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What is Really Rational Choice? Beyond the Utilitarian Concept of Rationality

This article is a critical half-trend report of rational choice theory in soci-L ology. Special emphasis is put on the conception of rationality in sociological rational choice theory. In essence, sociological rational choice theory operates with a utilitarian-economic concept of rationality qua utility optimization through consistent cost-benefit calculations. More precisely, rational choice theorists define rationality as the maximization of welldefined objective economic functions or ends. such as utility, profit, wealth and other 'maximands', or alternatively as the minimization of costs, including transaction costs (Williamson, 1994) and other 'dis-utilities'. Hence, rational choice theory conceptualizes rational (and all) human action as simply utility- or profit-optimizing behavior. The purpose of this report is to present and critically re-examine such a conception of rationality. For that purpose, this report is organized in two broad portions. A first portion reports the present state of rational choice theory by adducing its key concepts. A second portion of this report specifically centers on the conception of rationality in rational choice theory, and tries to demonstrate that the conception of rationality in present rational choice theory is both theoretically and empirically inadequate by being too narrow in its utilitarian crust. The second portion proposes outlines of an alternative, broader conception that transcends or greatly relaxes the utilitarian notion of 'rational choice'. Overall, the report is permeated by efforts to attain a better understanding of rational choice theory as well as to contribute to a more satisfactory conception of rationality as an indispensable corrective to its prevalent version. As such, this critical report attempts, to paraphrase the economist-sociologist Schumpeter, a 'creative destruction', rather than just an overview, of current rational choice theory, especially its (mis)conception of rationality. Unless

Reasons For Actions A Critique Of Utilitarian Rationality

Ted Honderich

Reasons For Actions A Critique Of Utilitarian Rationality:

Reasons for Actions Richard J. Norman,1971 Reasons for Actions Richard J. Norman, 1971-01-01 Rationality in Action Paul K. Moser, 1990-10-26 An anthology of previously published pieces that have proven long term importance to The Epistemology of Desire and the Problem of Nihilism Allan Hazlett, 2024-04-24 theoretical work in rational action Most people have wondered whether anything really matters some have temporarily thought that nothing really matters and some philosophers have defended the view that nothing really matters However if someone thinks that nothing matters if they are a nihilist about value then it seems that it is irrational for them to care about anything It seems that nihilism about value mandates total indifference This is the problem of nihilism Allan Hazlett addresses in The Epistemology of Desire and the Problem of Nihilism Hazlett argues that the problem of nihilism arises because desire and thus caring is a species of evaluation that admits of irrationality This contradicts the influential Humean view that desire does not admit of irrationality which has a ready solution to the problem of nihilism since desire does not admit of irrationality it cannot be irrational to care about something that you believe does not matter However following G E Anscombe Hazlett argues that desire has the same relationship to goodness as belief has to truth just as truth is the accuracy condition for belief goodness is the accuracy condition for desire This reveals desire as an appropriate target of epistemological inquiry in the same way that belief is an appropriate target of epistemological inquiry Desires can amount to knowledge in the same way that beliefs can amount to knowledge and crucially for the problem of nihilism desire admits of irrationality in the same way that belief admits of irrationality Nevertheless although it is obviously irrational to believe something that you believe is not true Hazlett argues that it is not irrational to desire something you believe is not good despite the fact that goodness is the accuracy condition for desire This provides a solution to the problem of nihilism and shows that nihilism about value can coherently be combined with the anti Humean view that desire is a species of evaluation The Limits of Utilitarianism Harlan B. Miller, William Hatton Williams, The Limits of Utilitarianism was first published in 1982 Minnesota Archive Editions uses digital technology to make long unavailable books once again accessible and are published unaltered from the original University of Minnesota Press editions Many philosophers have argued that utilitarianism is an unacceptable moral theory and that promoting the general welfare is at best only one of the legitimate goals of public policy Utilitarian principles seem to place no limits on the extent to which society may legitimately interfere with a person s liberties provided that such actions can be shown to promote the long term welfare of its members These issues have played a central role in discussions of utilitarianism since the time of Bentham and Mill Despite criticisms utilitarianism remains the most influential and widely accepted moral theory of recent times In this volume contemporary philosophers address four aspects of utilitarianism the principle of utility utilitarianism vis vis contractarianism welfare and voluntary cooperation and helping others. The editors provide an introduction and a comprehensive bibliography that covers all books and articles published in utilitarianism since 1930

Morality and Objectivity (Routledge Revivals) Ted Honderich, 2013-09-05 The late J L Mackie and his work were a focus for much of the best philosophical thinking in the Oxford tradition His moral thought centres on that most fundamental issue in moral philosophy the issue of whether our moral judgements are in some way objective. The contributors to this volume first published in 1985 are among the most distinguished figures in moral philosophy and their essays in tribute to John Mackie present views at the forefront of the subject Five of the essays give a new understanding of the objectivity of moral judgements These are by Simon Blackburn R M Hare John McDowell Susan Hurley and Bernard Williams The remaining contributors Philippa Foot Steven Lukes Amartya Sen David Wiggins give their attention to problems which are equally compelling such as the defence of a moral outlook based on a conception of a need and of what follows from it The volume also includes the addresses given by Simon Blackburn and George Cawkwell at the memorial service for John Mackie and a list of his publications compiled by Joan Mackie Catholic Perspectives on Medical Morals Edmund D. Pellegrino, J. Langan, John Collins Harvey, 2012-12-06 CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES AND CONTEMPORARY MEDICAL MORALS A Catholic perspective on medical morals antedates the current world wide interest in medical and biomedical ethics by many centuries 5 Discussions about the moral status of the fetus abortion contraception and sterilization can be found in the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church Teachings on various aspects of medical morals were scattered throughout the penitential books of the early medieval church and later in more formal treatises when moral theology became recognized as a distinct discipline Still later medical morality was incorpor ated into the many pastoral works on medicine Finally in the contemporary period works that strictly focus on medical ethics are produced by Catholic moral theologians who have special interests in matters medical Moreover this long tradition of teaching has been put into practice in the medical moral directives governing the operation of hospitals under Catholic sponsorship Catholic hospitals were monitored by Ethics Committees long before such committees were recommended by the New Jersey Court in the Karen Ann Quinlan case or by the President's Commission in 1983 8 9 Underlying the Catholic moral tradition was the use of the casuistic method which since the 17th and 18th centuries was employed by Catholic moralists to study and resolve concrete clinical ethical dilem mas The history of casuistry is of renewed interest today when the case method has become so widely used in the current revival of interest in medical ethics ll In Defense of Liberal-Pluralism Upendra Chidella, Vikram Singh Sirola, 2009-10-02 This book takes a critical view of Kantian and Neo Kantian moral philosophers preference of universalism the unity of morality moral impartiality consensus and common morality The central claim of the book is if the human condition is treated as complex and infested with irreducible choices and alternatives then moral rightness and wrongness ought to operate beyond these binaries giving epistemic status to Pluralism's multiple rationalities Redefining liberal pluralism the book also argues that moral reasoning is necessarily bound by paradoxes and contradictions seen in our choices of life projects in the conflict between individual morality and common morality and in justifying what is morally

reasonable in the interpersonal framework Equivocation in moral argumentation cannot be valued without understanding the nature of the interpersonal that ought to sufficiently argue for moral disagreement irreducible pluralism and limits of morality Liberal pluralism thus signifies the quasi relational partially admitting Gilbert Harman nature of moral reasoning in the multi agent framework It also takes account of reciprocity fairness reasonableness tolerance open ended morality and agreeing to disagree However this idea of liberal pluralism no way undermines rationality and reason nor turns to anti theory rather it only treats morality as guided by reason without unification and pluralism without relativism Reasons for Actions Richard J. Norman, 1971 A revision of the author's thesis London Bibliography p 173 175 **Problems of Market** Liberalism: Volume 15, Social Philosophy and Policy, Part 2 Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller (Jr.), Jeffrey Paul, 1998-10-13 These essays assess market liberal or libertarian political theory. They provide insights into the limits of government develop market oriented solutions to pressing social problems and explore some defects in traditional libertarian theory and practice Some of the essays deal with crucial theoretical issues asking whether the promotion of citizens welfare can serve as the justification for the establishment of government or inquiring into the constraints on individual behavior that exist in a liberal social order Some essays explore market liberal or libertarian positions on specific public policy issues such as affirmative action ownership of the airwaves the provision of healthcare or the regulation of food and drugs Other essays look at property rights the morality of profit making or the provision of public goods Still others address libertarianism as a political movement suggesting ways in which libertarians can reach out to those who do not share their views

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