§1. What is deontology?

What is the opposite of deontology…?

T1 ‘…what makes actions right [i.e. morally obligatory]… is that they are productive of more good than could have been produced by any other action open to the agent.’

(David Ross, The Right and the Good, p.16)

Weak non-consequentialism…

Whether or not an action is morally obligatory is at least partly determined by something other than the quantity of good that it produces compared to other actions open to the agent.

Strong non-consequentialism…

Whether or not an action is morally obligatory is wholly determined by something other than the quantity of good that it produces compared to other actions open to the agent.

What else could partly determine whether or not an action is morally obligatory…?

The fact that it is the keeping of a promise to another person…?

To say that there is a prima facie duty to keep your promises is to say that whether or not an action is the keeping of a promise is one of the things that counts towards its being morally obligatory…

Monistic non-consequentialism…

There is ultimately just one thing that determines whether or not an action is morally obligatory (and it isn’t the quantity of good that it produces compared to other actions open to the agent)…
‘...an act is wrong [i.e. not performing it is morally obligatory] if and only if... it could not be justified to others on grounds that they could not reasonably reject.’

(Tim Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other*, p.4)

'There is... only a single categorical imperative and it is this... act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law.’

(Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork*, p.73)

*Pluralistic non-consequentialism*...

There is an *irreducible plurality* of things that determine whether or not an action is morally obligatory (one of which could be the quantity of good that it produces compared to other actions open to the agent)...

'Nonconsequentialism is a normative ethical theory which denies that the rightness or wrongness of our conduct is determined solely by the goodness or badness of the consequences of our acts or the rules to which those acts conform…’

( Frances Kamm, *Nonconsequentialism*, p.261)

§2. Why not deontology?

An argument in favour...

Suppose I am faced with the choice of either keeping a promise or not keeping a promise... and that the quantity of good produced by my action will be exactly the same whether or not I keep my promise...

P1 If the only thing that counts in favour of an action’s being morally obligatory is the quantity of good that it produces, then it is not morally obligatory to keep my promise.

P2 It is morally obligatory to keep my promise.

C Whether or not an action is morally obligatory is at least partly determined by something other than the quantity of good that it produces.

Two arguments against...

P1 It is a consequence of pluralistic non-consequentialism that we can only decide whether an action is morally obligatory by means of *intuitive weighing*.

P2 We should reject any ethical theory a consequence of which is that we can only decide whether an action is morally obligatory by means of *intuitive weighing*.

C We should reject pluralistic non-consequentialism.
'Loyalty to the facts is worth more than a symmetrical architectonic or a hastily reached simplicity.'

(David Ross, *The Right and the Good*, p.23)

It is a consequence of *non-consequentialism* that breaking a promise is never morally permissible.

Breaking a promise is sometimes morally permissible.

*Non-consequentialism* is false.

Absolutist *non-consequentialism*...

Some of the things that count towards an action’s being morally obligatory (other than the quantity of good that it produces) count *decisively*...

*Non-absolutist non-consequentialism*...

None of the things that counts towards an action’s being morally obligatory (including the quantity of good that it produces) counts *decisively*...

§3. Double effect

If the only thing that counts in favour of an action’s being morally obligatory is the quantity of good that it produces, then either both the pulling and the pushing are morally permissible, or neither the pulling nor the pushing is morally permissible.

Pulling the lever is morally permissible.

Pushing the fat man is not morally permissible.

Whether or not an action is morally obligatory is at least partly determined by something other than the quantity of good that it produces.

*The Weak Doctrine of Double Effect*...

The fact that an action is a case of intentionally harming people counts *more strongly* against its being morally permissible than the fact that it is a case of unintentionally but foreseeably harming people...

*The Strong Doctrine of Double Effect*...

The fact that an action is a case of intentionally harming people counts *decisively* against its being morally permissible, whereas the fact that it is a case of unintentionally but foreseeably harming people does not...

In one case you intend to *kill the fat man* in order to save the lives of five other potholers... In another case you intend to *blast the fat man’s body into small pieces* in order to save the lives of five other potholers...
If the Doctrine of Double Effect is true, then the considerations against your action in the first case are stronger than the considerations against your action in the second case.

The considerations against your action in the first case are no stronger than the considerations against your action in the second case.

The Doctrine of Double Effect is false.

Perhaps P1 is false for the following reason... If X and Y are sufficiently close then I cannot intend X without also intending Y... But how are we supposed to measure closeness...?

Perhaps in the two cases you just intend different but equal harms...

§4. Permissible harm

The Weak Principle of Permissible Harm...

The fact that an action harms a person counts more strongly against an action if the harm results merely from a means to the greater good than if it results from the greater good/from the non-causal flipside of the greater good...

The Strong Principle of Permissible Harm...

The fact that an action harms a person counts decisively against an action if the harm results merely from a means to the greater good as opposed to resulting from the greater good/from the non-causal flipside of the greater good...

Thomas Hurka’s tactical bomber case...

References