

Article

Mercy Killing or Murder: A Moral Dilemma Regarding the Death of Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the death of Lennie Small, a tragic character in *Of Mice and Men*, through the lens of deontology and consequentialism. People have always paid the most attention to the ending of *Of Mice and Men*: Should George have killed Lennie or not? This study focuses on the factors that led to George's decision to end Lennie's life, using ethical perspectives to justify George's decision to shoot Lennie to death. With the shooting of Lennie as an example, we intend to demonstrate that, although the action and the outcome may be the same from the deontological perspective and the consequential perspective, the motivation for the shooting is different because of different moral philosophies. Consequentialism provides a clear benchmark to abide by; in contrast, although deontology claims that people are obliged to follow the supreme principle of morality, without clear guidance, people may confront contradictory obligations and, hence, face a dilemma.

Keywords: Consequentialism; Deontology; Obligation; Mercy killing, Moral dilemma

1. Introduction

In modern social sciences or in the legal arena, consequentialism plays an interesting role with regard to justifications. It also contrasts the moral concept of deontology theory (Bostyn et al., 2018). Scholars of philosophy have claimed that relying on consequentialism is counter to current social sciences and philosophy (Drakeman, 2017). It pertains to people always trying to solve problems in terms of their consequences, which is quite similar to socialism. However, some people, following deontological ethics, believe that we have an obligation to other human beings and should treat them as being worthy of respect and dignity (Kant, 1987, 2012, and 2015).

The debate regarding consequentialism and deontology can be seen in examples such as the Trolley problem of the British philosopher Foot (1967 and 1978), which involved remarkable experiments regarding moral judgments and dilemmas (Bostyn et al., 2018). The trolley problem, a familiar moral dilemma, involves the use of deontology and utilitarianism as a basis for the justification of moral decisions, either via intuitive thinking process or deliberative reasoning process. For those inclining to the intuitive thinking process, they have more tendency to make deontological judgments; for those inclining to the deliberative reasoning is thought to make utilitarian and consequential judgments (Hashimoto, Maeda, & Matsumura, 2022). Utilitarianism, a version of consequentialism, emphasizes that the consequences of any action on people is to bring the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people and that is the only criterion to justify the rightness and wrongness of the action. Bentham (1982 and 1987) and Mill (2010) are the representative advocates of utilitarianism. Kant (1987, 2012, and 2015) is the representative advocate of deontology. In contrast to consequentialists or utilitarianists, deontologists hold the idea that duty is the only criterion to justify the rightness or wrongness of the action. Hence, they concern not the consequences the action brings about but whether the action is in conformity with a duty.

In the "trolley problem" (Foot, 1967 and 1978; Thomson, 1985), people are torn to make a moral decision between consequentialism and deontology to justify the rightness or wrongness of the action, specifically, to be torn between harming one person in accordance with bringing the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people (utilitarian and consequential judgments) and not killing any innocent person in accordance with duty (deontological judgments).

These experiments on "trolley problem" simulations may provide helpful intellectual/moral stimulation by encouraging readers to reflect upon whether it is good to harm a person so as to save a number of others. So far, there has been no definitive resolution of the debate between consequentialism and deontology (Cummiskey, 2020). Because humans are restricted by the frame

of social rules, no one can be an outsider of the social system. Under such circumstances, while making judgments or moral decisions, people cannot avoid the pressure from the society, hence leading to moral dilemmas or conflicts. In order to give readers a clear understanding of the differences between consequentialism and deontology, this study aims to use Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* (1993) as a case study to analyze how people tend to misunderstand true justice and to clarify the differences between deontology and consequentialism, although they may coincidentally lead to the same result.

The study would introduce the theories of deontology and consequentialism to lead readers, via moral reasoning, to respond to the moral dilemmas in *Of Mice and Men* (1993), in terms of the deontological and consequential perspectives, and to reflect over the critical issue that whether it is morally justifiable to sacrifice one person to save a number of others or whether it is inherently wrong to take an action to kill an innocent person regardless of the possible benefits to others.

2. Materials and Methods

In order to lead readers to have more understanding regarding moral dilemmas, as in the fictional trolley problem, the study uses textual analysis (Hawkins, 2017) of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* to go through moral reasoning between deontology and consequentialism. Textual analysis is characterized by the process of deconstructing a literary work and observing how the parts fit together for the interpretation of a text using theoretical frameworks, here the use of the deontological and consequential moral theories, to represent certain intellectual traditions or social values. People have always focused on the ending of the film *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1993): Should George kill Lennie or not? With close reading and textual analysis, this study explores the factors that led to George's decision to kill Lennie, a tall, strong, but mentally retarded man, using ethical perspectives to justify his death. The study analyzes how value and consequence can be measured or judged through the lens of philosophy, mainly deontology and consequentialism, and interprets Lennie's death from the perspective of deontological and consequential ethics. By using the interpretation of different theories as a mirror, readers may reflect upon the meaning of life, the dignity of being human, the greatest interest of greatest number of people, and one's obligation or duty to community.

3. Results

3.1. Dilemma in *Of Mice and Men*

The story *Of Mice and Men* was set during the Great Depression, between 1929 and 1939, when the invention of cold machines took the place of human beings, and exploitation by industrial capitalists led tenants and farm workers to leave their hometowns and travel as migrant workers to survive by finding temporary work. These migrant workers longed to live in small houses, grow crops and vegetables on a piece of land, and raise livestock to feed themselves (Loftis, 1990). Lennie and George depict this yearning in *Of Mice and Men*.

The book started with George and Lennie sitting next to each other by the pond. Born in Auburn, Lennie, and George were raised by Lennie's Aunt Clara. Lennie, a big man—in fact, huge like a bear—seemed to be a forgetful person with a mental disability. After the death of his aunt, Lennie, unable to take care of himself, worked with George and promised his aunt that he would act as a guardian to Lennie. Although George tried to teach Lennie to avoid trouble, the large man often, albeit accidentally, caused difficulties for George. They had no land and drifted around like mice who have lost their nests, yet they always dreamed that, someday, they would earn enough money to purchase their land and house and thus became masters of their destiny. With Lennie's strength and George's insight, it was just a matter of time before they earned \$600 to purchase a little farm and raise pet rabbits. This dream of having their own farm and petting rabbits was one of Lennie's favorite stories, one that George told him often.

“George?”

“What you want?”

“I can still tend the rabbits, George?”

“Sure. You ain't done nothing wrong.”

“I di'n't mean no harm, George.” (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 65)

Though bulky, Lennie yearns to care for something soft, such as rabbits or mice, but he always kills them by accident. He has such passion for the soft creatures that, unable to control his strength, he always strokes them to death, hence causing more difficulties for George, who says, “God, you're a lot of trouble...I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl” (p. 7).

Throughout the film, the American dream becomes a vision, or wonderland, for George and Lennie, as well as for other laboring men. However, it seems to be only dream, as the financial issue never seems to resolve itself, especially during the Great depression. Moreover, Lennie's brute strength, as well as his habit of touching and petting soft things, brings him and George a

succession of problems: a girl is terrified when Lennie pets her red skirt; a small mouse is pinched to death while he is petting it; a small puppy given to him by Slim, a jerkline skinner on the range, is killed by his excessive caressing; the hand of the ranch owner's son, Curley, is crushed by him, albeit out of self-defense. Because of the difficulties accidentally caused by Lennie, they have to flee from one ranch to another. But they finally encounter one accident that they can't escape so easily: Lennie accidentally strangles Curley's wife when fiddling with her long hair. When Curley threatens to lynch Lennie brutally, George is torn between two extreme moral choices: deontology and consequentialism.

3.2. Deontology

The word "deontology" comes from the Greek *deon* (meaning duty, responsibility, and obligation) and *log* (meaning study, research, and science). Hence it refers to the study of duties, responsibility, and obligation (ten Have and Patrão Neves, 2021). Deontology, a normative ethical theory, holds that behavior is the end we seek; it is not an instrumental value, but an intrinsic value. Hence, deontology can be defined as the ethics of behavior with intrinsic value. As Kant (1987, 2012, and 2015) pointed out, people should never be considered to be mere instruments, or a means to achieve an end. Kant is not saying that we should not see an individual as a means, but that we should not see him "only" as a means. In this statement, he also addresses the question of man's self. Each individual, regardless of his/her gender, age, race, and so on, has a value worthy of our care; that is, his life and existence is a value in themselves. For Kant, all people should be regarded as intrinsically worthy of respect and dignity. He believed that any morality should come from such an obligation, an obligation grounded in moral ethics, with which consequences such as pain or pleasure would become relatively unimportant. However, Kant does not begin by addressing pain and pleasure, but the fact that the distinctive characteristic of humans is that, as human beings, we possess reason; with reason, we hold a duty and obligation to other human beings, treating them as people worthy of respect and dignity. According to the theory of deontology, people do not practice morality for benefit, but purely for morality itself. Hence, moral behavior is unconditional, and its value is determined by itself; that is to say, its value is autonomous, not heteronomous (Kant, 1987, 2012, and 2015). In other words, the morality of behavior should be judged according to whether the behavior itself is right or wrong under a set of rules, rather than according to the consequences of the act. To conclude, moral behavior is moral for the sake of morality, not for the sake of conditions other than morality (ten Have and Patrão Neves, 2021; Kant, 1987, 2012, and 2015).

Hence, corresponding to deontological ethics, which emphasizes people's duty and obligation in society, in the book *Of Mice and Men*, George thinks that all human beings have universal rational duties toward one another. Therefore, the notion of having a duty to respect others' humanity serves as the basis for his ethical decision-making regarding Lennie. At the beginning of the book, it is known that George was taking care of Lennie because he, abiding by duty-based ethics, thought that he must do so. In other words, when deciding to be with Lennie, he was neither pursuing his interests nor obeying social conventions, religious dogmas, or authoritative orders to reach a conditioned end. As George said to Slim, a jerkline skinner on the range,

"I ain't got no people.... I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean. They get wantin' to fight all the time... 'Course Lennie's a God damn nuisance most of the time, but you get used to goin' around with a guy an' you can't get rid of him. (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 41)

George's decision to take care of Lennie is quite uncommon, especially during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when jobs and food were scarce for migrant workers. Given their lower social status, these migrant workers had to leave their hometowns to find a way to make a living (Leyva, 1995). With few employment options and many poor living conditions, George was kind to stand by Lennie, who always brings trouble his way. George's behavior toward Lennie corresponded to Kant's philosophy of deontology: true morality follows unconditional obligations, regardless of the consequences (Kant, 1987, 2012, and 2015). Despite knowing that Lennie, a person with a mental disability, would bring trouble him, George recognized that each individual had inner value and should be respected, and he believed that he should take care of Lennie, especially due to his promise to Aunt Clara.

3.3. Consequentialism

Deontology focuses on the ethical action, but not the consequence; if the action is based on moral behavior, the result is irrelevant to the decision. (Kant, 1987, 2012, and 2015). In contrast, consequentialism focuses on the overall benefit of the outcome, which is the principle of moral consideration. In other words, the consequences justify the behavior (Kagan, 1998). This means that, if a goal is important enough, any means to obtain that goal would be acceptable. Morally wrong behaviors are sometimes necessary to achieve morally right outcomes; only by considering the morality of the result can we consider whether the behavior is correct (Beauchamp and DeGrazia, 2004; Bentham, 1982 and 1987). In other words, the consequentialist's perspective is based on ethical

decision-making in terms of evaluating the consequences and potential results of various choices and actions, and the correct behavior is the one that can yield the best results (Brandt, 1992; Driver, 2012), although the definition of a good outcome is arguable. Proponents of consequentialism generally make little use of principles because they believe that the identification, priority, and application of the principles have nothing to do with the best outcomes. For instance, utilitarianism, one famous branch of consequentialism, uses “utility” as a benchmark and defines it as “the greatest good for the greatest number of people” (Kagan, 1998; Mill, 2010). They agree that “the end justifies the means” (Machiavelli, 1950; Ratner, 2017), and hence, in order to reach the greatest good for the greatest number of people, some people’s human rights, or even their lives, can be sacrificed because it leads to a good end for other human beings.

If morality involves promoting the best interest of the greatest number of people, as Bentham (1982 and 1987) have declared, then utilitarian consequentialism involves maximizing the happiness of the greatest number of people. Grounded in the notion that no one principle takes priority over the other principles, consequentialism can be described as a neutral good, because the action taken based on consequentialism has no bias for or against any principle (Heuer and Lang, 2012). Despite its neutrality, consequentialism has been widely attacked for its subordination of people’s rights and obligations in the quest to maximize the happiness of others, that is, the greatest interests of the greatest number of people. If any behavior might be allowed to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people, then there seems to be no limit to how we can promote the greatest happiness. Hence, there is no morality to defend what rightness is and what wrongness is and thus no criteria by which to justify each individual’s duties, obligations, and rights (Cummiskey, 2020).

In *Of Mice and Men*, one might consider that Candy and his old dog were discriminated against, oppressed, and further sacrificed under consequentialism. Candy lived for more than half of a century on the range, but he became handicapped after breaking his left arm when working. Although Candy was not kicked out by the range owner, he certainly did not live a comfortable life in his old age. Without being given basic humanistic respect, Candy, as well as his dog, is portrayed as a pathetic character who can only wait to be abandoned and die. He has no friends or relatives, only an old dog to keep him company: “a drag-footed sheepdog, gray of muzzle, and with pale, blind old eyes” (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 24). Clearly, the dog was considered worthless, and his days could be numbered. Therefore, he had no value to the range, although Candy noted that he was “a good sheepdog when he was younger” (p. 24).

The way that the other characters treat Candy implies that the man and his dog have descended to the lowest level of the ranch, those who are valueless and cannot benefit the community. Not only did people give Candy a cold shoulder, but they also coerced him to act against his conscience. For instance, Candy’s roommates persuaded him to shoot his old dog, which accompanied him since he was young. Carlson always complained that the dog’s stink prevented them from falling asleep and suggested shooting the dog so that it was no longer in pain. Actually, though, for Carlson, the dog was simply too old; it lost its usefulness to the community. Thus, in order to benefit those on the range, they might have a good night’s sleep, it was decided that Candy should shoot the old dog and adopt a new puppy instead. At first, Candy thought this suggestion was ridiculous, but after Slim agreed with them, Candy had no choice but to obey him to satisfy the interest of the other people there. This example highlights a tenet of consequentialism: when a person, as well as any creature, becomes no longer useful to the community, one loses the right to exist there, thereby bringing the greatest happiness to the community (Kagan, 1998; Mill, 2010). When Carlson suggested shooting the old dog to benefit the others, no one protested. No one declared that killing a dog only because it was old was morally wrong. Since shooting the dog benefited the community, not the dog, one must have questioned whether this death sentence was a mercy killing or murder.

Similar to his dog, Candy was considered a useless creature because of his age; he was verbally abused by Curley’s wife, who failed to take his dignity and feelings into consideration. Indeed, she even laughed at him: “I’ve seen too many of you guys. If you had two bits in the worl’, why, you’d be in, gettin’ two shots of corn with it and suckin’ the bottom of the glass. I know you guys” (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 79). Candy, though his face had “grown redder and redder,” tried to control himself, replying gently, “I might know ... Maybe you just better go along an’ roll your hoop. We ain’t got nothing to say to you at all. We know what we got, and we don’t care whether you know it or not” (p. 79). Although Candy was frustrated by her teasing, he could not fight back since he was afraid of being fired. Old Candy’s situation highlights the circumstances of the Great Depression period in America, in which most people did not have much chance of getting a job. In order to keep working until his retirement, Candy did what he must survive, including being humiliated and teased. It can be predicted that Candy’s fate might be quite similar to that of his dog, as he said to George and Lennie,

“They’ll can me purty soon. Jus’ as soon as I can’t swamp out no bunk houses they’ll put me on the county. Maybe if I give you guys my money, you’ll let me hoe in the garden even after I ain’t no good at it. An’ I’ll wash dishes an’ little chicken stuff like that. But I’ll be on our own place, an’ I’ll be let to work on our own place.... You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They say he wasn’t no good to himself nor nobody else. When they can me here I wisht

somebody'd shoot me. But they won't do nothing like that. I won't have no place to go, an' I can't get no more jobs...." (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 60)

What saddened Candy was that, through the shooting of his dog, he saw his destiny. The old dog's death symbolizes the end of the old swamper Candy and the other migrant workers during the Great Depression, indicating that, once one's value to the community is lost, a person can be sacrificed to bring the greatest benefit to society. Being disabled and elderly, Candy was losing his value in the range, a place that needs labor for productivity. Candy could easily predict that, once he became totally useless to the range, he would not have a dignified ending. In fact, Candy's fate was the same for all migrant workers in the Depression Period.

3.4. *Mercy Killing or Murder: The Moral Perspective Regarding the Death of Lennie in Of Mice and Men*

Consequentialism has been widely attacked for its subordination of rights and obligations to maximize the happiness of most people *or its* overemphasis on instrumental value, ignoring intrinsic value (Kagan, 1998). In short, consequentialism justifies any deed based on the goals. The ends can be used to justify any action, no matter how cruel it may be to those innocent people, who may be killed, bullied, beaten, or robbed—as long as the ends would bring the greatest benefit to society, the sacrifice of those innocent would be irrelevant (Bentham, 1982 and 1987). From the consequential perspective, when a creature, either a dog or a man, is ill, aging and becomes useless, it or he can be sacrificed to increase the benefit of others. George, who also belongs to the powerless echelon, can do nothing but witness the dog being killed. On the other hand, from the deontological perspective, the sacrifice of some human beings or the innocent is not done to benefit society but to give those being sacrificed freedom and dignity.

Carlson's shooting of Candy's dog not only allows Candy to reflect upon his own ending, but also leads him to regret that he himself did not shoot his beloved dog. Indeed, he told George, "I oughtta of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't oughtta of let no stranger shoot my dog" (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 61). Candy's regret for not personally shooting the dog himself is grounded on that if we cannot change the fate, at least we can accompany with him, her, or it to the end of life, to bring warmth to those dying and suffering. In other words, Candy's wish to have shot the dog himself is grounded on the desire to relieve its suffering and, hence, is based on a deontological act. However, Carlson's act of shooting the dog is not intended to help it; he is acting for his own interest. The dog's inhumane ending changes Candy's mindset and influences George's mindset later when he shoots Lennie to prevent him from being lynched to death by others on the range, especially Curley.

The death of Lennie and of Candy's dog may inspire people to reflect upon the concept of mercy killing, particularly whether it is an acceptable choice, as it affords people dignity and freedom from suffering. In this regard, as opposed to being tortured or humiliated, Lennie's death may be the optimal solution.

If we readers see Lennie's death from the consequentialist perspective (Beauchamp and DeGrazia, 2004; Kagan, 1998), the shooting of Lennie is definitely not a mercy killing; however, it does save others from Lennie's involuntary assault. After realizing that Lennie cannot learn from his repeated pattern, which has progressed from a girl to a mouse to a pup to a man and, lastly, to a woman, Lennie has inadvertently hurt too many victims because of his incompetence and inability to control his reactions and his strength. It must be noted that Lennie shows regret and remorse, saying, "I done a real bad thing... I shouldn't of did that" (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 92). Although Lennie's harmful actions are not purposeful, it cannot be denied that he uses too much passion to stroke his beloved mouse and puppy. Moreover, since he cannot learn to be gentle, he continues to cause trouble for George and endanger those nearby. Thus, killing Lennie may save the lives of other innocents and prevent Lennie from suffering the remorse of his unintentional harm, thereby ending the repeated pattern of tragedies. Hence, through the lens of consequentialism, the killing of Lennie can be justified because that killing is for the greatest interest of the greatest number of people.

From the deontological perspective, George thinks that he is responsible for protecting Lennie from being bullied or humiliated. Thus, George kills Lennie with "goodwill," to protect him. He emphasizes the value of reason and the ability to uphold the dignity of human beings, rather than just using others. Although George is sad about Lennie's death; however, as he says to Slim: "A guy got to sometimes" (p. 107). Hence, considering that deontological moral ethics are based on goodwill and the behavior itself, without taking external factors into consideration, it becomes difficult to determine whether the killing of Lennie is morally wrong. Unlike consequentialism, deontology ethics does not consider the consequences of the action taken; its only concern is the duty, obligation, or responsibility toward human beings and the respect of people as individuals with inner values (Kant, 1987, 2012, and 2015). Deontologists are obliged to uphold human dignity, rather than just taking advantage of others.

Hence, in terms of the deontological perspective, an act committed from goodwill would not be derided if the outcome were negative. For instance, Lennie likes to touch soft things, and he enjoys tending rabbits and mice to show his love for them; however, unable to control his strength, in the end, he strokes these creatures to death. It is difficult to blame Lennie not because these are accidents, but because he had goodwill and love toward the creatures.

After admitting that it has never been possible to teach Lennie how to control his strength, George made a choice for Lennie, also for himself: Rather than letting others hurt his friend Lennie, he would prefer that Lennie's last moments was free of humiliation. George shot Lennie, his best friend, that he might die in a clean and painless manner. He decided not to let others do it and chooses an area that he thinks will be painless for Lennie:

He [George] looked at the back of Lennie's head, at the place where the spine and skull were joined.... And George raised the gun and steadied it, and he brought the muzzle of it close to the back of Lennie's head. The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger. The crash of the shot rolled up the hills and rolled down again. Lennie jarred, and then settled slowly forward to the sand, and he lay without quivering. (Steinbeck, 1993, p. 105–106)

George's killing of Lennie came from a place of goodwill; he sought to maintain Lennie's dignity as a human being. He was Lennie's friend. Thus, shielding this incompetent yet innocent man from further torture is a humanistic action that is committed unconditionally, out of obligation. George's decision to kill Lennie was an act of mercy; he killed his friend to spare him from being lynched to death by Curley, who was seeking revenge because Lennie smashed his hand. Moreover, the situation became even direr once Curley learned that his wife was killed by Lennie; he ran "furiously out of the barn," vowing that he was going to kill Lennie himself, using his shotgun (p. 96). Hence, the shooting of Lennie revealed George's concern and his willingness to take a risk by shooting Lennie to "protect" him from the humiliation of a public lynching. The shooting of Lennie became a mercy killing from the deontological perspective: a death with dignity.

Based on Kant, the supreme principle of morality is the absolute value of the rational nature of each individual. Hence, even though people have different levels of classes, positions, and/or power, they are all equal concerning their obligations: No one can claim to be of higher value than others. Kant (1987, 2012, and 2015) declared that each individual has the will or freedom to choose, and people have to respect those choices, as long as they do not violate morality. At the same time, each person also must safeguard the community to help others achieve their moral goals; otherwise, they would be condemned for abandoning their obligations. However, sometimes people encounter situations in which two contradictory obligations, both based on "goodwill," cannot be fully met. For instance, in the book, George was torn between two contradictory obligations: saving Lennie's life or saving Lennie's human dignity. The consequential perspective, despite its drawbacks, provides a clear rule or vision to follow; when that is lacking, as with the deontological perspective, people may be faced with conflict or dilemmas with respect to human life.

Hence, followers of deontological ethics may find their duty to be ambiguous and may, in the end, lose direction. This may lead to further suffering, because according to Kant (1987, 2012, and 2015), those abstaining from duty deserve to be condemned; in other words, it is immoral for a man to know his duty but evade it. However, if the consequentialists encounter this situation, they can easily resolve this conflict because, unlike deontology's ambiguous obligations, people holding to utilitarian ethics have a clear duty to obtain the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people (Kagan, 1998; Mill, 2010). If George had done nothing for Lennie, he would have been acting against deontological ethics and would have been worthy of condemnation because, based on Kant's supreme principle (1987, 2012, and 2015), the value of an act (shooting Lennie to death) cannot be determined by the consequences (the death of Lennie). From the consequential perspective, George's doing nothing for Lennie would be against consequential ethics, that is, to reach the greatest good for the greatest number of people. However, because of the ambiguous or contradictory obligations in terms of deontology, the question of whether to shoot or not to shoot Lennie places George amid a moral dilemma since it is impossible to prioritize the value of our obligations.

Although the motivations are certainly different, the outcome from both the deontological perspective and consequential perspective is the same, that is, shooting Lennie to death. From the consequential perspective, it protects others from being hurt by Lennie; From the deontological perspective, Lennie's death protects him from the painful and inhumane lynching. Hence, George's shooting of Lennie, though painful, becomes a mercy killing from the deontological perspective because the act removes Lennie's suffering and brings him dignity as a human being.

4. Conclusion

In the case of Lennie's death, the action and the outcome were the same from the deontological perspective and the consequential perspective. However, from the deontological perspective, the killing of Lennie was based on goodwill, because George did not want Lennie to be lynched and killed without dignity, whereas from the consequential perspective, George killed Lennie to spare others from being hurt or killed by him, due to his uncontrolled passion. Consequentialism provides a clear benchmark to abide by; in contrast, although deontology claims that people are obliged to adhere to the supreme principle of morality, there are no clear guidelines to abide by, which leads people to face contradictory obligations and, hence, a dilemma.

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