

NORMATIVE UTILITY AS THE BASIS OF ETHICAL DECISION

Emilio Rosenblueth, Ethical optimization in engineering, Engineering Issues--Journal of Professional Activities, 99: 223-243 (1973).

Regards an ethical system as "a set of postulates concerned with felicity, from which the utilities associated with different states of nature can be inferred. These utilities are taken to be normative. An ethical decision is the one, among all possible alternatives, which maximizes utility. Any other decision is unethical," ... "The normative decisions are commandments or norms and a set of them is a moral code."

In linear ethics, normative utility is a linear combination of expected felicities:

$$u_j = \sum_i i_j E_j(F_i)$$

↑
utility for subject j

↑
i-th sentient being

↑
expected felicity of i-th sentient being interested by j

Sum over all sentient beings in the universe, present and future

→

$\alpha_{ij} = \delta_{ij}$, j is completely selfish
 $\alpha_{ij} = 1 - \delta_{ij}$ " " altruistic
 $\alpha_{ij} < 0$ for $i \neq j$ " a sadist
 $\alpha_{jj} < 0$ " " marxist

Principle of the greatest good for the greatest number \equiv all the α_{ij} positive and equal to each other, i.e. $\alpha_{ij} = 1$. for all i, j . Hence the master principle is simplified to the maximization of

$$u_j = \sum_i E_j(F_i).$$