

Ex-Post Average Utilitarianism Can Oppose the Interests of All Affected Individuals

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ABSTRACT. According to *Ex-Post Average Utilitarianism*, prospect X is at least as good as prospect Y if and only if the expected average well-being is at least as great in X as in Y . This approach has the advantage (relative to the *ex-ante* approach of taking the average of individuals' expectations) of not needing well-defined expectations of well-being for merely-possible individuals—individuals who exist in some but not all states of nature. It also has the advantage (relative to any other kind of average utilitarianism) of maximizing an expectation, which means it satisfies Expected Utility Theory for general betterness. Nevertheless, *Ex-Post Average Utilitarianism*, we show, can oppose the interests of all affected individuals. Moreover, we can show this without assuming any well-defined expectations of well-being for merely-possible individuals.

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Ex-Post Average Utilitarianism Prospect X is at least as good as prospect Y if and only if the expected average well-being is at least as great in X as in Y .

This *ex-post* approach has the advantage (relative to the *ex-ante* approach of taking the average of individuals' expectations) of not needing well-defined expectations of well-being for merely-possible individuals—individuals who exist in some but not all states of nature. It also has the advantage (relative to any other kind of average utilitarianism) of maximizing an expectation, which means it satisfies Expected Utility Theory for general betterness. Nevertheless, we show that *Ex-Post Average Utilitarianism* can oppose the interests of all affected individuals. Moreover, we can show this without assuming any well-defined expectations of well-being for merely-possible individuals.

Consider the following prospects:

	Prospect A		Prospect B	
	S_1	S_2	S_1	S_2
	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
Ann	1	Ω	1	Ω
Bob	1	7	9	1

There are two possible states of nature S_1 and S_2 with an equal probability. In both prospects, Ann exists with a well-being of 1 in S_1 but she does not exist at all in S_2 . Bob, on the other hand, exists in all states of nature in both prospects. In A , Bob has a well-being of 1 in S_1 and a well-being of 7 in S_2 . In B , Bob has a well-being of 9 in S_1 and a well-being of 1 in S_2 .

Ann is unaffected by a choice between A and B . But, for Bob, B stochastically dominates A . Hence, for the only affected person (either in existence or well-being), B is clearly better than A . And yet, *Ex-Post* Average Utilitarianism entails that A is better than B , because the expected average well-being is 4 in A but just 3 in B .¹ Therefore, *Ex-Post* Average Utilitarianism opposes the interests of all affected individuals.²

¹ Note, moreover, that *Ex-Post* Average Utilitarianism would still favour A even if Ann's well-being in S_1 of B were 2.

² This counter-example can be generalized, changing what needs to be changed, to other person-wise non-separable axiologies.