. Utilitarians reject the existence of absolute moral rules (other than the principle of utility). Do you think that there are any absolute moral rules? If so, what are they, and how can their absolute status be defended against the utilitarian view that the ends justify the means?
3. Is there any way of measuring how much happiness is brought about by an action? Do we have any method for comparing the happiness of two different people? If the answer to these questions is "no," is this a problem for utilitarianism?
4. Critics claim that utilitarianism demands that we be saintly in our motivations. Explain this criticism and then discuss why you find it (im)plausible.
5. If utilitarianism is correct, then we may be morally required to undertake substantial sacrifice for others. What limits on such sacrifice does the utilitarian favor? Are these limits acceptable?
6. Utilitarianism requires us to be impartial. What does this amount to? In what sense does utilitarianism require that we treat all people equally? Is this a positive or a negative feature of the theory?
7. Which utilitarian reply to the Argument from Injustice do you think is the most promising? Do you think that this reply is ultimately successful? Defend your answer.