## Advantage 1 is Synthetic Natural Gas

China SNG plants reverse emissions reductions from wind and solar. They cause water shortages and mercury pollution. **Science Daily 13** writes[[1]](#footnote-1)

Coal-powered **s**ynthetic **n**atural **g**as **plants** being planned in China would produce seven times more greenhouse gas emissions than conventional natural gas plants, and use up to 100 times the water as shale gas production, according to a new study by Duke University researchers. These environmental costs have been largely neglected in the drive to meet the nation's growing energy needs, the researchers say, and **might lock China on an irreversible and** **unsustainable path for decades** to come. "Using coal to make natural gas may be good for China's energy security, but it's an environmental disaster in the making," said Robert B. Jackson, Nicholas Professor of Environmental Sciences and director of the Duke Center on Global Change. "At a minimum, **Chinese policymakers should** delay implementing their synthetic natural gas plan to avoid a potentially costly and environmentally damaging outcome," said Chi-Jen Yang, a research scientist at Duke's Center on Global Change. "An even better decision would be to **cancel the program entirely**." Yang is lead author of the new study, which was published Thursday in the peer-reviewed journal Nature Climate Change. As part of the largest investment in coal-fueled synthetic natural gas plants in history, the central Chinese government recently has approved construction of nine large-scale plants capable of producing more than 37 billion cubic meters of synthetic natural gas annually. Private companies are planning to build more than 30 other plants, capable of producing as much as 200 million cubic meters of natural gas each year -- far exceeding China's current natural gas demand. "These plants are coming online at a rapid pace. If all nine plants planned by the Chinese government were built, they would emit 21 billion tons of carbon dioxide over a typical 40-year lifetime, seven times the greenhouse gas that would be emitted by traditional natural gas plants," Jackson said. "**If all 40** of the **facilities are built,** their **carbon** dioxide **emissions would be** an astonishing **110 billion tons**," Jackson said. The analysis by Yang and Jackson finds that if the gas produced by the new plants is used to generate electricity, the total lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions would be 36 percent to 82 percent higher than pulverized coal-fired power. If the synthetic natural gas made by the plants were used to fuel vehicles, the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions would be twice as large as from gasoline-fueled vehicles. "The **increased** carbon dioxide **emissions from the nine government-approved plants alone will more than cancel out** all of the **reductions in** greenhouse gas **emissions from China's recent investments in wind and solar** electricity," Yang said. "While we applaud China's rapid development in clean energy, we must be cautious about this simultaneous high-carbon leapfrogging." The study notes that the **plants would also emit** hydrogen sulfide and **mercury, which, if not properly scrubbed and treated, are potentially harmful to human health**. Excessive water consumption by the plants is also a concern. "Producing synthetic natural gas requires 50 to 100 times the amount of water you need to produce shale gas," Yang said. "**The nine plants** approved by the government -- **most of which are located in desert** or semi-desert **regions** in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia -- **will consume more than 200 million tons of water annually and could worsen water shortages in areas that already are under significant water stress**." The overall environmental impacts will be severe, Jackson said. "It will lock in high greenhouse gas emissions, water use and mercury pollution for decades. Perhaps there's still time to stop it."

CO2 emissions release methane into the atmosphere which risks extinction. This is historically confirmed.

**Daily Take 13** writes[[2]](#footnote-2)

If you were standing outdoors looking at the distant and reddening sky 250 million years ago as the Permian Mass Extinction was beginning, unless you were in the region that is known as Siberia you would have no idea that a tipping point had just been passed and soon 95% of all life on earth would be dead. It's almost impossible to identify tipping points, except in retrospect. For example, we have almost certainly already past the tipping point to an ice-free Arctic. And we are just now realizing it, even though that tipping point was probably passed a decade or more ago. This is critically important because in the history of our planet **there have been five times when more than half of** all **life on Earth died**. They're referred to as "mass extinctions." One – the one that killed the dinosaurs – was initiated by a meteorite striking the Earth. The rest all appear to have been initiated by tectonic and volcanic activity. **In each case**, however,what happened was that massive amounts of carbon-containing **g**reen**h**ouse **g**ase**s – principally carbon dioxide, were released** from beneath the Earth's crust and up **into the atmosphere. This provoked** global **warming intense enough to melt billions of tons of frozen methane on the ocean**s **floor**s**. That** pulse of methane - an intense greenhouse gas - then **brought** the **extinction** to its full of intensity. While in the past it took continental movement or an asteroid to break up the crust of the earth enough to release ancient stores of carbon into the atmosphere, we humans have been doing this very aggressively for the past 150 years by drilling and mining fossil fuels. So the question: Will several centuries of burning fossil fuels release enough carbon into the atmosphere to mimic the effects of past volcanic and asteroid activity and provoke a mass extinction? Geologists who study mass extinctions are becoming concerned. As more and more research is coming out about the massive stores of methane in the Arctic and around continental shelves, climate scientists are beginning to take notice, too. The **fossil fuel companies are sitting on** roughly **2 trillion tons of underground carbon. That**, in and of itself, **is enough to warm the earth by 5 or 6°C, and is** an amount of carbon **consistent with tipping points during past mass extinctions**. There are an additional estimated 2 trillion tons of methane stored in the Arctic and probably 2 to 5 times that much around continental shelves all around the Earth. **If our burning fossil fuels warms the oceans enough** that that methane melts and is quickly released into the atmosphere, **the Earth will be in its sixth mass extinction**. And make no mistake about it, the **animals and plants** that are **most heavily hit by mass extinctions are those** that are largest and **at the top of the food chain. That means us.** We must stop the carbon madness and move, worldwide, to renewable 21st century energy sources.

SNG independently contributes to methane emissions.

**Zhang 3-9** writes[[3]](#footnote-3)

Coal-fired power plants, which China relies on for most of its energy, are the main cause for the smog. Although China has tried hard to diversify its energy sector and made progress, in the near future, coal consumption is expected to continue rising. **China’s solution of cutting air pollution while using coal is** to use coal-to-gas process to produce synthetic natural gas (**SNG**), which is similar to natural gas and is a lot cleaner. Last June, the largest coal-fired furnace within the Fourth-Ring Road of Beijing was shut down and the plant was retrofitted to burn natural gas. New coal-to-gas plants near coal mines and the pipeline connecting them to urban centers are built rapidly. The decision seems reasonable based on the high price of importing natural gas, the vast coal reserve in China and the unbearable air pollution, but the SNG operation will worsen the already existing water shortage in their locations. The national average of water consumed per person per year in China is 450 cubic meters, which is way below the 1,000 cubic meters defined as the threshold of “severe water stress”. Looking under this low national average number, the uneven distribution of water among regions is even more alarming. South China has four-fifths of the water, mainly in the Yangtze River basin. With only 20 percent of the water, north China struggles to support half the population and two-thirds of the farmland, mainly in the Yellow River basin. There is just 100 cubic meters per person per year in Beijing. Underground aquifers in north China are heavily used, way faster than its recharging speed. For example, the water table under Beijing has fallen by 1,000 feet in two decades, and the dropping water table in some parts of Inner Mongolia has worsened soil degradation and expanded the mobile sand area. The perched north in China is also the home to most of the coal reserves. Most of the SNG plants, either existing or under construction, are located in Xinjiang province and Inner Mongolia province. Building SNG plants in these areas will worsen the already existing water shortage. **Extreme heat and pressure are needed to turn coal into carbon monoxide and hydrogen, then steam and catalysts are added to convert them to natural gas, methane**. Shale gas is criticized as a water-intensive process, but its water usage pales in comparison to SNG, which uses at least 50 times more water. The water-intensive nature of SNG was the reason for the very slow development of this industry—before 2013, there were only four projected approved. But the pace has picked up in recent years promoted by the air pollution. By the end of last year, there are 18 projected approved. The largest one is in Inner Mongolia and has started operation already, it will complete expansion in 2017 and supply almost half of the current gas demand of Beijing. Water treatment plants and recycling plants are badly needed to ease the water shortage. Such operations need energy, adding to the energy-hunger of China. There is a pilot SNG plant in Xinjiang province which uses a new process and only needs half of the water in comparison to the traditional process. Still, the water usage in this best case for SNG is at least 25 times more than that in shale gas. Breakthroughs on technologies are expected to happen and the hope is it can happen fast enough. China won the war on poverty by unprecedented economic growth, which is the root cause for the complex environmental crisis. **The war on pollution** China declared recently **should not create a** situation that a short-term gain of air pollution is achieved on the expense of **more** complicated **long-term crisis** associated with worsening water shortage. The **g**reen**h**ouse **g**as **emission from SNG is** also **significantly higher than simply burning coal**. Experts advocate diversification of energy sector and improvement of energy efficiency, instead of charging ahead with so many big scale SNG plants so fast.

## Advantage 2 is China Stability

Environmental hazards are the main source of Chinese instability, and current policies fail. Genuine prioritization of the environment is key.

**Stanway 13** writes[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Three decades of** industrialization and **double-digit growth in China** have **left the country badly polluted.** **With public anger mounting over** a series of scandals involving hazardous **smog, contaminated soil and toxic water** supplies, **China** has **identified the environment as one of the biggest** potential **sources of instability.** But despite a pledge to create a "beautiful China" over the next decade, Beijing continues to struggle to bring polluting state-owned industrial enterprises and growth-obsessed local governments to heel. The **new policy** document said China **would "correct the bias towards** assessing (officials) on the speed of economic **growth and increase the weight placed on** other indicators such as resource use, **environment**al damage, ecological benefits, industrial overcapacity, scientific innovation, work safety and newly-added debt." **China** already **assesses local officials on** the way they handle **the environment, but with** the **economy still considered the priority, local authorities** stress their green credentials by **build**ing ostentatious national **parks**, wetlands or reforestation projects **rather than address** the cause of **pollution and risk** revenues and **jobs.** "Before, **they were just using environmental protection as a**nother **way of generating** economic **growth** and even if something causes a great deal of immediate environmental damage, they would still consider the short-term economic benefits," said Zhou Lei at Nanjing University, who studies the impact of industry on the environment.

Environmental strains cause Chinese collapse and extinction.

**Yee and Storey 2** writes[[5]](#footnote-5)

The fourth factor contributing to the perception of a china threat is the fear of political and economic **collapse in the PRC, resulting in** territorial fragmentation, **civil war and waves of refugees** pouring into neighbouring countries. Naturally, any or all of these scenarios **would have a profound**ly negative **impact on regional stability.** Today the Chinese leadership faces a raft of internal problems, including the increasing political demands of its citizens, a growing population, a shortage of natural resources and a **deterioration in the** natural **environment caused by rapid industrialisation and pollution**. These problems **are putting a strain on the** central government’s **ability to govern effectively.** Political disintegration or **a Chinese civil war might result in millions of** Chinese **refugees** seeking asylum in neighbounng countries. **Such an** unprecedented **exodus** of refugees from a collapsed PRC would no doubt put a severe **strain** on the limited resources of **China’s neighbours. A fragmented china could** also **result in a**nother **nightmare scenario — nuclear weapons** falling **in**to **the hands of** irresponsible **local** provincial leaders or **warlords**.12 From this perspective, **a disintegrating China would** also **pose a threat to** its neighbours and **the world.**

## Plan:

China should prioritize environmental protection over resource extraction when the two conflict. I reserve the right to clarify.

## FW

Adopt a parliamentary model to account for moral uncertainty. This entails minimizing existential risks. **Bostrom 9** writes[[6]](#footnote-6)

It seems people are overconfident about their moral beliefs.  But **how should one** reason and **act if one** acknowledges that one **is uncertain about morality** – not just applied ethics but fundamental moral issues? if you don't know which moral theory is correct?

It doesn't seem **you can[’t] simply plug your uncertainty into expected utility** decision theory and crank the wheel; **because many** moral **theories** state that you **should not** always **maximize** expected **utility.**

Even if we limit consideration to consequentialist theories, it still is hard to see how to combine them in the standard decision theoretic framework.  For example, suppose you give X% probability to total utilitarianism and (100-X)% to average utilitarianism.  Now an action might add 5 utils to total happiness and decrease average happiness by 2 utils.  (This could happen, e.g. if you create a new happy person that is less happy than the people who already existed.)  Now what do you do, for different values of X?

The problem gets even more complicated if we consider not only consequentialist theories but also deontological theories, contractarian theories, virtue ethics, etc.  We might even throw various meta-ethical theories into the stew: error theory, relativism, etc.

I'm working on a paper on this together with my colleague Toby Ord.  We have some arguments against a few possible "solutions" that we think don't work.  On the positive side we have some tricks that work for a few special cases.  But beyond that, the best **we have managed** so far is **a** kind of **metaphor, which** we don't think is literally and exactly correct, and it is a bit under-determined, but it **seems to get things roughly right** and it might point in the right direction:

**The Parliamentary Model.**  Suppose that you have a set of mutually exclusive moral theories, and that you assign each of these some probability.  Now imagine that **each** of these **theorie**s **gets to send** some number of **delegates to The Parliament**.  The number of delegates each theory gets to send is **proportional to the probability of the theory.**  Then the delegates bargain with one another for support on various issues; and the Parliament reaches a decision by the delegates voting.  What you should do is act according to the decisions of this imaginary Parliament.  (Actually, we use an extra trick here: we imagine that the delegates act as if the Parliament's decision were a stochastic variable such that the probability of the Parliament taking action A is proportional to the fraction of votes for A.  This has the effect of eliminating the artificial 50% threshold that otherwise gives a majority bloc absolute power.  Yet – unbeknownst to the delegates – the Parliament always takes whatever action got the most votes: this way we avoid paying the cost of the randomization!)

The idea here is that moral theories get more influence the more probable they are; yet **even a** relatively **weak theory can still get its way on some issues** that the theory think are extremely important **by sacrificing** its influence **on other** i**s**sues that other theories deem more important.  For example, **suppose you assign 10% probability to** total **util**itarianism and 90% to moral egoism (just to illustrate the principle).  Then **the Parliament** would mostly take actions that maximize egoistic satisfaction; however it **would make some concessions to util**itarianism **on** issues that utilitarianism thinks is especially important.  In this example, the person might donate some portion of their income to **existential risks** research and otherwise live completely selfishly.

I think there might be wisdom in **this model**.  It **avoids the** dangerous and **unstable extremism** that would result **from letting one’s current favorite moral theory completely dictate action**, while still allowing the aggressive pursuit of some non-commonsensical high-leverage strategies so long as they don’t infringe too much on what other major moral theories deem centrally important.

I don’t need to win that weighing values is possible. Extinction precludes all values, so it is wrong under any moral code. **Seeley 86**[[7]](#footnote-7)

In moral reasoning prediction of consequences is nearly always impossible. One balances the risks of an action against its benefits; one also considers what known damage the action would do. Thus a surgeon in deciding whether to perform an operation weighs the known effects (the loss of some nerve function, for example) and risks (death) against the benefits, and weighs also the risks and benefits of not performing surgery. Morally, however, **human extinction is unlike any other risk. No conceivable human good could be worth** the **extinction** of the race, **for** in order **to be a human good it must be experienced by human beings.** Thus extinction is one result we dare not-may not-risk. Though not conclusively established, **the risk of extinction is real enough to make nuclear war** utterly **impermissible under any** sane **moral code.**

No theory is so absolute that extinction is irrelevant. Even deon has a threshold.

**Korsgaard 02** writes[[8]](#footnote-8)

But actions are also events in the world (or correspond to events in the world, at least), and they too have consequences. There are a number of different ways in which one can deal with worries about what happens to the consequences in Kant’s ethical theory. It is worth pointing out that **Kant himself** not only **did not ignore** the **consequences**, but took the fact that good actions can have bad effects as the starting point for his religious philosophy. In his religious thought, Kant was concerned with the question how the moral agent has to envision the world, how he has to think of its metaphysics in order to cope with the fact that the actions morality demands may have terrible effects that we never intended, or may simply fail to have good ones. **I** myself **see** the development of what Rawls has called **“nonideal theory” to be the right way of taking care of** a certain class of **cases, in which the consequences** of doing the right thing just **seem too appalling** for us **to simply wash our hands of.** But I do not want to say that just having bad consequences is enough to put an action into the realm of nonideal theory. I think there is a range of bad consequences that a decent person has to be prepared to live with, out of respect for other people’s right to manage their own lives and actions, and to contribute to shared decisions. But I also think that **there are cases where our actions go wrong in such a way that they turn out** in a sense **not to be the act**ions **we intended** to do, or to instantiate the values we meant them to instantiate. I think that some of **these cases can be dealt with by** introducing **the** kind of **double-level structure** into moral philosophy that I have described in the essay on “The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil.” 3 But I also think there are cases that cannot be domesticated even in this way, cases in which, to put it paradoxically, the good person will do something “wrong.” I have written about that sort of case too, in “Taking the Law into Our Own Hands: Kant on the Right to Revolution.” 4

Infinite values don’t paralyze calculation. **Lauwers and Vallentyne 4** write[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Zero Independence holds that the ranking of two worlds is determined by** the pattern of **differences in local value. This**, we claim, **is highly plausible** in the context of finitely additive value theories. In the finite case, finitely additive value theories always satisfy Zero Independence. Although they typically get expressed as judging a world as at least as good as another (having the same locations) if and only if its total value is at least as great, the **reference to the total is not needed.** An equivalent statement is that one world as at least as good as the second if and only if the sum of the differences in value is at least as great as zero. **Only the pattern of differences matters**. **Even in the infinite case**, Zero Independence is “partially” implied by Sum and Loose Pareto. Sum ranks U as at least as good as V if and only if Sum ranks U-V as at least as good as its zero world. Moreover, if two worlds U and V satisfy the antecedent clause of Loose Pareto, then Loose Pareto ranks U as at least as good as V if and only if it ranks U-V above its zero world. Zero Independence is thus, we claim, highly plausible for finitely additive theories.

Zero Independence is equivalent to a condition in social choice theory known as Translation Scale Invariance when it is restricted to the case where locations are the same.[[10]](#footnote-10) This latter condition holds that interlocational comparisons of zero points are irrelevant to the ranking of worlds. The zero point for value at each location, that is, can be set independently of how it is set for other locations (although, of course, when comparing two worlds, the zero point used for a given location in one world must also be used for that location in the second world). For example, if a location has values of 10 in world U and 5 in world V, both measured on the basis of some particular zero point (the same for both worlds), those values could be changed to 7 and 2 (by making the zero point 3 units higher for that location), and this, according to Translation Scale Invariance, would not alter how the two worlds are ranked.

Zero Independence is equivalent to Translation Scale Invariance (restricted to the case where locations are the same), since any change in the zero points for the locations in worlds U and V can, for some W, be represented by U+W and V+W. (For example, if there are just two people, and the first person’s zero point is decreased by two units, and the second person’s zero point is increased by one unit, then the resulting two representations of the value of U and V are simply U+W and V+W, where W is <2,-1>.) Zero Independence and Translation Scale Invariance thus each hold that U ≥ V if and only if U+W ≥ V+W.

Translation Scale Invariance (and hence, Zero Independence) is highly plausible for finitely additive value theories. (Recall that our goal is to defend a particular extension of finite additivity, not to defend finite additivity against non-additive theories.) **If there is no natural zero point that separates positive from negative value** (if there is just more or less value with no natural separating point), **then any particular zero point is arbitrary** (not representing a real aspect of value). In this case, interlocational comparisons of zero-points are uncontroversially irrelevant. **If**, on the other hand, **there is a natural zero for value, it is still** plausible for finitely additive value theories to hold that it is **irrelevant** for ranking worlds. **What matters** (e.g., **from** a **util**itarian perspective), as argued above, **are** the **differences in value at each location between two worlds—not the absolute level of values** at locations. No interlocational comparison of zero points is needed for this purpose.

Cost-benefit analysis is feasible. Ignore any util calc indicts. **Hardin 90** writes[[11]](#footnote-11)

**One** of the **cute**r **charge**s **against util**itarianism **is that** it is irrational in the following sense. **If I take the time to calculate** the consequences of various courses of action before me, **then** I will ipso facto have chosen the course of action to take, namely, to sit and calculate, because while I am calculating the other **courses of action will cease to be open to me. It should embarrass philosophers that they have ever taken this** objection **seriously. Parallel considerations in other realms are dismissed** with eminently good sense. Lord Devlin notes, “If the reasonable man ‘worked to rule’ by perusing to the point of comprehension every form he was handed, the commercial and administrative life of the country would creep **to** a standstill.” James March and Herbert Simon **escape** the quandary of **unending calculation** by noting that often we satisfice, **we do not maximize: we stop calculating** and considering **when we find a merely adequate choice** of action. **When**, in principle, **one cannot know what is** the **best** choice, **one can nevertheless be sure that** sitting and **calculating is not the best choice.** But, one may ask, How do you know that another ten minutes of calculation would not have produced a better choice? And one can only answer, You do not. At some point the quarrel begins to sound adolescent. It is ironic that **the point** of the quarrel **is almost never at issue in practice** (as Devlin implies, **we are** almost all **too reasonable** in practice **to bring the world to a standstill**) but only in the principled discussions of academics.

Ignore permissibility and presumption because moral uncertainty means we’ll always have a non-zero credence in the existence of morality, so there’s always a risk of offense in favor of one action.

The standard is **maximizing happiness**.

First, revisionary intuitionism is true and leads to util.

**Yudkowsky 8** writes[[12]](#footnote-12)

I haven't said much about metaethics - the nature of morality - because that has a forward dependency on a discussion of the Mind Projection Fallacy that I haven't gotten to yet. I used to be very confused about metaethics. After my confusion finally cleared up, I did a postmortem on my previous thoughts. I found that my object-level moral reasoning had been valuable and my **meta-level moral reasoning had been worse than useless.** And this appears to be a general syndrome - **people do much better when discussing whether torture is** good or **bad than when they discuss the meaning of "good" and "bad". Thus, I deem it prudent to keep moral discussions on the object level** wherever I possibly can. Occasionally **people object** to any discussion of morality on the grounds **that morality doesn't exist**, and in lieu of jumping over the forward dependency to explain that **"exist" is not the right term to use** here, I generally say, "But **what do you do anyway?**" and **take the discussion back down to the object level.** Paul Gowder, though, has pointed out that both the idea of choosing a googolplex dust specks in a googolplex eyes over 50 years of torture for one person, and the idea of "utilitarianism", depend on "intuition". He says I've argued that the two are not compatible, but charges me with failing to argue for the utilitarian intuitions that I appeal to. Now "intuition" is not how I would describe the computations that underlie human morality and distinguish us, as moralists, from an ideal philosopher of perfect emptiness and/or a rock. But I am okay with using the word "intuition" as a term of art, bearing in mind that "intuition" in this sense is not to be contrasted to reason, but is, rather, the cognitive building block out of which both long verbal arguments and fast perceptual arguments are constructed. **I see** the project of **morality as a project of renormalizing intuition.** We have intuitions about things that seem desirable or undesirable, intuitions about actions that are right or wrong, intuitions about how to resolve conflicting intuitions, intuitions about how to systematize specific intuitions into general principles. **Delete all** the **intuitions, and** you aren't left with an ideal philosopher of perfect emptiness, **you're left with a rock. Keep all your** specific **intuitions and** refuse to build upon the reflective ones, and you aren't left with an ideal philosopher of perfect spontaneity and genuineness, **you're left with a** grunting **caveperson** running in circles, due to cyclical preferences and similar inconsistencies. "Intuition", as a term of art, is not a curse word when it comes to morality - there is nothing else to argue from. **Even modus ponens is an "intuition"** in this sense - **it**'s **just** that modus ponens **still seems like a good idea after being** formalized, **reflected on**, extrapolated out to see if it has sensible consequences, etcetera. So that is "intuition". However, Gowder did not say what he meant by "utilitarianism". Does utilitarianism say... That right actions are strictly determined by good consequences? That praiseworthy actions depend on justifiable expectations of good consequences? That probabilities of consequences should normatively be discounted by their probability, so that a 50% probability of something bad should weigh exactly half as much in our tradeoffs? That virtuous actions always correspond to maximizing expected utility under some utility function? That two harmful events are worse than one? That two independent occurrences of a harm (not to the same person, not interacting with each other) are exactly twice as bad as one? That for any two harms A and B, with A much worse than B, there exists some tiny probability such that gambling on this probability of A is preferable to a certainty of B? If you say that I advocate something, or that my argument depends on something, and that it is wrong, do please specify what this thingy is... anyway, I accept 3, 5, 6, and 7, but not 4; I am not sure about the phrasing of 1; and 2 is true, I guess, but phrased in a rather solipsistic and selfish fashion: you should not worry about being praiseworthy. Now, what are the "intuitions" upon which my "utilitarianism" depends? This is a deepish sort of topic, but I'll take a quick stab at it. First of all, it's not just that someone presented me with a list of statements like those above, and I decided which ones sounded "intuitive". Among other things, **if you try to violate** "**util**itarianism", **you run into paradoxes, contradictions**, circular preferences, **and other** things that aren't **symptoms of** moral wrongness so much as **moral incoherence.** After you think about moral problems for a while, and also find new truths about the world, and even discover disturbing facts about how you yourself work, you often end up with different moral opinions than when you started out. This does not quite define moral progress, but it is how we experience moral progress. As part of my experienced moral progress, I've drawn a conceptual separation between questions of type Where should we go? and questions of type How should we get there? (Could that be what Gowder means by saying I'm "utilitarian"?) The question of where a road goes - where it leads - you can answer by traveling the road and finding out. If you have a false belief about where the road leads, this falsity can be destroyed by the truth in a very direct and straightforward manner. When it comes to wanting to go to a particular place, this want is not entirely immune from the destructive powers of truth. You could go there and find that you regret it afterward (which does not define moral error, but is how we experience moral error). But, even so, wanting to be in a particular place seems worth distinguishing from wanting to take a particular road to a particular place. Our intuitions about where to go are arguable enough, but our intuitions about how to get there are frankly messed up. **After** the two hundred and eighty-seventh **research** study **showing that people will chop their own feet off if you frame the problem the wrong way, you start to distrust first impressions. When you've read enough research on scope insensitivity** - people will pay only 28% more to protect all 57 wilderness areas in Ontario than one area, **people will pay the same amount to save 50,000 lives as 5,000 lives**... that sort of thing... Well, the worst case of scope insensitivity I've ever heard of was described here by Slovic: Other recent research shows similar results. Two Israeli psychologists asked people to contribute to a costly life-saving treatment. They could offer that contribution to a group of eight sick children, or to an individual child selected from the group. The target amount needed to save the child (or children) was the same in both cases. Contributions to individual group members far outweighed the contributions to the entire group. There's other research along similar lines, but I'm just presenting one example, 'cause, y'know, eight examples would probably have less impact. If you know the general experimental paradigm, then the reason for the above behavior is pretty obvious - focusing your attention on a single child creates more emotional arousal than trying to distribute attention around eight children simultaneously. So people are willing to pay more to help one child than to help eight. Now, **you could** look at this intuition, and **think it was** revealing **some** kind of **incredibly deep moral truth** which shows that one child's good fortune is somehow devalued by the other children's good fortune. But what about the billions of other children in the world? Why isn't it a bad idea to help this one child, when that causes the value of all the other children to go down? How can it be significantly better to have 1,329,342,410 happy children than 1,329,342,409, but then somewhat worse to have seven more at 1,329,342,417? **Or you could** look at that and **say: "The intuition is wrong: the brain can't** successfully **multiply** by eight and get a larger quantity than it started with. **But it ought to**, normatively speaking." And once you realize that the brain can't multiply by eight, then the other cases of scope neglect stop seeming to reveal some fundamental truth about 50,000 lives being worth just the same effort as 5,000 lives, or whatever. You don't get the impression you're looking at the revelation of a deep moral truth about nonagglomerative utilities. It's just that the brain doesn't goddamn multiply. Quantities get thrown out the window. If you have $100 to spend, and you spend $20 each on each of 5 efforts to save 5,000 lives, you will do worse than if you spend $100 on a single effort to save 50,000 lives. Likewise if such choices are made by 10 different people, rather than the same person. As soon as you start believing that it is better to save 50,000 lives than 25,000 lives, that simple preference of final destinations has implications for the choice of paths, when you consider five different events that save 5,000 lives. (It is a general principle that Bayesians see no difference between the long-run answer and the short-run answer; you never get two different answers from computing the same question two different ways. But the long run is a helpful intuition pump, so I am talking about it anyway.) The aggregative valuation strategy of "shut up and multiply" arises from the simple preference to have more of something - to save as many lives as possible - when you have to describe general principles for choosing more than once, acting more than once, planning at more than one time. Aggregation also arises from claiming that the local choice to save one life doesn't depend on how many lives already exist, far away on the other side of the planet, or far away on the other side of the universe. Three lives are one and one and one. No matter how many billions are doing better, or doing worse. 3 = 1 + 1 + 1, no matter what other quantities you add to both sides of the equation. And if you add another life you get 4 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1. That's aggregation. **When you've read enough** heuristics and **biases research, and enough coherence** and uniqueness **proofs for** Bayesian probabilities and **expected utility**, and you've seen the "Dutch book" and "money pump" effects that penalize trying to handle uncertain outcomes any other way, **then you don't see** the **preference reversals** in the Allais Paradox **as** revealing **some** incredibly **deep moral truth** about the intrinsic value of certainty. **It just goes to show that the brain doesn't** goddamn **multiply.** The primitive, perceptual intuitions that make a choice "feel good" don't handle probabilistic pathways through time very skillfully, especially when the probabilities have been expressed symbolically rather than experienced as a frequency. So you reflect, devise more trustworthy logics, and think it through in words. When you see people insisting that no amount of money whatsoever is worth a single human life, and then driving an extra mile to save $10; or when you see people insisting that no amount of money is worth a decrement of health, and then choosing the cheapest health insurance available; then you don't think that their protestations reveal some deep truth about incommensurable utilities. Part of it, clearly, is that **primitive intuitions don't successfully diminish the emotional impact of** symbols standing for **small quantities** - anything you talk about seems like "an amount worth considering". And part of it has to do with preferring unconditional social rules to conditional social rules. Conditional rules seem weaker, seem more subject to manipulation. If there's any loophole that lets the government legally commit torture, then the government will drive a truck through that loophole. So it seems like there should be an unconditional social injunction against preferring money to life, and no "but" following it. Not even "but a thousand dollars isn't worth a 0.0000000001% probability of saving a life". Though the latter choice, of course, is revealed every time we sneeze without calling a doctor. The rhetoric of sacredness gets bonus points for seeming to express an unlimited commitment, an unconditional refusal that signals trustworthiness and refusal to compromise. So you conclude that moral rhetoric espouses qualitative distinctions, because espousing a quantitative tradeoff would sound like you were plotting to defect. On such occasions, people vigorously want to throw quantities out the window, and they get upset if you try to bring quantities back in, because quantities sound like conditions that would weaken the rule. But you don't conclude that there are actually two tiers of utility with lexical ordering. You don't conclude that there is actually an infinitely sharp moral gradient, some atom that moves a Planck distance (in our continuous physical universe) and sends a utility from 0 to infinity. You don't conclude that utilities must be expressed using hyper-real numbers. Because the lower tier would simply vanish in any equation. It would never be worth the tiniest effort to recalculate for it. All decisions would be determined by the upper tier, and all thought spent thinking about the upper tier only, if the upper tier genuinely had lexical priority. As Peter Norvig once pointed out, if Asimov's robots had strict priority for the First Law of Robotics ("A robot shall not harm a human being, nor through inaction allow a human being to come to harm") then no robot's behavior would ever show any sign of the other two Laws; there would always be some tiny First Law factor that would be sufficient to determine the decision. Whatever value is worth thinking about at all, must be worth trading off against all other values worth thinking about, because thought itself is a limited resource that must be traded off. When you reveal a value, you reveal a utility. I don't say that morality should always be simple. I've already said that the meaning of music is more than happiness alone, more than just a pleasure center lighting up. I would rather see music composed by people than by nonsentient machine learning algorithms, so that someone should have the joy of composition; I care about the journey, as well as the destination. And I am ready to hear if you tell me that the value of music is deeper, and involves more complications, than I realize - that the valuation of this one event is more complex than I know. But that's for one event. When it comes to multiplying by quantities and probabilities, complication is to be avoided - at least if you care more about the destination than the journey. **When you've reflected** on enough intuitions, **and corrected enough absurdities, you** start to **see a common denominator, a meta-principle** at work, **which one might phrase as "Shut up and multiply."** Where music is concerned, I care about the journey. When lives are at stake, I shut up and multiply. It is more important that lives be saved, than that we conform to any particular ritual in saving them. And the optimal path to that destination is governed by laws that are simple, because they are math. **And that's why I'm a utilitarian** - at least when I am doing something that is overwhelmingly more important than my own feelings about it - which is most of the time, because there are not many utilitarians, and many things left undone.

Second, reductionism.

Brain studies prove personal identity doesn’t exist. **Parfit 84** writes[[13]](#footnote-13)

Some **recent medical cases provide striking evidence in favour of the Reductionist View.** Human beings have a **lower brain and** two **upper hemispheres**, which **are connected by a bundle of fibres.** In treating a few people with severe epilepsy, **surgeons have cut these fibres.** The aim was to reduce the severity of epileptic fits, by confining their causes to a single hemisphere. This aim was achieved. But the operations had another unintended consequence. **The effect**, in the words of one surgeon, **was the creation of ‘two separate spheres of consciousness.’ This effect was revealed by** various **psychological tests.** These made use of two facts. We control our right arms with our left hemispheres, and vice versa. And what is in the right halves of our visual fields we see with our left hemispheres, and vice versa. When someone’s hemispheres have been disconnected, **psychologists can thus present** to this person two different written **questions in the two halves of his visual field, and can receive two different answers** written by this person’s two hands.

In the absence of personal identity, only end states can matter. **Shoemaker 99**[[14]](#footnote-14)

Extreme reductionism might lend support to utilitarianism in the following way. Many people claim that we are justified in maximizing the good in our own lives, but not justified in maximizing the good across sets of lives, simply because each of us is a single, deeply unified person, unified by the further fact of identity, whereas there is no such corresponding unity across sets of lives. But if the only justification for the different treatment of individual lives and sets of lives is the further fact, and this fact is undermined by the truth of reductionism, then nothing justifies this different treatment. **There are no deeply unified subjects of experience. What remains are merely the experiences themselves, and so any ethical theory distinguishing between individual lives** and sets of lives **is mistaken.** If the deep, further fact is missing, then there are no unities. **The morally significant units should then be the states people are in at particular times, and an ethical theory that focused on them** and attempted to improve their quality, whatever their location, **would be the most plausible. Util**itarianism **is just such a theory.**

Third, the ultimate human good is happiness. **Darwish 9**[[15]](#footnote-15)

Let’s start with knowledge. It is clear that **those who value knowledge for its own sake** (for instance, highly motivated professionals) **find pleasure in** both the **pursuit** and attainment **of knowledge**, however exhausted they become in either case. So, granted that **knowledge**, for them, is a value that **has intrinsic worth** in itself, and is thus sought for itself, **[because] it** is a value that **yields** their pleasure or **happiness. The same can be said about** the **other values.** Let’s take autonomy in the sense expressed by Hooker as “control over one’s own life” as another example. Here one needs to say no more than that **the mere fact that people seek autonomy explains** the satisfaction or the **pleasure autonomy brings.** Those who value autonomy, thus seek it for itself, cannot feel happy when their decisions are not in their hands, or when they do not have control over their own life. In short, they cannot be happy otherwise. Moore, who explicitly differs from the classical utilitarians in holding that pleasure is not the sole good, 20 says that “the most valuable things… are pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects,” 21 which seems to mean that such things are valued for the pleasures and the enjoyment they bring. These examples clearly show that **though these values have intrinsic worth, they** bring or **constitute our pleasure.**

Fourth, respect for human worth would justify util. **Cummiskey 90**[[16]](#footnote-16)

We must not obscure the issue by characterizing this type of case as the sacrifice of individuals for some abstract “social entity.” It is not a question of some persons having to bear the cost for some elusive “overall social good.” Instead, the question is whether some persons must bear the inescapable cost for the sake of other persons. Robert Nozick, for example, argues that “to use a person in this way does not sufficiently respect and take account of the fact that he is a separate person, that his is the only life he has.” But why is this not equally true of all those whom we do not save through our failure to act? **By emphasizing solely the one who must bear the cost if we act, we fail to** sufficiently **respect** and take account of **the many other** separate **persons**, each with only one life, **who will bear the cost of our inaction**. In such a situation, what would a conscientious Kantian agent, an agent motivated by the unconditional value of rational beings, choose? A morally good agent recognizes that the basis of all particular duties is the principle that “rational nature exists as an end in itself”. Rational nature as such is the supreme objective end of all conduct. If one truly believes that all rational beings have an equal value, then the rational solution to such a dilemma involves maximally promoting the lives and liberties of as many rational beings as possible. In order to avoid this conclusion, the non-consequentialist Kantian needs to justify agent-centered constraints. As we saw in chapter 1, however, even most Kantian deontologists recognize that agent-centered constraints require a non- value-based rationale. But we have seen that Kant’s normative theory is based on an unconditionally valuable end. How can a concern for the value of rational beings lead to a refusal to sacrifice rational beings even when this would prevent other more extensive losses of rational beings? If the moral law is based on the value of rational beings and their ends, then what is the rationale for prohibiting a moral agent from maximally promoting these two tiers of value? If I sacrifice some for the sake of others, I do not use them arbitrarily, and I do not deny the unconditional value of rational beings. **Persons** may **have “dignity**, that is, an unconditional and incomparable worth” **that transcends any market value, but persons also have** a fundamental **equality that dictates that some must** sometimes **give way for the sake of others.** The concept of the end-in-itself does not support the view that we may never force another to bear some cost in order to benefit others.

And fifth, act-omission distinction doesn’t apply to states.

**Sunstein and Vermuele 05** write[[17]](#footnote-17)

The most fundamental point is that unlike individuals, **governments always** and necessarily **face a choice between** or among **possible policies for regulating third parties. The distinction between acts and omissions may not be intelligible in this context,** and even if it is, the distinction does not make a morally relevant difference. Most generally, government is in the business of creating permissions and prohibitions. When it explicitly or implicitly authorizes private action, it is not omitting to do anything or refusing to act. **Moreover, the distinction between authorized and unauthorized private action** – for example, private killing – **becomes obscure when government** formally **forbids private action but chooses a** set of **policy** instruments **that do[es] not** adequately or **fully discourage it.**

## Next is Theory Preempts

**Aff gets RVIs** on I meets and counter-interps because

(a) 1AR time skew means I can’t cover theory and still have a fair shot at substance.

(b) no-risk theory gives her a free source of no-risk offense which allows her to moot the AC.

Reject the argument theory also triggers the RVI. It still causes a time skew and allows her to moot the AC at no risk.

I’m willing to clarify or alter my advocacy in cross-ex.

More aff ground is good. It compensates for side bias. Side bias is also a reason to err aff on theory. If the round takes over six minutes to evaluate, vote aff because I had to overcome structural skews so the round was close.

Err aff on theory because of time skew and neg side bias. Negs won 12% more rounds at VBT according to Tabroom, and Fantasy Debate confirms 7% neg side bias. This also means presume aff if presumption matters.

Err towards small schools on theory to account for resource disparity that makes it harder for me to win.

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