

Self centred Utilitarianism

In this piece I will grasp the essay review “Nitsche’s Critique of Utilitarianism” written by Jonny Anomaly to critically look at Nitsche’s idea’s and how those question the general notion of Utilitarianism. I am aware that Utilitarianism is a large subject and has been highly philosophised in the past. Because of this I am using the “trolley situation”, as my notion of utilitarianism. Furthermore, I intend to focus my essay review on section 3 of Anomaly’s text, Egoistic Altruism. Lastly, I will summarise my key point.

Utilitarianism

To define Utilitarianism, it’s best to take the “trolley situation”. In this situation you are given a choice. There is a trolley heading towards four people, but you could also flip the switch and let the trolley run over one person instead of the four people. If we followed a utilitarian mindset, which means the greatest happiness of the greatest number, we would flip the switch and only kill one person instead. Delving deeper into this example you can ask the question of before and after the situation. For example, would the four survivors be heavily traumatised? Or would the person who flipped the switch, live with the weight of choosing one life over another?

The decision made by the person flipping the switch is generally considered a morally correct decision. That is why I want to state that to follow a utilitarian mindset means you almost always make a morally correct decision. For the sake of this essay, I won’t be able to delve further into the morality of utilitarianism but can, with this example, talk about Nitsche’s theory of unconscious motivation of self-interest.

Nitsche’s unconscious motivation of self-interest

In chapter three, Anomaly writes about one of Nitsche’s quotes in a section of *Daybreak* dubbed *Morality of sacrificial beasts*:

“By devoting yourselves with enthusiasm and making a sacrifice of yourselves you enjoy the ecstatic thought of henceforth being at one with the powerful being, whether a god or a man, to whom you dedicate yourselves: you revel in the feeling of his power, to which your very sacrifice is an additional witness. The truth of the matter is that you only seem to sacrifice yourselves: in reality you transform yourselves into gods and enjoy yourselves as such.”

Nitsche is implying that if a person makes a decision that is considered morally correct, they are doing that out of self interest. As Anomaly writes “he also implicitly accuses utilitarians (as champions of altruism) of being unconsciously motivated by self-interest.” Nitsche fights Utilitarianism as whole, because to make a decision that is

Utilitarian you will in most cases need to sacrifice something. To come back to the “trolley situation”, the person deciding whether to pull the switch will not only mentally suffer from carrying the weight of this decision but also have to deal with other’s judgement on said decision. Research done by the National Centre of Biotechnologies shows that we are biased to taking on more negativity than positivity. If the person pulling the trigger made this decision from a selfish motive, it would not make up for the weight that this person would have to mentally carry moving forwards, henceforth debunking Nietzsche’s ideas. To make a morally correct and therefore considered utilitarian decision, one cannot make this out of self interest.

Conclusion

Given the information in my essay, it’s clear that to call a morally correct decision and therefore Utilitarian decision selfish, is unrealistic.

sources

[Not all emotions are created equal: The negativity bias in social-emotional development - PMC](#)

Nietzsche’s Critique of Utilitarianism by Jonny Anomaly (Chapter: Egoistic Altruism)