

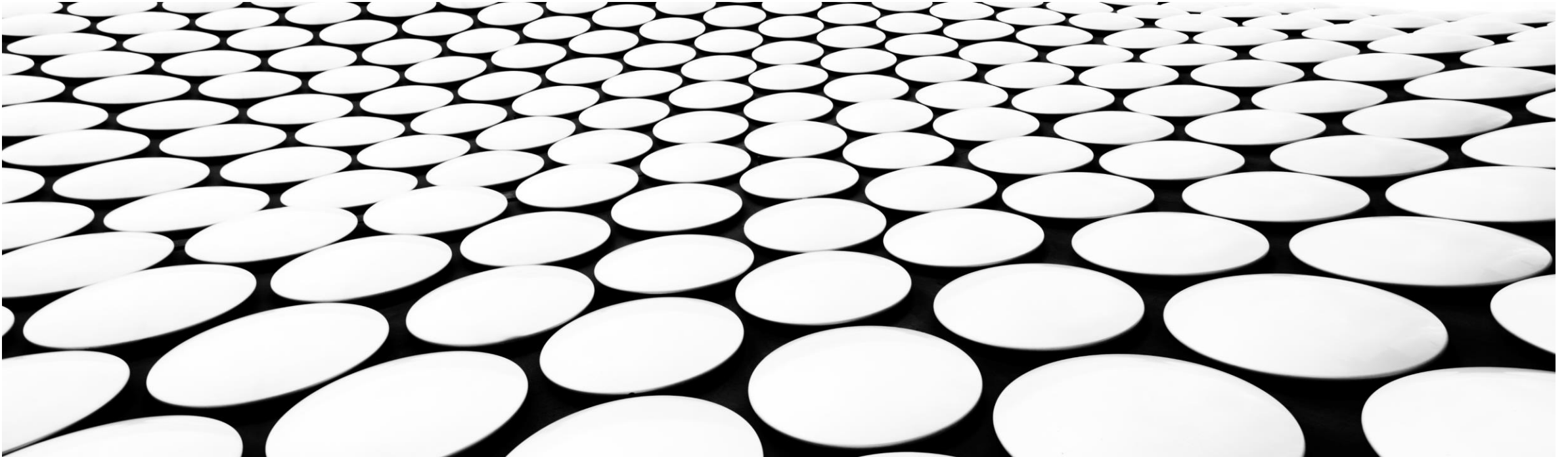
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# MAXIMIZING GOD'S GLORY: A NORMATIVE ETHICAL THEORY

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SCP 2021 MIDWEST MEETING



# OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Analysis of Glory
- Argument for Christian Consequentialism
- Divine Glory Consequentialism
- Implications
- Objections
  - Christian consequentialism
  - Euthyphro dilemma

## DIVINE GLORY CONSEQUENTIALISM (DGC): THE MAIN IDEA

- The chief end of man is to glorify God
- Ethical framework available to all theists
- Guiding principle for decision making



# WHAT IS DIVINE GLORY?

- Many religious senses of glory, like lumination, are not ethically significant
- Descriptions of God's glory we can't affect:
  - Revealed glory
  - Radiant, visible glory
- Focus is on what our actions can do

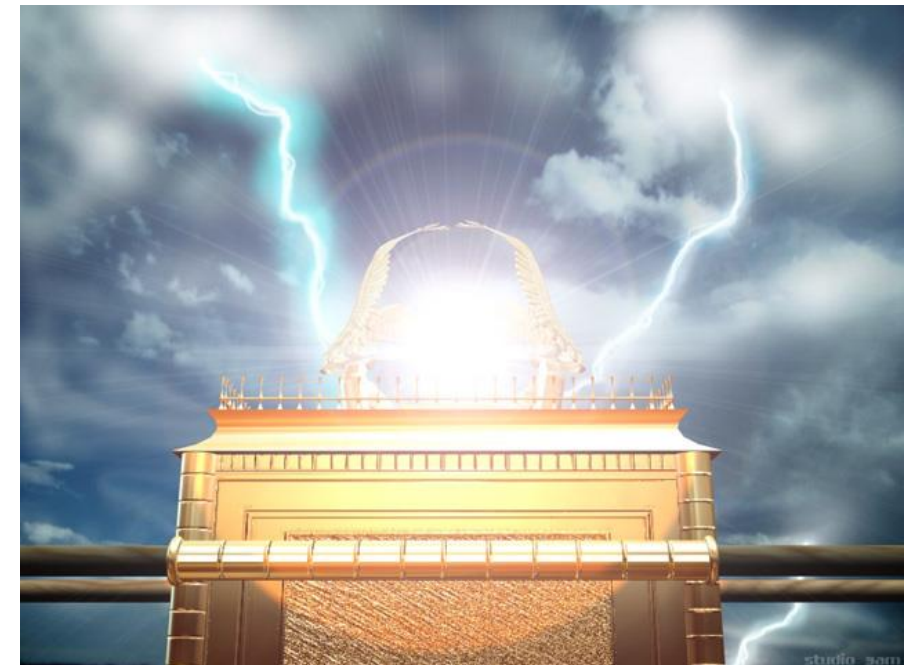


Image Source: <https://livelyscribes14.wordpress.com/2015/03/11/the-shekinah-glory-of-god/>

# CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF GLORY

## A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF GLORY

Paul Silva Jr.

- $\text{Glorify}_1$  = to praise, respect, or admire
- $\text{Glorify}_2$  = to incite others to  $\text{glorify}_1$
- $\text{Glorify}_3$  = to put others in a position to recognize God's attributes that make God glorious
- Being glorious = God's actual characteristics make God worthy of much praise, respect, and admiration.
  - We cannot affect God's gloriousness
- Being glorified by a person = a person  $\text{glorifies}_{1,2,3}$  God.

Silva, Paul. "A Conceptual Analysis of Glory." *Res Philosophica* 95.3 (2018): 561-582.

Silva, Paul, and Brandon Szerlip. "A Unified Account of Glory Concepts: Glory, Glorious, Glorified, Glorifying-in, and Derivative Concepts." *Journal of Analytic Theology* 8 (2020): 300-320.

## FURTHER DETAILS

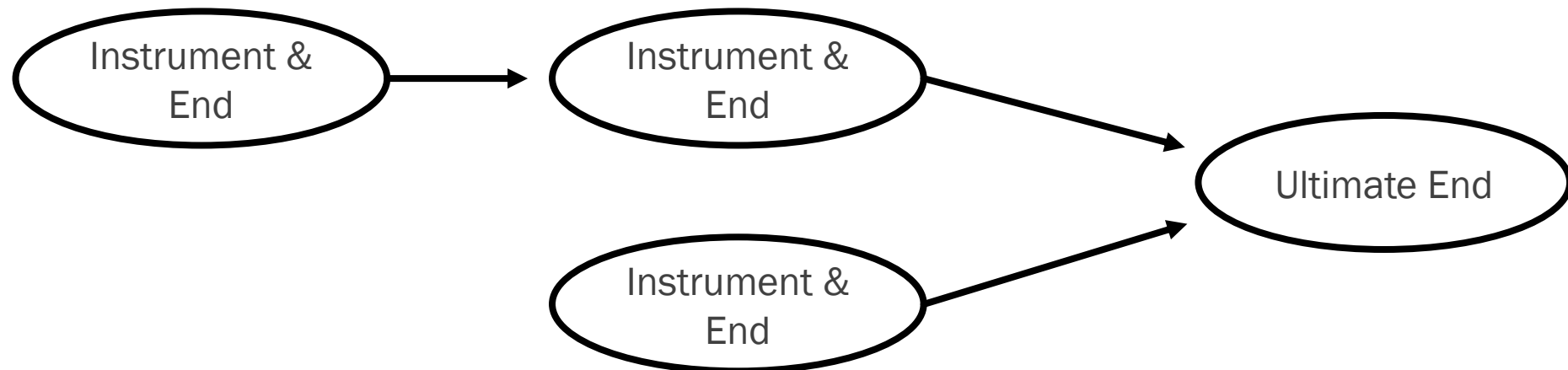
- Something is properly glorified if and only if the glorification is sincere, refers to the correct object of glory, and matches the object's gloriousness.
- Praise is an action of “commending something for its perceived characteristics” while believing those characteristics are good.
- Respect is having a fitting “behavioral disposition” that occurs because of one's belief that the object deserves the respect you are giving.
- Admiration is an evaluative pro-attitude like valuing or esteeming.

## GENERAL ARGUMENT FOR DGC

1. If there is an ultimate end of creation, God's actions and desires, and our actions, then it should be maximized (i.e. is a good candidate for the foundation of a consequentialist theory)
2. Divine glory is the ultimate end of creation, God's actions and desires, and our actions
3. Therefore, divine glory is a good candidate for the foundation of a consequentialist theory

# ULTIMATE ENDS

- “Ends, like means, are relative, that all ends and means are related to each other in a contributory hierarchy, and that in their turn all ends become means to some end higher than themselves. There is only one end, one goal, one purpose which is not relative and contingent, always an end in itself.” (Fletcher 1997)
- Subordinate ends can have final and instrumental value; ultimate ends only have final value





## IS DIVINE GLORY THE ULTIMATE END?

- God's glory is the "supreme and ultimate end of all God's works," "end of the creation," "ultimate end of the goodness of moral agents," "ultimate end commanded of moral creatures," etc. (Edwards 1765)
- God's glory is... (Morgan 2010)
  - "Arguably the foundational theme of New Testament theology, biblical theology in general, and the very purpose of all creation and history."
  - The "goal of creation; the exodus; Israel; Jesus' ministry, life, death, resurrection, and reign; our salvation; the church; the consummation; and all of salvation history."
  - "The ultimate goal of the display of God's attributes, perfections, or person."

Edwards, Jonathan. *The End for Which God Created the World*, quoted in Piper, John. *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards (With the Complete Text of The End for Which God Created the World)*. Crossway, 2006.

Morgan, Christopher W. "Toward a Theology of the Glory of God." in Morgan, Christopher W. and Peterson, Robert A., eds. *The Glory of God*. Crossway, 2010, p. 154, 175, 158.

## BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK: OLD TESTAMENT

- God's glory is foundational to His plan
  - Divine glory is why we were created (Isaiah 43:7)
  - God longs for the knowledge of it to fill the earth (Habakkuk 2:14)
  - It is why God brought the Israelites out of Egypt (Psalm 106:8)
  - It is why God withholds his wrath (Isaiah 48:9,11)
  - It is why God guides us (Psalm 23:3)
  - It is why God restored Israel (Ezekiel 36:20-23)

## BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK: NEW TESTAMENT

- It is the end goal of our salvation (Ephesians 1:12,14)
- God's glory should be foundational to our decision making
  - It is the result of bearing fruit (John 15:8)
  - It should be our motivation in everything we do (1 Corinthians 10:31)



## **THEME VERSE**

**1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 “SO WHETHER YOU EAT OR DRINK OR  
WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD”**



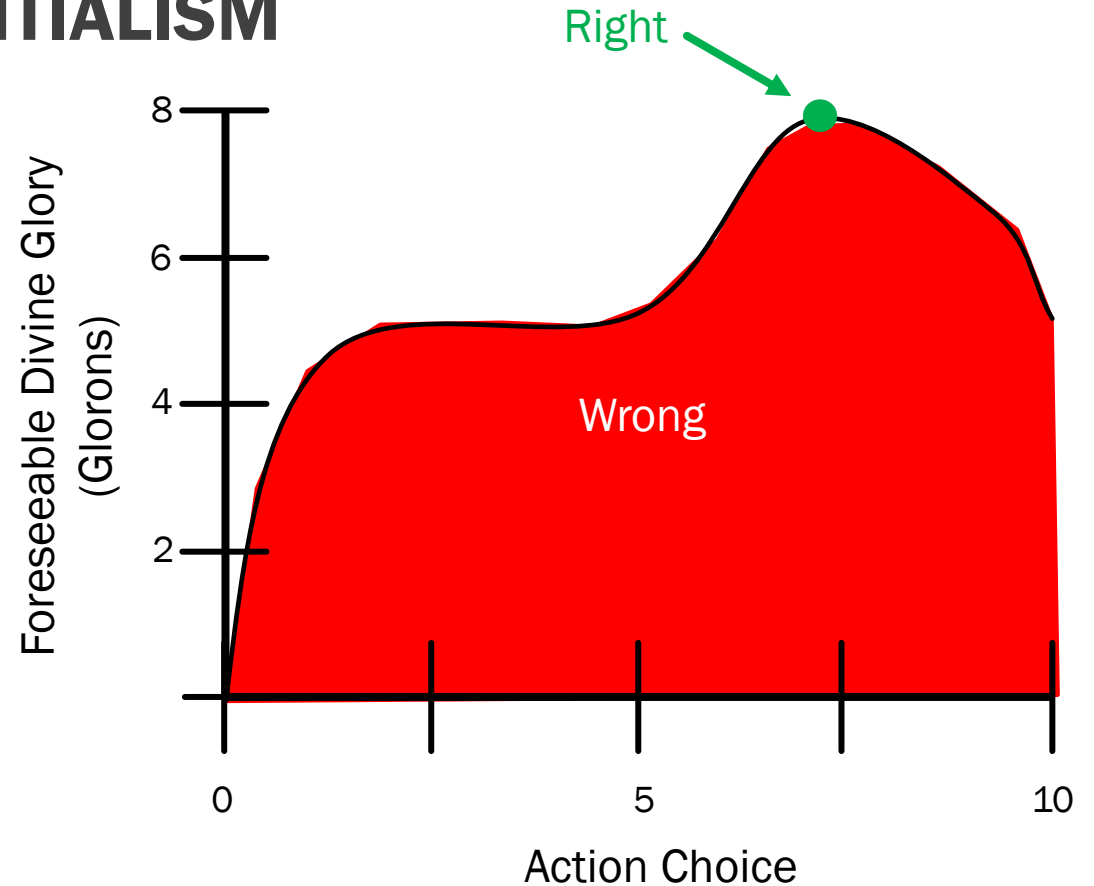


# **ETHICAL FRAMEWORK**



# MAXIMIZING SUBJECTIVE CONSEQUENTIALISM

- An action is right if and only if it maximally glorifies God
- An action is evaluated based on foreseeable consequences
  - “Foreseeable” requires fulfilling epistemic duties (e.g. evidence gathering and evaluation)



Maximizing Consequentialism

## DRAWING OUT IMPLICATIONS

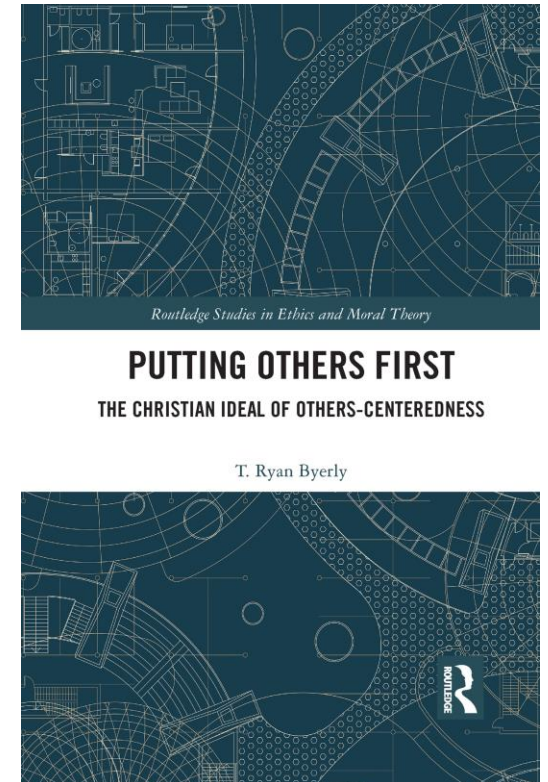
- Inherent goals: glorify<sub>1,2,3</sub> God
- Derivative goals (from respecting God)
  - Respecting God's creation, creatures, and offspring
    - Environmental and animal ethics, etc.
  - Obeying God's commands
    - Necessary connection between obedience and glory
  - Proper motivation for action
    - Attitude of respect



Source: <http://clipart-library.com/clipart/329080.htm>

# GENERAL RESULTS

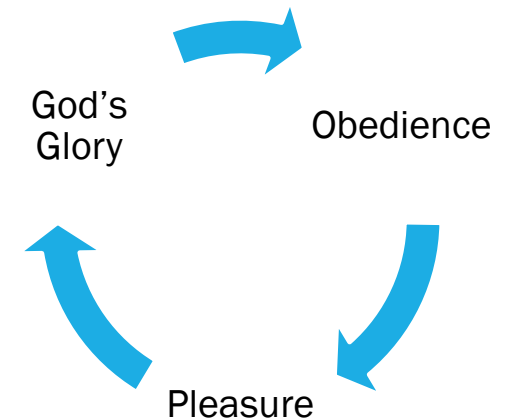
- Incorporates consequences, deontological restraints (commands), and motivations
- Others-centeredness
  - 2/3 of  $\text{glorify}_{1,2,3}$  are how actions affect others
- Importance of evangelism and evangelism-adjacent activities
  - Results in infinite value





# DGC DISSOLVES STANDARD OBJECTIONS TO CONSEQUENTIALISM

- Paradox of hedonism –worrying about pleasure isn't pleasing
  - The pursuit of God's glory is pleasing (Psalm 1:2), is obedience (1 Cor 10:31), and increases God's glory
- Differentiating persons – different obligations for family
  - Special obligations for intimate persons is commanded (1 Tim 5:8)
- Reduction of goodness to base desires
  - God's glory is supreme and worthy





# **OBJECTIONS**



# IS CHRISTIAN CONSEQUENTIALISM AN OXYMORON?

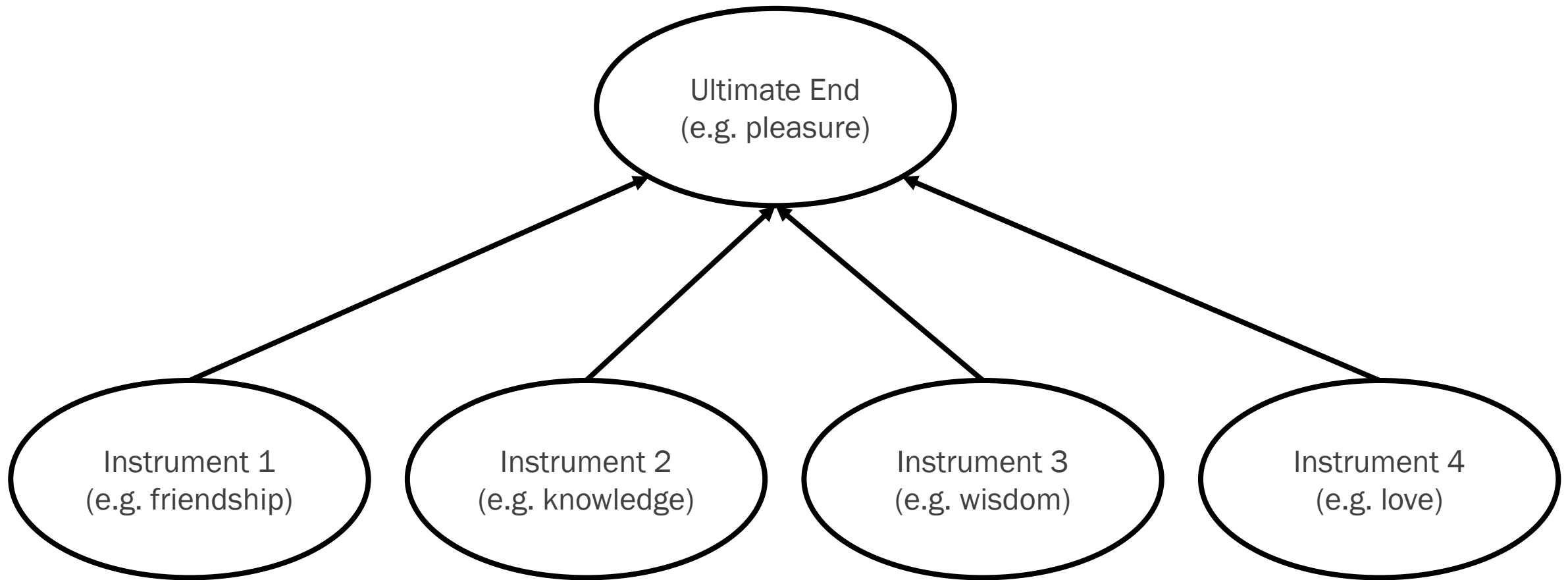
- Utilitarianism was originally a Christian endeavor (Perry 2014)
  - Love your neighbor as yourself (neighbor = everyone)
  - Love = act for the wellbeing of the other
- Source of disagreement is typically on the theory of value
- Consequentialism is independent of whether God is a ‘consequentialist’ (contra Chappell 1993)
  - God’s actions aren’t part of human morality
  - Skeptical theism



# EUTHYPHRO DILEMMA

- Are actions good because they glorify God, or do actions glorify God because they are good?
- Horn 1 is acceptable, but let's make it more palatable
- DGC is deontically equivalent to maximizing divine glory + respecting persons of value
  - Maximize end E is deontically equivalent to maximize end E + instruments  $I_i$
- Therefore, combining DGC + expanded axiology is an open option
- Multiple good-making properties, but only one right-making property
- Thus, “saving someone’s life is good because they have value” is accurate

# CHAINS OF VALUE





**GUIDING QUESTION:  
HOW CAN I MOST GLORIFY GOD WITH MY TIME,  
ENERGY, AND MONEY?**



## QUESTIONS WE SHOULD ASK

- Which glorifies God more?
  - \$50,000 car or \$25,000 car + \$25,000 to charity
  - \$4 Starbucks coffee or feeding a starving family of 4 for a day
- Samaritan's Purse (meets physical & spiritual needs)
  - \$10,000 = water well for 500 villagers
  - \$40 = eye surgery for the blind
  - \$7 = week's worth of hot meals
- GiveWell charities



**THANK YOU**







# **SUPPLEMENTARY SLIDES**



## DEGLORY

- Something is deglorified by some person at a time if and only if at that time they properly condemn, disrespect, or ridicule it
- God can never be “properly” deglorified

## EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES

- We don't need to know God's commands
- How do we know the God we are praising accurately refers to God (i.e. glorification is proper)?
  - We should put effort into philosophy of religion to ensure an accurate referent
- How do I know that I will incite others to glorify God?

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## **HOW CAN WE GLORIFY GOD?**

1. Giving credit where credit is due (John 9:24, Acts 12:23)
2. Accepting one another (Romans 15:7)
3. Becoming more like God (2 Corinthians 3:18)
4. Being perfect/not sinning, aka obeying (Romans 3:23, Ephesians 5:27)
5. Doing what God commands us (same as 4) (Leviticus 9:6)
6. Bearing fruit (John 15:8)

## CAN AN ATHEIST EVER DO THE RIGHT THING?

- An atheist can certainly do good by respecting creation, creatures, etc.
- Atheists can put others in a position to recognize God's attributes (e.g. expanse of cosmos)
- But can they ever do the *most* glorifying thing?
  - Depends on how we build 'ought implies can' into the theory (and the related theological considerations)

## BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK: NEW TESTAMENT (FULL VERSION)

- It is the end goal of our salvation (Ephesians 1:12,14)
- God's glory should be foundational to our decision making
  - It is the result of bearing fruit (John 15:8)
  - It should be our motivation in everything we do (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- Wrongdoing can lead to (non-maximal) glorification (Romans 3:7-8; Philippians 1:15-18)
  - Disobedience is a sufficient condition for wrongness
  - Improper motive is an example of disobedience

# FURTHER OBJECTIONS

- Not discussed for the sake of time and theological focus
- Utilitarianism
  - Utility monster
  - Mere addition paradox (Repugnant Conclusion)
  - Wrong answers (violating human rights for marginal gain)
  - Alternatives/unconsidered issues
    - Prioritarianism and egalitarianism
    - Act vs rule utilitarianism
    - Two-level utilitarianism
    - Predicting consequences problem
- Divine Command Theory
  - Psychopathy

## FURTHER READING

- General Ethics
  - *Metaethics: An Introduction* (Andrew Fisher)
  - *Normative Ethics* (Shelly Kagan)
- Utilitarianism
  - *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Smart, Williams)
  - *Taking Utilitarianism Seriously* (Christopher Woodard)
- Divine Command Theory (or variations thereof)
  - Historical: Augustine, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Kirkegaard
  - Modern: Phillip Quinn, Robert Adams, Linda Zagzebski, Paul Copan, William Lane Craig
- Supererogation
  - Condrey, B. J. "Possibility and role of supererogation in Protestant ethics." (PhD Thesis, 2020).
  - Vessel, Jean-Paul. "Supererogation for utilitarianism." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47.4 (2010): 299-319.
  - Dorsey, Dale. "The supererogatory, and how to accommodate it." *Utilitas* 25.3 (2013): 355-382.
  - Zimmerman, Michael J. "Supererogation and doing the best one can." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30.4 (1993): 373-380.
- DGU: <https://gospeldemands.com/> (my website)



## OBLIGATION TO GLORIFY GOD (CREATION-BASED ACCOUNT)

1. Each person created by God has a life of value: that is, a life that is of enormous value and worth living.
2. God is worthy of much respect because he has given us lives of value, and disrespect and indifference would be inappropriate responses to someone who has given us, and continues to sustain, our lives of value.
3. Therefore, we have an obligation to glorify God because he has given us lives of value.

Lightly adapted from Silva, Paul. "A Conceptual Analysis of Glory." *Res Philosophica* 95.3 (2018): 561-582.

## NEW QUESTIONS FOR DGU

- Why does obeying divine commands glorify God?
  - It is intrinsically respectful and honoring
  - Biblical support
- Is DGU consequentialist or deontological (rule-based)?
  - Technically, consequentialist
  - Practically, both: combines motives, commands, and consequences



## SUPPORT FROM CHURCH FATHERS

- "In all of our deeds God looks at the intention, whether we do it for His sake, or for the sake of some other intention." - St. Maximus the Confessor

## FORMS OF UTILITARIANISM

- Hedonistic utilitarianism (Bentham, Mill) – maximize pleasure
  - Christian hedonism (John Piper) – maximize pleasure in God
- Preference utilitarianism (Peter Singer) – maximize preference fulfillment
- Motive utilitarianism (Robert Adams) – maximize motives leading to utility
- **Divine Glory Utilitarianism** – maximize God's glory
  - Bring the most positive attention to God with the least amount of time, energy, money
  - Free time, energy, and money should be directed toward things that (directly) glorify God

# FORMS OF DIVINE COMMAND THEORY

- Divine command theory – if God commands it, it is obligatory
- Divine will theory – if God wills it, it is obligatory
- Divine motivation theory (Linda Z)
- Uniting feature: they are all rule-based

## OBJECTIONS TO DCT

- Arbitrariness (Plato's Euthyphro Dilemma)
- Moral Epistemology – how to know divine commands?
- Underdetermination – do they apply to all areas of life?
  - Intuitionism and situational ethics
  - Out of scope





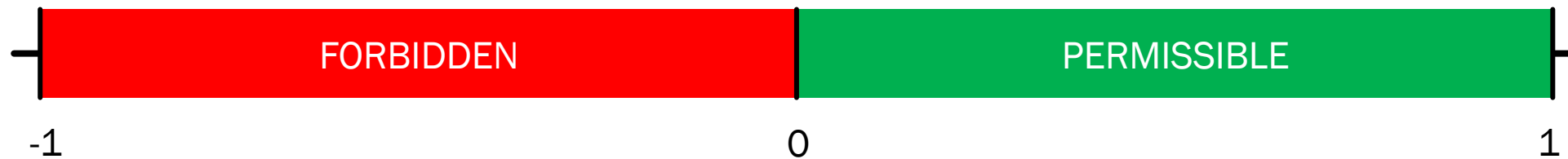
# **OBJECTIONS: SUPEREROGATION**



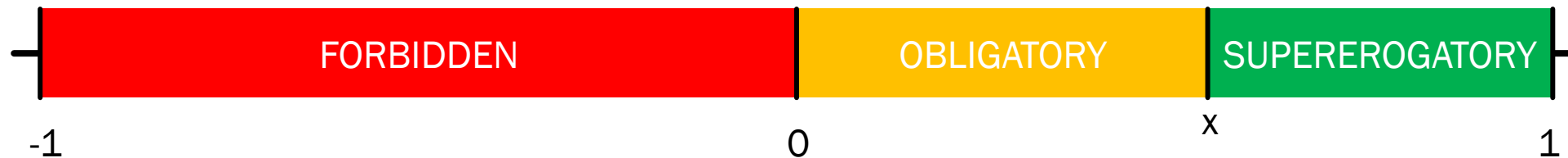
# SUPEREROGATION: AN INTRODUCTION

- Supererogation = beyond the call of duty (i.e. morally good but not obligatory)
- All theories distinguish between the morally 1) forbidden, 2) permissible, and 3) obligatory
- An action  $<0$  is morally bad and thus forbidden. An action  $>0$  is good and thus permissible

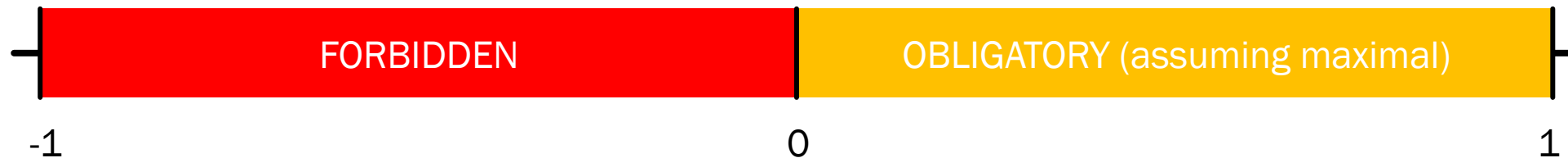
General Case



Case with Supererogation



Utilitarianism



Moral Goodness Scale



# FOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT SUPEREROGATION

1. Does supererogation exist? (Moral experience)
  - Out of scope
2. Can utilitarianism account for it?
  - Conventionally conceived of as a serious problem for utilitarianism
  - Common response: reject the supererogatory (e.g. Singer). See Further Reading for other responses
3. Can DGU account for it?
  - Out of scope
4. Does the Bible support or deny supererogation?



# THE PROBLEM OF SUPEREROGATION

- Biblical examples?
  - Good Samaritan (abortion arguments – Good Samaritan thesis)
  - Christian liberty (see next slide)
- Catholic theology (based on Matthew 19:21)
  - Celibacy, poverty, and monasticism
- Protestant theology (no supererogation)
  - Luther and Bonhoeffer critique the Catholic position
  - James 4:17, Matthew 5:48
  - (See PhD thesis)

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## **SUPEREROGATION AND CHRISTIAN LIBERTY**

- Macro vs micro decisions and “ties at the top”
- A range of careers are permissible
- Need conscious thought about God’s glory

# OVERVIEW OF ALL OBJECTIONS

- Cost of calculation
- No rest
- Paradox of hedonism
- Differentiating persons
- Reduction of goodness to base desires
- Arbitrariness (Plato's Euthyphro Dilemma)
- Epistemology
- Underdetermination
- Supererogation
- Glorification via commands
- Consequence- or rule-based



## WHY DGC?

- For a Christian: it is biblical
- For a theist: it combines ethical theories that solves problems in both
- It challenges conventional notions of the comfortable American life



# **APPLICATION TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL**



# BEST POSSIBLE WORLD

- Problem of Evil (PoE) assumes consequentialism
- Greater-goods theodicies (e.g. free will defense) assume (divine) consequentialism
- Rules-based ethics offer a defeater to current forms of PoE
- Issue of best possible worlds
  - No evil (logical problem of evil)
  - Less evil (evidential problem of evil)
  - No best world (Aquinas)
  - Most good (Leibniz)
  - Most saved people (Craig)
  - **Most divine glory (DGU)**
- God works everything for His glory (a potential inconsistency?)

DOES THE ARGUMENT FROM EVIL ASSUME A  
CONSEQUENTIALIST MORALITY?

Eric Reitan

**Why God is Not a Consequentialist**

T. D. J. Chappell <sup>[a1]</sup> ⊕



# **APPLICATION TO ALTRUISM AND THEOLOGY OF POSSESSIONS**

