UTILITARIANISM has been the object of much criticism, most of which is thought to undermine nonutilitarian forms of consequentialism or teleology as well. The most common objections to utilitarianism are moral objections. It is alleged that utilitarianism fails to accommodate the extent of our obligations to

* I would like to thank David Lyons, T. H. Irwin, Alan Sidelle, and Nicholas Sturgeon for helpful comments on previous versions of this paper.

1 Of course, it is often argued that utilitarianism is either theoretically or practically incoherent, because it presupposes abilities to compare the consequences of an infinite number of possible actions and to make interpersonal comparisons of welfare. See, e.g., Lionel Robbins, An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science (New York: Macmillan, 1935) and Alan Donagan, The Theory of Morality (Chicago: University Press, 1977), pp. 201f. Cf. Jerome Schneewind, Sidgwick and Victorian Moral Philosophy (New York: Oxford, 1977), pp. 141/2, 146. There is a theoretical or metaphysical problem here just in case interpersonal comparisons of welfare are impossible or incoherent. There is a practical or epistemological problem for utilitarianism just in case, though interpersonal comparisons of welfare are possible, we are unreliable measurers of value. Though I cannot argue for these claims here, I think that both metaphysical and epistemological objections can be dismissed. If there were a metaphysical objection to interpersonal comparisons of welfare, it would have sweeping implications. A metaphysical objection to interpersonal comparisons of welfare would underwrite metaphysical objections both to any moral theory that included duties of beneficence and to any theory of rationality requiring diachronic intrapersonal comparisons of welfare. We need a better motivation for denying the possibility of interpersonal comparisons of welfare than has been given before we scrap all plausible moral theories and theories of rationality. The epistemological objection, on the other hand, is, in a way, well motivated. For obvious reasons, we are not always reliable calculators of welfare. But this fact undermines utilitarianism only if utilitarianism is a decision procedure. However, as we shall see, utilitarianism is a standard or criterion of rightness and not a decision procedure and thus avoids the practical or epistemological problem about interpersonal comparisons of welfare.

This defense of utilitarianism summarizes arguments which can be found in my Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics (manuscript), chapter 9.
others, the existence of moral and political rights, and the demands of distributive justice. In a series of recent papers, Bernard Williams has added a new, if related, moral objection to utilitarianism; he argues that utilitarianism cannot account for the moral significance of personal integrity. Still more recently, in *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, Samuel Scheffler has argued that utilitarianism cannot account for the natural independence of the agent’s point of view and so should be replaced by a “hybrid moral theory” that incorporates what he calls “agent-centered prerogatives.” On this hybrid moral theory, agents are permitted but not required to maximize the good. The claim common to Williams, Scheffler, and others is that the impartiality characteristic of utilitarianism, in particular, and teleological theories, in general, cannot account for the moral significance of what I shall call the personal point of view.

It is this claim that I wish to examine. There are two reasons for this focus. First, Williams, Scheffler, and others have made this criticism of utilitarianism quite influential. Second, this criticism of utilitarianism is related to many other moral objections to utilitarianism. Though I cannot argue the claim here, it is reasonable to regard many of the moral objections to utilitarianism as stemming from a common source: these objections assign great moral importance to the fact that people lead separate lives, possess different commit-

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ments, and pursue different projects and plans. If this diagnosis is correct, examination of the objection from the personal point of view should cast some light upon these other moral objections to utilitarianism.

I shall argue that there is no successful moral objection to utilitarianism from the personal point of view. There are various ways in which utilitarianism can accommodate the moral significance of the personal point of view. It must be conceded, however, that these strategies do not eliminate all conflict between utilitarianism's impartiality and the personal point of view. But this residual conflict does not constitute a moral objection to utilitarianism, for, in this conflict, the personal point of view represents worries about the rationality or supremacy of utilitarian demands. These worries are properly understood as worries about rather than within morality and so do not threaten and, indeed, support a utilitarian analysis of morality.

I. UTILITARIAN AND TELEOLOGICAL ETHICS

Utilitarianism is a kind of teleological moral theory. Teleological moral theories, unlike deontological and other nonteleological moral theories, hold thatrightness or justifiedness consists in maximal goodness; something is right or justified just in case it realizes the most value possible in the circumstances. It is sometimes claimed that teleological theories must also specify goodness independently of rightness, with the result that a moral theory is nonteleological just in case either it denies that rightness is maximal goodness or its specification of goodness is in terms of rightness. Though I could, for my purposes, accept this account of teleological and nonteleological theories, we should, I think, question it. Teleological and nonteleological theories can be distinguished along traditional lines if a theory is teleological just in case it holds that rightness consists in


9 Michael Slote, Common-sense Morality and Utilitarianism (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), chs. 3 and 5, suggests that we construe consequentialist or teleological moral theories as claiming only that correct moral assessment is some function of value realized. The claim that rightness is maximal goodness is, according to Slote, only a special case of teleology or consequentialism. I think that Slote's broad construal of teleology may make it difficult to distinguish teleological and deontological moral theories. Whether or not this is so, traditional teleological theories such as utilitarianism conform to my more narrow characterization of teleology. I intend to adhere to this narrower, more traditional construal. Those sympathetic with Slote's broader construal can treat my defense of utilitarian and teleological ethics as a defense of a special class of teleological theories.

maximal goodness. This weaker construal of teleology is sufficient to
distinguish between teleological and nonteleological theories,
though it allows the goodness of states of affairs to be determined by
considerations of moral permissibility or acceptability. As long as
rightness, i.e., all-things-considered permissibility or obligation, is
maximal goodness, rightness and goodness will be distinct prop-
erties, no matter how goodness is conceived. We can fairly demand of
teleological theories, that they treat rightness and goodness as dis-
tinct properties, without requiring that they make rightness and
goodness independent of each other. So I shall assume that what
distinguishes teleological and nonteleological moral theories is that
the former, unlike the latter, hold rightness to consist in maximal
goodness.

We can now make several important points about teleological moral
theories, so construed. First, we can distinguish between te-
leological and consequentialist moral theories; the latter are, on a
certain construal, just a special case of the former. Consequentialism
is usually understood as the claim that actions and other objects of
moral assessment are right or justified just in case their causal con-
sequences have more intrinsic value than alternative actions, etc. This
is a special case of the teleologist’s claim that actions and other
objects of moral assessment are right or justified just in case they
realize more intrinsic value than alternative actions, etc. Conse-
quentialism, so construed, is only a special case of the teleological
claim, because, unlike the teleological view, consequentialism treats
the objects of moral assessment as bearers only of extrinsic value.
The teleologist, on the other hand, allows that objects of moral
assessment, such as actions, might have intrinsic value and that their
intrinsic value counts toward the rightness or justifiedness of those
objects of assessment.\textsuperscript{11}

Second, this characterization of teleology does not require that
teleological theories provide reductive theories of goodness or value.
Teleological theories may define rightness in terms of goodness and
goodness in terms of moral properties such as fairness or respect for
persons. The resulting theory need be neither circular nor deontolo-
gical. It would be circular, as we have seen, to identify rightness
with goodness and then to identify goodness with rightness. But we
can define rightness, i.e., all-things-considered permissibility or obli-
gation, in terms of goodness and goodness in terms of still other

\textsuperscript{11} If, however, the consequences whose intrinsic value consequentialism seeks to
maximize include\textit{ conceptual} as well as causal consequences, then consequentialism
can treat actions, motives, etc. as intrinsically valuable. So construed, consequen-
tialism and teleology would be equivalent. Cf. Scheffler, pp. 1n–2n.
moral properties without circularity (contrast Frankena, 14). Indeed, as we have seen, since the teleologist defines rightness as maximal goodness, he can give an account of the good which relies on the acceptability of certain states of affairs without identifying rightness and goodness.

Third, this characterization of teleology allows for a plurality of objects of moral assessment. Utilitarianism and other teleological theories have traditionally been concerned with the assessment of the rightness of actions. But actions need not be the teleologist’s only objects of moral assessment.12 The teleologist can assess motives, rules, and institutions as well as actions. These too the teleologist will assess by the value that they realize.

Fourth, as we shall see at greater length below, teleological theories can be construed as standards or criteria of rightness or as decision procedures. A standard or criterion of rightness explains what makes an action or motive right or justified; a decision procedure provides a method of deliberation. Teleological theories do provide criteria of rightness, but need not provide decision procedures.13 Just as an agent may best secure his own happiness not by always seeking his own happiness, but by pursuing certain activities for their own sake, so too an agent may maximize total welfare not as the result of deliberating about how to do so or by acting out of benevolence, but by reasoning in nonutilitarian ways or by acting on nonutilitarian (nonbeneficent) motives.

Finally, different teleological theories result from different specifications of the good. Utilitarian theories are teleological theories with a welfarist theory of value. Utilitarianism claims that human welfare or happiness is what is of value.14 As a teleological theory, utilitarian-

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14 Of course, a utilitarian can construe the good as sentient welfare or happiness. I will not discuss this form of utilitarianism; the sentient-welfare teleologist can interpret my arguments and claims mutatis mutandis.
ism claims that actions, motives, institutions, etc. are right or justified just in case they realize as much human welfare as any alternative action, motive, institution, etc. available (i.e., just in case they maximize welfare). Of course, different conceptions of welfare are possible, and different conceptions of utilitarianism result from these different conceptions of the good. Traditional versions of utilitarianism offer subjective conceptions of welfare.\textsuperscript{15} They construe welfare as either pleasure or preference satisfaction. These theories of welfare are subjective, because they make welfare consist in or depend importantly upon psychological facts about what people happen to want. By contrast, objective theories of welfare make the constituents of welfare largely nonsubjective; on this view, a valuable life consists in such things as having a certain kind of character, engaging in certain kinds of activities, and exercising certain capacities.\textsuperscript{16} What makes such things valuable is largely independent of what people happen to prefer. Of course, different forms of objective utilitarianism result from different objective conceptions of welfare.

Although the claim that utilitarianism cannot accommodate the personal point of view is often urged against traditional subjective versions of utilitarianism, it is supposed to be true in virtue of utilitarianism’s teleological aspects.\textsuperscript{17} For this reason, the personal point of view is supposed to tell against nonsubjective versions of utilitarianism and nonutilitarian teleological theories as well. Part of my response to this objection relies on the resources available to utilitarianism. Utilitarianism can partially accommodate the demands of the personal point of view if utilitarianism is construed as a criterion of rightness, rather than as a decision procedure, and if its theory of value is objective. There is no good reason to deny these resources to utilitarianism. Since the objection from the personal point of view is supposed to undermine all teleological theories, however, it is im-

\textsuperscript{15} If Fred Berger, \textit{Happiness, Justice, and Freedom} (Los Angeles: California UP, 1984) is correct, J. S. Mill is an important exception to this general tendency. According to Berger, Mill defends a version of objective utilitarianism, which I find quite plausible.

\textsuperscript{16} Cf. T. M. Scanlon, “Preference and Urgency,” this \textit{JOURNAL}, \textbf{LXXII}, 19 (Nov. 6, 1975): 655–669 and “Rights, Goals, and Fairness” reprinted in Waldron; Richard Kraut, “Two Conceptions of Happiness,” \textit{Philosophical Review}, \textbf{LXXXVIII}, 2 (April 1979): 167–197. Kraut distinguishes between subjective and objective conceptions of happiness. Though I think Kraut is right to find objective components in our conception of happiness, it may be easier to see this distinction as a distinction between different conceptions of welfare. For we might think that our criteria for application of the word ‘happiness’ are predominantly subjective, even if we can think of welfare in completely nonsubjective terms.

\textsuperscript{17} See Williams, “A Critique,” pp. 79, 81; Nozick, pp. 28/9; Fried, pp. 2, 8, 104.
important only that these resources be available to some teleological theories.

II. THE PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW

Williams formulates his version of the claim that utilitarianism cannot accommodate the importance of the personal point of view as a claim about personal integrity. He claims that it is a deep commitment to certain personal projects which gives one’s life meaning and, hence, integrity. Because utilitarianism assesses the rightness of, say, actions by the consequences of those actions for everyone’s welfare, Williams claims, utilitarianism requires agents to assume an impersonal point of view. This impersonal point of view requires agents to take an impartial attitude toward their own welfare; an agent must view his own projects as no more valuable than those of others. But this is inconsistent with the concern that an agent, as an agent, must have for his own projects and commitments. Utilitarianism, therefore, cannot accommodate the personal point of view.

The point is that he [an agent] is identified with his actions as flowing from his projects and attitudes which in some cases he takes seriously at the deepest level, as what his life is about. . . . It is absurd to demand of such a man, when the sums come in from the utility network which the projects of others have in part determined, that he should just step aside from his own project and decision and acknowledge the decision which utilitarian calculation requires. It is to alienate him in a real sense from his action 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; but this is to neglect the extent to which his actions and his decisions have to be seen as the actions and decisions which flow from the projects and attitudes with which he is most closely identified. It is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity (“A Critique,” 116/7).

Utilitarianism as a Criterion of Rightness. As Williams and others construe this objection, it is an objection to utilitarianism’s requirement that agents regard their projects from an impersonal point of view.18 So construed, the integrity objection is an objection to utilitarianism as a decision procedure: utilitarian reasoning requires agents to discount their own projects in a way which disregards the personal point of view. If utilitarianism were a decision procedure, it would require everyone to value his projects and commitments impersonally and, hence, impartially. People would be required to act on motives of impartial benevolence and to sacrifice frequently their

own projects and commitments in order to maximize total welfare. Utilitarian reasoning cannot recognize the special concern that an agent has for his own projects and commitments and so cannot recognize the moral importance of the personal point of view.

But utilitarianism does not require the assumption of the impersonal point of view in normal circumstances. It would require this only if it were a decision procedure. Utilitarianism need provide only a standard or criterion of rightness and not also a decision procedure. Although some utilitarians may have taken their theory to offer a decision procedure, utilitarianism need not be and typically has not been construed in this way. Utilitarianism need only provide the criterion or standard of rightness.

Joseph Butler, J. S. Mill, Henry Sidgwick, G. E. Moore, and others have distinguished, in various terms, between moral theories as criteria or standards of rightness and as decision procedures (see fn 14). Criteria of rightness supply the property or properties in virtue of which objects of moral assessment, e.g., actions, are right or justified. A decision procedure states how agents should deliberate, reason, and make moral decisions. As such, a decision procedure also has implications for the content of a moral agent’s motives. Because utilitarianism claims that everyone’s happiness matters and that total happiness be maximized, a utilitarian decision procedure would require, among other things, that agents be disinterestedly benevolent at all times. But utilitarianism can be a criterion of rightness without being a decision procedure. Sidgwick makes this point in the following way:

Finally, the doctrine that Universal Happiness is the ultimate standard must not be understood to imply that Universal Benevolence is the only right or always the best motive of action. For, as we have observed, it is not necessary that the end which gives the criterion of rightness should always be the end at which we consciously aim: and if experience shows that the general happiness will be more satisfactorily obtained if men frequently act from other motives than pure universal philanthropy, it is obvious that these other motives are reasonably to be preferred on Utilitarian principles (413).

Sidgwick’s point is that because of facts such as our limited abilities to benefit effectively people whom we do not know and the special importance of personal projects and relationships, utility will not be maximized by universal benevolence. Rather, the standard of utili-

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19 Bentham, ch. II, sec. 10, seems to be construing utilitarianism as a decision procedure (Berger, pp. 78–77, disputes this). Interestingly, it is almost entirely opponents of utilitarianism who make this assumption.
tarianism will be better satisfied if we have special concern for ourselves and those near at hand (432–434).

Call an agent who uses utilitarianism as a decision procedure and acts with the intention of maximizing welfare a *U-agent*. There are familiar utilitarian reasons for thinking that we should not be U-agents. Interpersonal comparisons of welfare and estimates of total, long-run consequences of alternative actions and policies are often difficult to make with accuracy. The causal mechanisms in many of these counterfactual situations are numerous and complex, our time is frequently limited, and our calculations are often subject to distortion due to prejudice, self-interest, and failure of imagination. For these and other reasons, there will be many cases in which our estimates of what would maximize human welfare would be highly unreliable. U-agents, therefore, would frequently fail to maximize welfare. Of course, U-agents can make use of rules of thumb. But these are just summaries of former prospective and retrospective estimates. Any U-agent must continually scrutinize these rules and depart from them whenever he thinks a new situation sufficiently different from previous ones. And, of course, both the estimates embodied in the rules of thumb and those used in departing from rules of thumb are subject to the same sort of errors as are the estimates that the rules of thumb were introduced to avoid.

These limitations on our ability to make reliable estimates of consequences and their value present utilitarian reasons for believing that agents should deliberate, not by attempting to maximize welfare, but by appealing to rules that are *in fact* justifiable as contributing to human welfare. These rules will *not* be mere rules of thumb, because they will not function as aids in utilitarian deliberation. Rather, moral rules, on this view, should be appealed to and applied more or less strictly and uncritically in most cases. The complexity of the moral rules that are justifiable on utilitarian grounds and the strictness with which they should be followed depends upon just how serious and general our inability to estimate consequences and their value is, and this may vary among societies and individuals. It may be that our inabilities as U-agents are so great that we are never justified in departing from a relatively coarse-grained set of moral rules. But it is much more likely that we should set aside the moral rules and deliberate as U-agents in certain unusual circumstances and in cases of conflicts of moral rules. When the application of generally opt-

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20 Moore, pp. 162–164, thought so.

mific rules would clearly fail to maximize the general welfare (e.g., would produce significant and clearly avoidable suffering) and when moral rules, each of which has a utilitarian justification, conflict, agents should deliberate as U-agents.\textsuperscript{22}

The utilitarian, then, can construe his theory as a criterion of rightness rather than a decision procedure. Our cognitive limitations provide us with good utilitarian reason for acting on valuable motives and by appeal to valuable rules. By regularly acting from these motives and with regard to these rules, we will maximize the total value realized by our actions.\textsuperscript{23}

Indeed, as Sidgwick observes, there is good reason to think that such a set of moral rules would specify, among other things, that agents should adopt a differential concern for their own projects and the welfare of others close to them. It is often difficult to know what would benefit others, and, even when one does know, one is often in a poor position to produce some of those benefits without great cost to oneself. Moreover, the possession and pursuit of personal projects and the development of close personal relationships involving mutual concern and commitment are a source of great utility. Of course, the utilitarian justification of the personal point of view should not be exaggerated. Utilitarianism will recognize obligations to assist others when significant harm can be avoided or significant benefit provided without great cost to the agent. But even these

\textsuperscript{22} Of course, in some cases of conflict we may be poor U-agents, and there may be generally optimific priority rules that should, therefore, be followed.

\textsuperscript{23} It may be useful to emphasize that, insofar as it is a theory of right action, this utilitarian account of moral rules is an act-utilitarian theory. The rightness of actions is determined by their actual contribution to human welfare. But agents need not and should not deliberate as U-agents. Because of our unreliability as calculators of welfare, we would often be better off acting from "nonutilitarian" motives and rules. Part of our unreliability as U-agents is our frequent inability to discriminate those cases in which the best action would involve departing from established rules. Our motivational and cognitive abilities are such that we could depart from established rules and maximize welfare in this case only by being such as also to depart from established rules in other cases in which doing so would not maximize welfare. There are good utilitarian reasons, therefore, for acting from sturdy motives and established rules that one knows will sometimes fail to maximize welfare. By acting from optimific motives and in accord with optimific rules, we will almost certainly perform some actions that are wrong. But this just shows that the assessment of particular actions is not the most important dimension of assessment for a utilitarian. For by acting from optimific motives and in accord with optimific rules, we will maximize the total value realized by our actions.

Even if agents should typically act from sturdy motives and in accord with established rules, there may nonetheless be good utilitarian reason for them to deliberate as U-agents in order to avert disaster, adjudicate conflicts among moral rules, and critically assess the value of their moral rules in a "cool hour" when their calculations are less subject to distortion.
other-regarding obligations can be carried out in ways that are minimally disruptive of agents’ personal projects and commitments, e.g., by means of public taxation schemes or mutual-aid organizations. In normal circumstances, therefore, utilitarianism can justify a limited but nonetheless differential concern for personal projects and so will not require agents to be forever setting aside their own projects and commitments in the impersonal pursuit of welfare maximization.\(^{24}\) A utilitarian may thus defend his theory as a standard of rightness and claim to accommodate the moral importance of the personal point of view.

There are two worries about this defense of utilitarianism, however, which need to be addressed. This defense depends upon the distinction between criteria of rightness and decision procedures. The first worry concerns the legitimacy of this distinction; the second concerns the adequacy of the defense this distinction affords.

**The Publicity Objection.** Some would claim that utilitarianism cannot be maintained as a criterion or standard of rightness rather than a decision procedure. In order for a moral theory to provide a standard of right conduct, they would claim, it must be a standard which can be taught and which can serve as a public justification of actions, policies, institutions, etc.\(^{25}\) Utilitarianism, therefore, cannot distinguish between criteria of rightness and decision procedures so as to justify nonutilitarian motives and uncritical acceptance of a plurality of moral rules. Williams makes this objection as follows.

There is no distinctive place for . . . utilitarianism unless it is, within fairly narrow limits, a doctrine about how one should decide what to do. This is because its distinctive doctrine is about what acts are right, and, especially, for utilitarians, the only distinctive interest or point of the question what acts are right, relates to the situation of deciding to do them ("A Critique," 128).

Williams also refers with approval to John Rawls’s insistence that utilitarianism not violate a publicity condition. Rawls writes

We should note, then, that utilitarianism, as I have defined it, is the view that the principle of utility is the correct principle for society’s public

\(^{24}\) Cf. Sidgwick, pp. 432–434; Scheffler, p. 15; and Railton.

conception of justice. . . . What we want to know is which conception of justice characterizes our considered judgments in reflective equilibrium and best serves as the public moral basis of society. Unless one maintains that this conception is given by the principle of utility, one is not a utilitarian (A Theory of Justice, 32).

Rawls’s objection to the distinction between criteria of rightness and decision procedures rests upon his acceptance of the publicity constraint. This constraint can be construed as a conceptual constraint upon what can count as a moral theory or, alternatively, as a substantive and revisable moral belief.

Construed as a formal or conceptual claim which would undermine the distinction between criteria of rightness and decision procedures, the publicity constraint simply begs the question against teleological moral theories. Whether the true moral theory should be recognized, taught, or recommended as a decision procedure are themselves practical questions the answers to which, the teleologist claims, depend upon the intrinsic and extrinsic value that this sort of publicity produces. Nor is this separation of truth and acceptance value peculiar to ethics (cf. Railton, 154/5). Not only do we distinguish the truth and acceptance value of nonmoral claims, but we recognize, as reasonable, claims that certain facts should be suppressed. We may not always think suppression is justified, but we find such claims intelligible and take them seriously. It is conceivable that truth and acceptance value are not separate in the case of moral truth, but this needs to be argued.26

The publicity constraint, therefore, must be construed as a substantive moral claim. Here, I think, a utilitarian should claim that there is no reason to think that utilitarianism will violate the publicity constraint and that, in those counterfactual situations in which it would, this constitutes no objection to utilitarianism.

In the actual world utilitarianism satisfies the publicity constraint. Publicity would be violated only if utilitarianism could not be recognized as the standard of rightness and utilitarian reasoning was always inappropriate. But a utilitarian commitment to moral rules

26 Of course, it would be difficult to separate moral truth and acceptance value if moral realism were rejected. If moral claims could be not true but only acceptable, as some noncognitivists claim, or if the truth of moral claims consisted in their acceptability, as some constructivists claim, then moral truth and acceptance value could not be distinguished so as to justify the claim that utilitarianism can be a standard of rightness without being a decision procedure. But, of course, it takes a separate argument to show that moral realism is false. For defense of moral realism, see my “Moral Realism and the Sceptical Arguments from Disagreement and Queerness,” Australasian Journal of Philosophy, LXII, 2 (June 1984): 111–125, and Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics.
that are more than rules of thumb and to the moral value of motives other than benevolence is compatible with the recognition that the moral justification for these rules and motives consists in their contribution to human welfare. Moreover, utilitarian assessment is appropriate in some circumstances. Circumstances in which the relevant calculations can be made accurately can limit the application of moral rules and call for utilitarian deliberation; conflicts among moral rules, each of which has a utilitarian justification, can call for utilitarian deliberation; and some agents in some circumstances should take the time and effort to assess the consequences of past and continued adherence to a particular set of moral rules. This attitude toward utilitarianism is psychologically possible and does not offend against the publicity condition.

Of course, there must be possible circumstances, even if we cannot represent them, in which it would be best that most people not even recognize utilitarianism as providing the standard or criterion of right conduct. Under these circumstances, utilitarianism would indeed be an “esoteric morality” (Sidgwick, 489/90). But this is a possibility for any moral theory. For any moral theory, there are possible circumstances in which its recognition and application would satisfy the theory worse than recognition and application of some alternative theory. The proper response of anyone, who, as theorist, believes the theory in question to be true, is to think that in those circumstances the true theory should be suppressed and some false theory recognized. Publicity is a plausible but revisable substantive moral commitment. A moral theory that violated publicity in the actual world would be less plausible for that reason. But the fact that there are merely possible circumstances in which a moral theory would require violation of publicity is not a fact peculiar to utilitarianism and is not itself, I think, an objection to utilitarianism or to any other moral theory.

So, a defense of utilitarianism that relies on the distinction between criteria of rightness and decision procedures is legitimate and is not undermined by considerations of publicity. The utilitarian

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27 Aren’t there circumstances in which a Kantian would think publicity should be violated? Imagine people who have hopelessly false beliefs about what a rational being as such would will. In such circumstances, agents might better satisfy the Categorical Imperative if they do not always deliberate about how to satisfy it. They might better approximate how rational beings as such would act by acting directly on a particular set of moral rules. In such circumstances, might not a Kantian want to suppress the Categorical Imperative and advocate some particular set of moral rules which a rational being as such would will? Indeed, we might wonder whether these circumstances are merely possible.
claims that the value of publicity depends upon the effects of publicity on human welfare. There are possible circumstances in which a utilitarian would and should violate the publicity condition. In normal circumstances, however, there is no reason for a utilitarian to violate publicity.28

The Value of Autonomy. Even if the distinction between criteria of rightness and decision procedures is legitimate, one may wonder whether the defense that it affords utilitarianism is adequate. The objection from the personal point of view can be construed as an objection to utilitarianism's criterion of rightness. Even if utilitarianism does not require agents to adopt a purely impersonal attitude, it still assigns moral value impersonally. Is this feature of utilitarianism consistent with the recognition of the moral importance of the personal point of view?

I am not convinced that this sort of impersonality is morally objectionable. Is it objectionable for a standard of rightness to be impersonal? Do I care whether value is assigned to projects impersonally, if I am not required to view my own projects impersonally? If not, then the objection to utilitarianism from the personal point of view has now been answered: because utilitarianism is a standard of rightness and not a decision procedure, it need not and in fact will not require agents to adopt an impersonal attitude. But let us see what can be said to someone who thinks that the impartiality of a utilitarian standard of rightness undervalues the moral significance of agents' projects and commitments.

If the possession and pursuit of personal projects and commitments that are supposed to be constitutive of personal integrity are so important, then a utilitarian’s account of human welfare should recognize this fact. Utilitarianism can claim that self-determination is a dominant component in an agent’s welfare and that, therefore, a certain amount of personal autonomy is a necessary condition for realizing this kind of value. Because possession, pursuit, and realization of personal projects and commitments are dominant components in an agent’s good, freedom to formulate and pursue personal projects will trump other less important intrinsic and extrinsic goods. On such a theory, one person’s reasonable and important projects will not be held hostage to others’ whims or preferences.

28 Cf. Sidgwick, pp. 489/90; Scheffler, pp. 45–52; Railton, pp. 154/5; and Parfit, pp. 24–51, especially 40–43. Railton and Scheffler appear to assume that utilitarianism does violate the publicity constraint and argue that this is not so bad. I agree that violation of publicity is not so bad when it is necessary, but I do not agree that it is actually necessary.
This response presupposes an objective theory of welfare; it would depart from traditional subjective versions of utilitarianism. But there is no reason to rule out objective theories of welfare or the utilitarian theories that incorporate them. In this way, objective utilitarianism might claim that it accommodates the moral importance of the personal point of view.29

Is the Impartial Value of Autonomy Enough? This response may well not satisfy those who think that the impersonal assignment of value undervalues the moral significance of agents’ projects. For their objection presumably is not that utilitarianism undervalues projects but that it undervalues the agent’s projects. Their worry is about the impersonal point of view, and this worry is not assuaged by taking account of the personal point of view, as it were, from the impersonal point of view. Even if utilitarianism can treat autonomy as a dominant good, it must be impartial between the autonomy of different people.

Williams presents an example which illustrates this issue. His example is this. Jim is a foreign explorer who comes upon a small South American village in which an army captain is about to execute twenty innocent villagers for “purely political” reasons. As an honored visitor, Jim is offered the privilege of shooting one of the twenty villagers. If he does, the other nineteen villagers will be released unharmed (of this there is no doubt!). If he does not, the captain will shoot all twenty as planned. No other options are reasonably open to Jim (Williams’s stipulation). Not implausibly, Williams claims that in these circumstances it is clear that Jim would maximize welfare, including, we might add, personal projects, by killing the one villager, and so utilitarianism requires him to do so (“A Critique,” 98/9; Williams is not explicit about this, but, presumably, the commitment that utilitarianism requires Jim to abandon here is a moral commitment not to kill innocent people). Jim’s case illustrates what, on this view, is the problem with utilitarianism: utilitarianism allows the impersonal value of an agent’s projects to exhaust their moral significance (Scheffler, 9, 61).

Should We Incorporate the Personal Point of View into Morality? One might accept this criticism of utilitarianism and demand that morality accommodate the personal point of view. One might then reject utilitarianism in favor of a moral theory that incorporates what Scheffler calls “agent-centered prerogatives” (chs. 2 and 3). On such

29 This objective utilitarian defense might be compared with Nozick’s “utilitarianism of rights”; see Nozick, pp. 28–30.
a theory, the moral significance of agents’ projects is not exhausted by their impersonal value; an agent’s projects have moral significance out of proportion to their impersonal value. Agent-centered prerogatives permit but do not require agents to maximize the good and so would produce what Scheffler calls a “hybrid” moral theory. Rightness, on this hybrid view, is defined disjunctively: an action, say, is right just in case it either maximizes the good or preserves the agent’s projects and commitments in the appropriate way.  

This hybrid theory is superior to utilitarianism, according to Scheffler, because it reflects “the natural independence” of an agent’s concern for his own projects and commitments. A hybrid moral theory containing agent-centered prerogatives, therefore, might seem the best way to recognize the importance of the personal point of view.

But the utilitarian need not accept this criticism and so need not move to a hybrid moral theory. Impersonal moral theories can assign moral value to the commitments of agents like Jim, but they refuse to assign Jim’s commitments any special value because they are his. Jim’s commitments are important, but they are no more important than those of the nineteen villagers whom he could save. In this way, the impersonal point of view is impartial. It is impartiality of this kind which we expect a moral theory to reflect. Nor is this kind of impartiality peculiar to utilitarianism or even to teleological moral theories. Many nonteleological theories recognize duties to forgo one’s own good in order to prevent great harm to or provide great benefit for others. It is, of course, a substantive moral claim that it is this kind of impartiality which is characteristic of the moral point of view, but it is a plausible claim which cannot be rejected lightly. If this claim is correct, then it is no indictment of utilitarianism that it is impersonal.

This defense of utilitarianism does not force us to deny the importance of the personal point of view. The personal point of view is important, and we can recognize this without making morality capture its importance. The worries that the importance of the personal point of view raises can be viewed not as moral worries but as worries

30 Scheffler, pp. 17f. discusses more specific formulations of the second disjunct. In particular, the scope of agent-centered prerogatives does not include just any personal projects or commitments; morally obnoxious projects and commitments receive little or no protection from agent-centered prerogatives.

31 Scheffler, pp. 56, 79, 116. Scheffler seems ambivalent about what conclusion to draw. At times, he explicitly refuses to conclude that his hybrid theory is superior to sophisticated forms of utilitarianism of the sort discussed in pp. 425–427 and 430/1 above (see Scheffler, pp. 65 and 77). But he does claim that the objection to utilitarianism based upon the personal point of view is well founded (pp. 6, 13, 56, 90, 116). If this objection to utilitarianism is well founded, then a hybrid theory which avoids this objection is presumably superior to utilitarianism, other things being equal.
about morality. Our sympathies for Jim need not be moral sympathies. Cases like Jim's can be dilemmatic, if they are dilemmatic, because they raise serious questions about the justification of morality. We can imagine that if Jim is a decent fellow—having the right sort of motives—he may be haunted by doing as utilitarian morality requires and killing an innocent villager. He may experience doubts and serious personal anguish. We may come to wonder whether Jim has reason or enough reason to do as morality requires in these circumstances. These are worries about the justification or supremacy of moral demands, not about the correctness of a utilitarian account of morality.

Two preliminary points should be made about this interpretation of the importance of the personal point of view. First, this interpretation of the conflict between utilitarianism and the personal point of view makes the externalist assumption that it is a substantive question whether moral considerations provide an agent with reason or sufficient reason for action, the answer to which depends upon a substantive theory of reasons for action or rationality and, in all probability, a substantive theory of human welfare. An internalist about the rationality of moral demands might deny this, claiming that “the concept of morality” makes this conflict inconceivable or unintelligible. It is simply part of the concept of a moral consideration that moral considerations necessarily provide reason or conclusive reason for action. The dispute between internalism and externalism raises large issues, which cannot be settled here. But there are familiar reasons to doubt this internalist assumption, which should at least force an opponent of utilitarianism to provide a defense of internalism. As many internalists themselves recognize, common moral experience and philosophical reflection can lead one to ask whether there are good or sufficient reasons to do as morality requires. Call this the amoralist's challenge. Internalism claims that we can rule out this challenge as incoherent by appeal to “the concept of morality.” But the amoralist’s challenge to the rationality of moral demands not only seems intelligible but deserves to be taken seriously. Externalism does not claim that the amoralist’s challenge is unanswerable; it claims only that this challenge is intelligible and that it can be addressed only in conjunction with a substantive theory of reasons for action. The fact that our ability to represent the worries

about utilitarianism which the personal point of view raises as worries about the rationality or supremacy of moral demands depends upon these externalist claims, therefore, does not seem to be a weakness in this way of representing the importance of the personal point of view.33

Second, on this interpretation, the worries about utilitarianism which the personal point of view raises can be represented as worries about either the rationality or the supremacy of moral demands. I assume that if something is in one’s interest then one has reason to bring that thing about. Rational egoism claims that one has reason to do \( x \) if \( \text{and only if} \) \( x \) is in one’s own interest. The personal point of view can be seen as representing the interests of the agent. If rational egoism is true, then the worries about utilitarianism which the personal point of view raises can be represented as worries about the rationality of morality. Do agents have reason to do as utilitarian morality requires? This question is answered by a substantive theory of human welfare which explains to what extent the demands of utilitarian morality, in particular its demands to benefit others, promote or are constitutive of the moral agent’s well-being. For example, an objective conception of human welfare which recognizes important social or other-regarding components in an individual’s good can provide the basis of a strong justification of utilitarian morality even on rational-egoist assumptions. (Indeed, if there are both self- and other-regarding components to an agent’s good, there may always be a rational-egoist reason to do as utilitarianism requires, even if there is not always conclusive rational-egoist reason to do so.) I will say something below about a rational-egoist account of the rationality of utilitarianism’s implications in exceptional circumstances, such as Jim’s.

Alternatively, if rational egoism is false and agents have reason to do as utilitarian morality requires independently of its contribution to their own well-being, we can represent the worries about utilitarianism which the personal point of view raises as worries about the supremacy of moral demands. Even if rational egoism is false, agents presumably still have prudential reasons for action, and these prudential reasons can conflict with the reasons for action which, on such a theory of rationality, other-regarding features of morality themselves provide. One may then wonder whether agents have sufficient or conclusive reason to do as utilitarian morality requires.

I shall not attempt to decide here between these alternative repre-

33 For a fuller defense of externalism, see William Frankena, “Obligation and Motivation in Recent Moral Philosophy” reprinted in his Perspectives on Morality, K. Goodpaster, ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University Press, 1976) and my Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics, chapter 3.
sentations of the conflict between utilitarian morality and the personal point of view. Rather, I want to stress what is common to them; both represent the worries that the personal point of view raises as worries about the justifiability of moral demands rather than as moral worries.

This interpretation of the true conflict between utilitarianism and the personal point of view is confirmed by Williams’s claims in “Persons, Character and Morality”:

A man who has such a ground project will be required by Utilitarianism to give up what it requires in a given case just if it conflicts with what he is required to do as an impersonal utility-maximizer when all of the causally relevant considerations are in. That is quite an absurd requirement. But the Kantian, who can do rather better than that, still cannot do well enough. For impartial morality, if the conflict really does arise, must be required to win; and that cannot necessarily be a reasonable demand on the agent. There can come a point at which it is quite unreasonable for a man to give up, in the name of the impartial good ordering of the world of moral agents, something which is a condition of his having interest in being around in the world at all (14).

The fact that Williams here takes Kantian views of morality to be equally guilty of making unreasonable demands upon agents supports the claim that the real worry latent in the conflict between utilitarianism and the personal point of view is not the worry within morality about which moral theory is correct but the worry about morality concerning the rationality or supremacy of moral demands.34 We can recognize the importance of the personal point of view without granting it moral importance.

Indeed, not only can we recognize the importance of the personal point of view without granting it moral importance; we should not concede it moral importance. Not only is Scheffler’s preference for a hybrid moral theory incorporating agent-centered prerogatives unnecessary; hybrid moral theories actually misrepresent the connection between morality and the personal point of view. There are two reasons for this.

First, the impartiality among various people’s goods which is characteristic of utilitarianism and other teleological theories represents important considered beliefs about the nature and demands of mo-

34 Though we arrived at our views separately, I would like to record my agreement on this point with Sarah Conly’s suggestive review of Scheffler’s book in the Philosophical Review, XCVIII, 3 (July 1984): 489–492. Interestingly, this theme is not emphasized in her discussion of Williams; see Conly, “Utilitarianism and Integrity” The Monist, LXVI, 2 (April 1983): 298–311. Though Railton’s title suggests this interpretation of Williams’s argument, Railton does not develop this interpretation fully. But see Railton, pp. 163n–164n.
rality better than a hybrid moral theory that incorporates the personal point of view into morality. An important moral belief is that the moral perspective is an impartial perspective; moral demands frequently require us to put aside purely personal projects and commitments in order to prevent harm to or do good for others. One argument for the impartial character of morality parallels Scheffler’s own argument against *agent-centered restrictions*. Scheffler distinguishes between his own agent-centered prerogatives which permit but do not require an agent to maximize the good and agent-centered restrictions that do not even permit the agent to maximize the good. Agent-centered restrictions are based upon the claim that it is sometimes wrong to maximize the good. Scheffler defends what he calls the *asymmetry thesis*: although the natural independence of the personal point of view provides a principled rationale for agent-centered prerogatives, there is no principled rationale for agent-centered restrictions (ch. 4, esp. 82–100). In particular, Scheffler argues that a moral theory incorporating agent-centered restrictions does not represent a rational response to the demands utilitarianism places upon agents. For example, against Nozick’s construal of rights as side constraints (Nozick, 28–30), Scheffler claims, if a violation of a right is a bad thing, then it is rational to want to minimize the violation of rights—even if we must violate one person’s rights in order to do this. Similarly, if Jim’s projects and commitments are valuable, then so are those of the nineteen villagers whose lives he could save, and it is rational to minimize the violation of people’s projects and commitments as utilitarianism instructs Jim to. But, against Scheffler, if these violations of people’s basic projects are of disvalue, their minimization is arguably obligatory and not merely permissible. Moreover, this judgment seems to be confirmed by considered moral beliefs. Regrettable as this kind of situation is, one *ought to* violate one person’s right, say, to liberty in order to prevent a greater number of equally serious violations of liberty (or some equally weighty right). Also, disagreeable as this is, Jim *ought to* kill the one innocent villager in order to save nineteen other innocent lives. Morality appears impartial among people’s good in the way utilitarianism and other teleological theories claim.

Second, if we were to accept the demand that morality accommodate the personal point of view, as Scheffler does, we would find ourselves unable to ask a question that, we have seen, is surely intelligible and legitimate. We would be unable to ask whether the demands of morality are really rational or justifiable. If morality were forced to incorporate the personal point of view, we could not get what are at least apparent conflicts between the demands of morality and the interests of agents. Common sense and philosophical reflec-
tion upon the demands that morality can make lead one to question whether there are always good and sufficient reasons to be moral. Philosophical deliberation about the demands of morality, the nature of an agent's good, and the nature of rationality may vindicate the rationality or supremacy of moral demands. But, even if we are able to answer the question, Why be moral?, we need to be able to formulate the question. If we are to be able to formulate the question about the rationality or supremacy of morality, we must be able to represent what are at least apparent conflicts between the demands of morality and the interests of agents. Hybrid moral theories could represent apparent conflicts within morality, but not the conflicts between morality and the agent's interest with which we are familiar. Since we are familiar with these apparent conflicts, it is a virtue of moral theories that are impartial in the way in which utilitarianism is that they allow, indeed, lead one to expect such conflicts, and a defect of hybrid moral theories that they cannot represent such conflicts.

If it is really a worry about the rationality or supremacy of morality which the personal point of view raises, then the personal point of view presents no objection to utilitarian accounts of morality. Indeed, as Williams's later writings testify, the worry about morality which the personal point of view raises is not a worry peculiar to utilitarianism or even to teleological moral theories.

The justifiability of morality raises large issues which are independent of the merits of utilitarianism. Nevertheless, the defense of utilitarianism given above does suggest certain claims. An objective version of utilitarianism that recognizes autonomy as a dominant good can explain why the pursuit and realization of personal projects is so important. Because this version of utilitarianism is a standard or criterion of rightness and not a decision procedure, it can and will justify agents in adopting a differential concern for their own projects and the welfare of those close to them. Even on rational-egoist assumptions, therefore, agents will normally have reason to do as utilitarianism requires.

Of course, not all circumstances are normal. Jim's case illustrates

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55 It might seem that hybrid theories could represent the conflict between morality and self-interest, because agent-centered prerogatives do not incorporate the personal point of view completely into morality. Scheffler, pp. 17f. claims that agent-centered prerogatives would not protect morally obnoxious personal projects and commitments (e.g. those of Caligula or Hitler). So hybrid theories leave room for conflict between morality and these personal projects and commitments. But I doubt that any plausible theory of agent good would recognize these conflicts as conflicts between morality and self-interest. In any case, the apparent conflicts between morality and self-interest with which we are familiar are not limited to such cases.
how utilitarianism can sometimes demand of agents a great deal. It is true that if Jim is a decent fellow—having the right sort of motives—he may suffer if he complies with the demand of utilitarian morality that he kill an innocent villager. But surely Jim would suffer just as much if not more, assuming again that he is a decent fellow, if he refuses to comply with the demands of utilitarian morality. Here too, he may experience doubts and anguish. Indeed, this time he would be haunted not by the death of one innocent villager but by the nineteen innocent lives he could have saved. It seems to be the situation, not utilitarian morality, that is hard on Jim. The fact that Jim may be poorly off no matter what he does is one reason the situation is dilemmatic.

Fortunately, these kinds of dilemma are rare. In normal circumstances, utilitarianism's account of morality is compatible with the moral permissibility of a differential concern for one's own projects and the welfare of those close to one. In some circumstances, an impartial weighting of everyone's good will require agents to sacrifice important personal projects or commitments in order to prevent great harm to, or produce great benefit for, others. This is the sort of demand we expect a moral theory to make. And where the sacrifice demanded of the agent is great, he may typically take consolation in the knowledge that his suffering would be no less were he to resist the demands of morality.

III. CONCLUSION

Consideration of the objection from the personal point of view reveals the resources of utilitarianism. The utilitarian can offer a partial rebuttal by distinguishing between criteria of rightness and decision procedures and claiming that, because his theory is a criterion of rightness and not a decision procedure, he can justify agents' differential concern for their own welfare and the welfare of those close to them. The flexibility in utilitarianism's theory of value allows further rebuttal of this objection; objective versions of utilitarianism can treat self-determination or autonomy as a dominant good which trumps even large magnitudes of lesser goods such as pleasure. After the resources of utilitarianism are exhausted, though, there remains a worry, generated by the personal point of view, about utilitarianism's impartiality. But this worry is correctly viewed, not as a moral worry about the merits of utilitarianism as a moral theory, but as a worry about morality concerning the rationality or supremacy of impartial moral demands. Whether or not this worry can be answered, the fact that it arises supports rather than undermines a utilitarian account of morality.

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