

Daily Application of Principle of Maximum Utility

Post by "Daniel Van Orman" of May 14, 2018 at 2:11 PM

Arguments against Maximizing Total Happiness

Position: One should not be concerned for the happiness of others.

I apologize for the lack of content in this section. I had trouble finding points to add.

- Unnatural

Typically, a person's natural instincts are to maximize their own happiness - not that of others! Why should one go against their nature and sacrifice their happiness for others?

"Happiness and bliss are produced not by great riches nor vast possessions nor exalted occupations nor positions of power, but rather by peace of mind, freedom from pain, and a disposition of the soul that sets its limits in accordance with nature." - Selected Fragments, 548, <http://monadnock.net/epicurus/fragments.html>

Utilitarianism teaches this principle must be taught as it does not occur naturally: "education and opinion, which have so vast a power over human character, should so use that power as to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole" - John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Chapter 2

- Sacrificing Happiness for Others is Based on Emotion, not Reason

Unless one cultivates emotional feelings driving them to sacrifice their happiness for others, there is no motivation for it. Creating this motivation is an attempt to make their own happiness derive from others' happiness, causing them to indirectly focus on increasing their own happiness. This is less effective for increasing one's own happiness than simply focusing on one's own happiness.

"And often we consider pains superior to pleasures when submission to the pains for a long time brings us as a consequence a greater pleasure." - Letter to Menoecus

"No one chooses a thing seeing that it is evil; but being lured by it when it appears good in comparison to a greater evil, he is caught." - Vatican Sayings, 16

- Causes Stress

Unnecessary worry concerning others may cause stress, lowering one's own happiness without helping anyone.

"All desires that do not lead to pain when they remain unsatisfied are unnecessary, but the desire is easily got rid of, when the thing desired is difficult to obtain or the desires seem likely to produce harm." - [Principal Doctrines](#), 26

- May Cause Anxiety or Depression

Worrying about and enduring failures when attempting to help others may deteriorate one's mental health.

"Unhappiness is caused by fears, or by endless and empty desires; but he who is able to rein these in creates for himself a blissful understanding." - Selected Fragments, 485, <http://monadnock.net/epicurus/fragments.html>

- Strains One's Time and Resources

Frequently spending one's efforts on others may lower or exhaust their time and resources.

"Some men want fame and status, thinking that they would thus make themselves secure against other men. If the life of such men really were secure, they have attained a natural good; if, however, it is insecure, they have not attained the end which by nature's own prompting they originally sought." - [Principal Doctrines](#), 7

- Restricts Freedom

Having to worry about actions which may negatively or not positively affect others may limit one's choices.

- Motivational/Psychological Hedonism (the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain) is Traditionally about One's Self - Not Others

Many of the ancients spoke of hedonism as centered on one's self. Attempting to shift its focus toward others is violating its foundation.

"we must exercise ourselves in the things which bring happiness, since, if that be present, we have everything" - Letter to Menoecus

"For the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and fear, and, when once we have attained all this, the tempest of the soul is laid; seeing that the living creature has no need to go in search of something that is lacking, nor to look for anything else by which the good of the soul and of the body will be fulfilled." - Letter to Menoecus