



Beyond Consequentialism

Paul Hurley

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Consequentialism, the theory that morality requires us to promote the best overall outcome, is the default alternative in contemporary moral philosophy, and is highly influential in public discourses beyond academic philosophy. Paul Hurley argues that current discussions of the challenge consequentialism tend to overlook a fundamental challenge to consequentialism. The standard consequentialist account of the content of morality, he argues, cannot be reconciled to the authoritativeness of moral standards for rational agents. If rational agents typically have decisive reasons to do what morality requires, then consequentialism cannot be the correct account of moral standards. Hurley builds upon this challenge to argue that the consequentialist case for grounding the impartial evaluation of actions in the impartial evaluation of outcomes is built upon a set of subtle and mutually reinforcing mistakes. Through exposing these mistakes and misappropriations, he undermines consequentialist arguments against alternative approaches that recognize a conception of impartiality appropriate to the evaluation of actions which is distinct from the impartiality appropriate to the evaluation of outcomes. A moral theory that recognizes a fundamental role for such a distinct conception of impartiality can account for the rational authority of moral standards, but does so, Hurley argues, by taking morality beyond consequentialism in both its standard and non-standard forms.

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