

CONSEQUENTIALISM: OBJECTION TO

A common objection to consequentialism is that we cannot predict with certainty the outcome of our actions, hence we cannot evaluate our actions, or the rules they follow, by their consequences. True enough, nearly all the predictions of human actions can only be predicted, if at all, approximately. This is due not only to our incomplete knowledge of laws and circumstances, but also to the fact that many of the factors involved are objectively chancy (probabilistic).

However, there are some human actions that can be predicted with certainty. For example, nobody can be saved from a firing squad or a world nuclear war; nobody can survive a severe and protracted draught unless helped by relief; freedom and culture are the first to suffer from a military coup; an economy

that consumes more than it produces, that borrows heavily, and that devotes a large fraction to arms manufacture, is doomed to fall into a deep crisis; a nation poor in natural resources is forced, to survive, to trade heavily with other nations;

Secondly, the uncertainty of our predictions of human behavior has not prevented technology (including sociotechnology) from developing vigorously. This is because, far from watching passively, we take an active part in maintaining or correcting the course of events we initiate. Planning and the constant revision of plans make up for poor predictability.