

A New Necessity for Consequentialism and A New Consequentialism for Necessity¹

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Abstract: Consequentialism is often repudiated as a backwards approach to moral theory, and the term ‘Machiavellian’ carries a derogatory weight. Moreover, many people believe that politics and morality do not mix, citing Machiavelli as evidence. But what if the only way to be moral in necessary human activities, such as politics, is to be ‘Machiavellian?’ In this, essay I make the case that morality and politics are inextricable. I uncover a dynamic of interconnected functions, which introduces a Machiavellian form of consequentialism that I seek to prove is the only moral theory employable in necessary human affairs. I explore necessity and its relationship to morality, and I argue that ends *necessarily* render means moral, and that acting on necessitation determines the morality (or immorality) of an action. I posit that necessity in the dynamic of affairs such as politics is a natural law. I implore people to realize and actuate the natural law of necessary consequentialism so that a functional and moral world is effectuated. This is Machiavellianism. If this argument is correct, then we shall see Machiavelli’s reputation is mistaken, and in so doing, appreciate the moral theory that stems from Machiavelli’s framework.

A common sense but rather misleading popular belief is that politics and morality are mutually exclusive. Likewise, Machiavelli is popularly seen as a proponent of an unethical political view. Indeed, the word ‘Machiavellian’ is often used as a synonym for ‘immoral.’ What these popular beliefs fail to consider is that because politics is a natural and necessary human activity, it cannot be circumvented or eschewed; thus, politics must have an inherent moral aspect.² This position does not mean that all engagement in such activities are intrinsically moral. Rather, because such activities are necessary for our existence, they possess the capacity for being practiced morally and immorally. In properly understanding the complex world of politics and morality through this lens, the gap between the political and the moral disappears. Moreover, I argue, if we understand Machiavelli correctly, the political is the moral.

In this essay, I seek to explain how the inherent capacity for morality in natural human activities exists and address the moral theory that underlies Machiavelli. I will explicate the Machiavellian consequentialist formula for acting morally when engaging in such activities, but first I must address the incompleteness of consequentialism and explore the Machiavellian worldview of Natural and Necessary Human Activities³ and the dynamic

¹ This essay would not be in the shape that it is in without the generous Dr. Douglass Reed! Thank you so much for your help, Professor!

² I make the assumption that politics is a natural, and necessary human activity.

³ A characteristic of Natural and Necessary Human Activities is that they are necessarily strived for as ends, which is maximum functionality of the activity.

that arises from them.

“As I have said, he should do what is right if he can; but he must be prepared to do wrong if necessary” (Machiavelli 2000, 577). This quote from *The Prince* is the smoking gun for the usual interpretation that Machiavelli is immoral, yet it will serve as the foundation for my argument and what I consider Machiavellian Conduct.⁴ This is because though Machiavelli uses the word ‘wrong’ to signify immoral behavior, he is referring to conventional immorality: what society considers immoral, rather than what *is* moral. ‘Wrong’ for Machiavelli does not mean objectively wrong, all things considered. I am attempting to provide a framework in which Machiavelli’s moral theory is coherent and insightful. In doing so, I present a new moral theory.⁵

As we will see, Machiavelli’s consequentialism is inextricable from the intention that produces the desired result. Furthermore, we will find that Machiavellian Conduct is the only effective way for the realism of Natural and Necessary Human Activities to be engaged with morally. I argue that the true Machiavellian is competent and thus moral, and must continue to employ this form of morality or become incompetent and thus immoral. Moreover, I shall show that Machiavelli realized that there is a particular consequentialism that bridges the perceived gap between politics and morality.

The Primary Question of Consequentialism

The motto of primary consequentialism is “the ends justify the means.” Few people regard this doctrine as truly providing a system or theory of ethics, since it is a repudiation of Conventional Morality and has other drawbacks. In consequentialism, the morality of the initial action is dependent upon the intended consequence being fulfilled. Thus, if the intended consequence is not fulfilled, the initial act may be judged unnecessary⁶ and unjustified. This holds true even when there is no intention to produce a positive or negative outcome, as consequentialism judges all outcomes regardless of intention. This often causes reluctance to engage in the initial act since the consequence is never guaranteed and thus the agent might be deemed immoral. Examples of Conventional Morality are refraining from killing, lying, stealing, deceiving, violence (unless in self-defense), repression, inciting fear, coercion, torturing/cruelty, etc., since these actions intentionally cause harm. Further, the fact that the consequences of such actions might be good is not enough to consider the actions moral. Most people regard the above actions as immoral, so they are considered Conventionally Immoral.⁷ Consequentialism, therefore, is not “conventional,” since it permits these acts so long as they result in net gain, or the consequence is

⁴ Machiavellian Conduct is acting conventionally moral when conventional immorality is not necessitated. Machiavellian Conduct is acting according to his quote.

⁵ To be clear, this essay is not interpretive. Rather, it is the beginning to a rational reconstruction of Machiavellian moral theory. That is, I am not here presenting Machiavelli’s ethics, but perhaps a Machiavellian theory of ethics.

⁶ Unnecessary = something that is not demanded or required by a situation.

⁷ Conventional Immorality is only a function when it is necessitated.

“good.” I divide all possible moral actions into two categories,⁸ Conventional Morality and Conventional Immorality.

Proponents of consequentialism are often asked, “at what point do the ends no longer justify the means?” This is the primary question of consequentialism. It is significant because if the ends justify the means, then theoretically anything—even a Conventionally Immoral act—is permissible as long as it brings about good consequences or net benefits. For instance, one purpose of torture might be to elicit information from the tortured. Imagine a situation in which people are using torture to find and eliminate a ruthless dictator. The information presumed to be obtained from the tortured will help the torturers find the dictator and free the people from his subjugation and oppression. The use of torture is the means, which is justified if the ends are reached, and unjustified if not; however, torture never ceases to be Conventionally Immoral.

The nature of consequentialism is that the ends must be anticipated to justify the means. Thus, the primary question of consequentialism returns, for if something is *not absolutely certain or necessary* for the continuation of an Existential Necessity,⁹ say, for instance, the thriving of a community,¹⁰ then the means taken to reach an end remain immoral, since the situation didn’t necessitate¹¹ the means. Conventional Morality is typically a good moral theory because it refrains from causing harm. Undergoing harm is the opposite of what an Existential Necessity desires by virtue of it existing as a functional entity. Conventional Morality is typically good in itself, and as a means to ends.

Is it not amoral when someone proceeds to engage in speculative and hopeful means after acknowledging the possibility (maybe even probability) that the means would not be justified by Conventionally Immoral actions? This is engagement in primary consequentialism. Certainly it is difficult to predict outcomes with one hundred percent accuracy. Even if the ends are certain to occur as a result of the means, what it took to get there in the example of torture remains Conventionally Immoral and may not have been necessary, meaning that the ends cannot fully justify the means. The dictator may have been located by another means, for instance using advanced technology, which would not cause much suffering but still result in locating the target. Since Conventional Morality is moral until otherwise necessitated, any Conventionally Immoral means that don’t ensure the ends can never be rendered completely moral. I assert that Conventionally Immoral means are only ever justified if they are necessitated because if they are not required, Con-

⁸ This division of possible moral actions signifies that at all times in Natural and Necessary Human Activities, one of the two can be employed and be rendered moral, or immoral depending on its necessitation and thus outcome.

⁹ An Existential Necessity is anything that is necessary for the functioning of something that is necessary to be fulfilled for an entity in a dynamic, whatever that entity is. Fulfilling the needs of an Existential Necessity is moral so long as the entity is a necessity for itself and a necessary function for other Natural and Necessary Human Activities.

¹⁰ A community is an Existential Necessity, not only because it is a natural human activity, but because the community’s functioning is desired by all of its members, making it existentially necessary to exist and fulfill its needs.

¹¹ Necessitate* requires a moral action of some kind, be it Conventionally Moral or Conventionally Immoral. In Natural and Necessary Human Activities, some kind of action is always necessitated.

ventional Morality should have been used. Only if a situation necessitates¹² a Conventionally Immoral action will it make that action inextricable from the necessary consequence. Then, the situation transforms into a frame of good ethics, whereupon Conventional Immorality becomes moral.

The Dynamic of Morality in Natural and Necessary Human Activities

I am proposing that there are two features of an action required for it to be moral, even if it is Conventionally Immoral. First, the action is required for the continuation or improvement of some necessary condition or function of a necessity.¹³ For example, a stable economy is necessary as an end and a means for another necessary function, such as a state. Second, the agent knows that a situation requires a specific action, and knows which action(s) is required. This will ensure that sufficient and not excessive Conventional Immorality is used, and render all actions fundamentally moral. This is because what makes life worth living is fundamentally good¹⁴ and what makes life worth living must be functional for it to be fulfilled. This fulfillment can only occur when there is an inextricable relationship between the ends and means.

In a situation where Conventional Immorality is required, not engaging in Conventional Immorality will result in a dysfunctional necessary function.¹⁵ One attribute of a functioning community is a functioning economy, which is itself a function, and therefore also an end. Since this end also leads to other functions of an Existential Necessity, such as technology, security, happiness etc., a functioning economy is simultaneously also a means. Therefore, a sustained economy and the actions taken to sustain it are each functions and necessities of an Existential Necessity. Without the means that continue the functioning of the necessity, there would be no end for which something in existence can live and thrive. Upon the fulfillment of an end in a dynamic, more functions are enabled for fulfillment, whereby the ends become means.

The community is a necessary function itself,¹⁶ an ultimate end,¹⁷ and an Existential Necessity, which becomes fully functional when all other necessary functions that enable it to function are functioning. So, when a function of a community is not fulfilled or is violated, for instance when people starve even amidst an abundance of food, the community

¹² A necessitated situation requires a specific action because that action is inextricable from its results which are necessary, otherwise, the action wouldn't be necessitated.

¹³ A function of a necessity is anything that enables the necessity to exist, and/or thrive, whatever that necessity is.

¹⁴ Existential necessities and are good in themselves, thus their functionality is good.

¹⁵ A necessary function of something can thus be anything that enables a necessity (which can also be a function) to function, or is a process of its functioning. This function is necessary to continue to function as an Existential Necessity, and thus all necessary functions are existentially necessary because they are functions of ultimate ends.

¹⁶ The community is a function of itself, and for everyone who seeks benefit from living in the community.

¹⁷ An entity that is the starting point of all other necessary functions that come back to sustain and better the entity. An existentially necessary entity whereupon functioning is the purpose of its own existence.

falls into partial dysfunction. Dysfunction signifies that immorality is occurring.¹⁸ This is the case for a few reasons. Food provides sustenance and is necessary for the functioning¹⁹ of a community, because not only does it enable subsistence (an end to many means), but it enables higher levels of functioning (a means to many ends). People live in a community to subsist and flourish, so when the central reasons for their communalism are neither fulfilled nor working towards fulfillment, the community is immediately rendered dysfunctional. So long as the function/necessity is fulfilled, whatever attributes the intention carries (greed, altruism) when executing a necessitated act does not matter. So long as the intention to execute an action is necessitated, it is also moral by virtue of the situation.

There is a myriad of functions that constitute a fully functioning Existential Necessity. A state and its government are inextricable from the people who live in the state.²⁰ They each exist for each other; therefore, the functions of one become interrelated with the functions of the other. Thus a dynamic²¹ of ends to means relationships exists. A dynamic necessitates total functionality, as it only arises by virtue of an Existential Necessity. Because dysfunction occurs when something Conventionally Immoral is committed unnecessarily, for instance, when corrupt politicians steal what is rightly the state's money, something must be done to reinstate functionality to the now dysfunctional dynamic. The people are angry, meaning other functions (happiness, trust, community, citizenry, etc.) have fallen into dysfunction. Their economy is spiraling downward, they distrust government, and therefore the functionality of the dynamic is in disarray. Whatever must be done to solve this *must* be done.

Imagine that the corrupt politicians are apprehended. Some willingly return the stolen money, but the majority do not. The stolen money is a substantial portion of the state's total budget, continuing and exacerbating the dysfunction everywhere. The citizens, still subscribing to Conventional Morality, demand that the corrupt politicians return the money, but will neither understand nor accept a Conventionally Immoral method for obtaining it. The remaining corrupt politicians will succeed in keeping their stolen money unless their bank account numbers are somehow obtained. After repeated failures from Machiavellian politicians to open their accounts, an excruciatingly painful, carcinogenic, illegal, unconstitutional but impeccably effective truth serum is used. The necessary information is obtained and the stolen money is recovered.

¹⁸ Remember that Conventional Morality must be employed unless Conventional Immorality is necessitated. This is because unnecessary Conventional Immorality renders something dysfunctional because what's necessary for a function of an Existential Necessity is Conventionally Moral. Conventional Morality is moral unless otherwise necessitated. That which makes for functionality is moral.

¹⁹ Being necessary for something's functioning indicates an ends-means dynamic relationship between the function or multiplicity of functions and what's necessary for them to be achieved.

²⁰ I make the assumption that a state is necessary for the functioning of a community, human prosperity, and continuation of each. This assumption is predicated on acknowledging citizen's desires to reach their own ultimate ends. While anarchy might be possible, it isn't a reality for those living in a state.

²¹ Dynamic is the entire multitude of interconnected functions that exist by virtue of an Existential Necessity. Dynamic is also the relationship between connected functions. Dynamic relationships aren't just back and forth between two functions, a functions' means and ends are also means other functions in the dynamic.

The politicians who administered the truth serum announce that they have recovered the stolen money but lie about the method by which it was obtained, telling everyone that the money was retrieved through legal and Conventionally Moral means. Because a necessary function of the functioning economy was reinstated, the citizens rejoice. Other functions, such as happiness, trust in government, etc., also become functional as a result of the recovery, thus returning the once dysfunctional functions to a state of proper functionality. According to the citizens, the politicians acted morally and responded to their indignation and needs. To return to original functionality, however, the Machiavellian politicians were required to deceive the citizens—another Conventionally Immoral practice. Because the people were unaccepting of Conventional Immorality when the stolen money situation necessitated its use, deception was rendered moral and obligatory.

Deception brought the dynamic back to functionality as the money was returned and economic functioning was restored. Telling the truth would not have changed the outcome of the restored economy, but it would sustain, exacerbate, and likely cause other dysfunctions. Deception also rendered the dynamic flourishing since the citizens commend and trust the Machiavellian politicians - after all, they did their job both in the eyes of the citizens, and in the nature of the situation. This was only the case *because* the politicians used Conventionally Immoral methods, and this was only moral because the methods were necessitated. Conventionally Immoral acts always remain Conventionally Immoral but are rendered moral in these situations. “As I have said, he should do what is right if he can; but he must be prepared to do wrong if necessary” (Machiavelli 2000, 577).

If such actions were not necessitated, they would have been immoral on all sides (just like stealing the money), and would therefore result in the dysfunctionality of the dynamic. If someone were to use truth serum to obtain the stolen money, but instead of returning it, pocket it just as the original thieves did, and proceed to deceive the citizens, that person would be acting completely immorally. This is because dysfunctionality would be perpetuated, as there was no need for him to pocket the money, nor lie to citizens. The situation demanded Machiavelli’s consequentialism from him, however, he did not execute what was necessitated and did the opposite: committed Conventional Immorality unnecessarily.

A New Morality

I call my Machiavellian variation of consequentialism ‘Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism.’²² Consequentialism becomes Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism when a dynamic exists within Natural and Necessary Human Activities whereby any means to continue functional necessary ends become moral. This is the criteria for Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism:

²² Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism is the entire system of morality that exists in situations that necessitate consequentialism. Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism is also the employment of consequentialism in a dynamic state (non political state) of necessity. Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism is also acting Conventionally Moral when Conventional Immorality is not necessitated, as the dynamic necessitates Conventional Morality unless Conventional Immorality is necessitated. A moral person must realize Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism and employ it. Machiavellian Conduct is practiced when this happens.

1. The means are certain to produce the intended outcome, which dynamic relationships enable and ensure.
2. A situation necessitates a means, which if not enacted would result in the dysfunctionality of a necessity. Conventional Morality are the standard means unless a situation necessitates otherwise.
3. The outcome is sustaining and continuing [a] necessary function(s) or thing(s) (the end or means since both are ends and means to other functions).

Thus, no matter how Conventionally Immoral the means are, they are moral because without them there would be no way of even being Conventionally Moral (a function itself) because morality wouldn't exist without life, and thus the good exists from having a starting point. What brings us to good is necessary and thus moral. A means to ends dynamic system is predicated on necessity, and vice versa, which is why necessity is the attribute that makes an action moral so long as what is being engaged in is an Existential Necessity. In cases of Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism, the Conventionally Immoral act to achieve a necessary functions' functioning must be the least Conventionally Immoral action of all effective alternatives, otherwise true Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism is not employed.²³

The axiom for Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism, is "the ends must *necessarily* render the means moral" and "for something necessary for existence there is a goodness embedded in its very functioning." Thus, we are now in position to answer to the question of consequentialism. The answer is "so long as the means are necessary, they are moral. So long as they are not necessary, they are immoral." This is because any objectively necessitated act (not just perceived to be necessitated) becomes moral when executed. The normative property still judges the outcome of the action regardless of Conventional Morality or Conventional Immorality, and thus this form of ethics remains within the doctrine of consequentialism.

The ends necessarily render the means moral, *because* the means enable moral ends and both are necessary for a necessity (whatever the necessity is) which is always moral to fulfill. In political realism or any Existential Necessity, or dynamic stemming from an Natural and Necessary Human Activities, the actions taken to reach the functioning of a necessary function is synonymous with morality. It is Existentially Necessary for the necessary functions of an ultimate end to be fulfilled. The necessity is now both the ends and the means for the ultimate ends.²⁴ The necessity's ends and means fulfill the functioning of the ultimate ends, which come back to enable the necessary functions of the Existential Necessity's means and ends.

Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism is a natural law of functionality, and exists when Natural and Necessary Human Activities are in play. This theory means that a truly moral person, especially rulers, must realize the world of Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism and conduct their actions according to its law. A truly moral person has renounced acting upon the misleading theories of complete Conventional Morality and

²³ This is because Conventional Morality is moral unless otherwise necessitated, so if a 'less Conventionally Immoral' alternative to a necessary end exists, it must be employed. This 'less Conventionally Immoral' alternative is the truly required act.

²⁴ Ultimate ends = An Existential Necessity in which total functionality fulfills the purpose of its existence.

non-Machiavellian (primary) consequentialism that blind him/her to moral law. The discoverer who activates their morality so that their thoughts and actions are in accord with the law operates skillfully within the dynamic of Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism. We call this person ‘Machiavellian.’

Conclusion

While Machiavelli did not write *The Prince* to focus on morality’s entwinement with politics and all other Natural and Necessary Human Activities, his fundamental insight into the nature of human activities is correct. The excerpt from *The Prince* perfectly captures my use of the terms Conventional Immorality and Conventional Morality and the necessity and therefore morality of acting Conventionally Immoral when necessary. After all, Machiavelli was focused on securing the statesman’s power and position, but he realized that the only way to do this was to create a truly functioning state system. Machiavelli unknowingly discovered that competency is morality when engaging in Natural and Necessary Human Activities, and that acting immorally means doing something unnecessary. Regardless of whether Machiavelli’s prescription is used to further a position of power or act with the best interest of the people in mind, its true application results in the functioning of an Existential Necessity, which is necessary to fulfill. This is how and why Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism in Natural and Necessary Human Activities is obligatory to employ, and why consequentialism can only be a true ethical system in a necessary-dynamic relationship of such kind. In fact, it is the *only* true ethical system in this relationship.

I stand by the maxim that to render something completely moral is better than to merely render something acceptable, and Machiavellian Conduct does just that to consequentialism. I argue that primary consequentialism at its best only delivers permission to Conventionally Immoral acts, but that Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism delivers morality to Conventional Immorality. I argue that Machiavelli (unknowingly) discovered a system for which consequentialism becomes mandatory for a moral person, and not acting “Machiavellian” renders engagement in Natural and Necessary Human Activities immoral.

Normatively speaking, every person involved in the dynamic world of Natural and Necessary Human Activities and Existential Necessities must act with the realist knowledge of Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism and Machiavellianism. If they do not, they become immoral and incompetent. Anyone can use regular consequentialism to think themselves into justification, but it takes perspicacity²⁵ to know when and how to employ Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism – true consequentialism. Whether a person strives to either be moral or competent, (s)he must employ Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism, for it delivers both as they are synonymous in the world of Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism. Machiavellianism is morality.

²⁵ This theory relies on the human ability to realize Necessary-Dynamic-Consequentialism and conduct themselves in a completely Machiavellian manner, with perspicacity, and rationality, and therefore the skills and moral character to act this way.

References

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