

Actions and Nonactions in Consequentialism: Focal Point, Reference Point, and Level

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Standard act consequentialism directly evaluates actions. But how can and should, if any, consequentialists evaluate nonaction objects such as rules, motives, and social institutions? Since the mid-20th century, much ink has been spent on the validity of indirect consequentialist views, e.g., *rule-consequentialism*, *motive-consequentialism*, and *virtue-consequentialism*, as alternatives to act consequentialism. Furthermore, *global consequentialism*, a view that evaluates everything in terms of its consequence, has been gaining popularity in recent decades.

This paper concerns how consequentialism can and should assess nonaction objects. One challenge to this inquiry is conceptual and terminological confusion hindering an appropriate treatment of this question. Given this, the purpose of this paper is two-folded. First, I offer a framework that distinguishes three often overlooked concepts: *a focal point*, *a reference point*, and *a level*. Not only is this framework useful for my purpose, but it will also promote a general understanding of the structure of consequentialism. Second, I utilize this framework to examine conceptual spaces of consequentialist views that arise from it. Eliminating all views with at least *prima facie* difficulties, I ultimately conclude that, among the conceptually possible views, only two positions survive the scrutiny, viz., *act-local direct multi-level consequentialism* and *act-local indirect multi-level consequentialism*. Given this, we must return to the traditional debate between direct and indirect consequentialism.