Comments on Profs. Crisp and Voorhoeve

JP Sevilla
Fellow
Petrie Flom Center, Harvard Law School
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Summary

1. Health redistribution is non-separable from income redistribution and health financing. These can complicate, reduce, or eliminate the rationale for health redistribution.

2. Social planner is an agent (one who acts on behalf of another) rather than an impartial moral actor. This supports additivity.

3. Separateness of Persons: Should individuals' special connections to their own lives lead us to reject utilitarianism?

1. Non-separability

1.1. Redistribution is ultimately about well-being, which is a positive function of both income and health. Redistribution of income and health are therefore substitutes or alternatives.

1.2. All else equal, the more progressive the tax system, the weaker the rationale for health redistribution. An alternative to health redistribution is *more* income redistribution.

1.3. How do we apportion our ultimate goals with respect to redistributing well-being between redistributing income and health?

1. Non-separability

1.4. Redistribute using more or fewer goods?

More: imperfect correlation between income and health

Fewer: multiplication of inefficiencies (reduce incentives to work or stay healthy)

1.5. Comparative advantages of money and health as redistributive mediums

1.5. Money versus health

1.5.1. Measurement

aggregation, unobservability, flows vs. stocks, coherence

1.5.2. Fine versus lumpy

1.5.3. Risk

1.5.4. Personal identity, personhood, moral status

1.5.5. Futility in face of private provision and financing of health care

1. Non-separability

1.6. Consider some benefit to the better off that you are thinking of redistributing to the worse off. This trade-off presumes a fixed budget constraint. But if the better off have WTP that is greater than the cost of producing their benefits, then there is potential pareto improvement.

2. Social Planner as agent

2.1. Two senses of agent:

    Economic: one who acts on behalf of another

    Rational: origin or author

2.2. Economic agent isn't impartial moral agent

2.3. Prudent individuals are willing to prepay ex ante for a health benefits package that maximizes expected ex post utility

2.4. Even the worse off are prudent

2.5. Unborn future generations have ex ante interests

3. Separateness of Persons

3.1. The argument:

1. Each individual is specially connected to his or her own life in a way that he or she is not to others' lives

2. Social choices should respect this special connection

3. Utilitarianism doesn't respect this special connetion

4. We should reject utilitarianism

3. Separateness of persons

3.2. The need to respect these special connections drives a wedge between the intrapersonally and interpersonally optimal

3.3. What exactly are "special connections"?

They involve valuing self over non-self

What happens to me matters more to me than what happens to not-me

Egoism, partiality

3. Separateness of persons

3.4. Partiality is not sufficient for a wedge

A group of ex ante individuals willing to prepay $X for a common (limited) health benefits package

Each individual is partial

There is no wedge between the intrapersonally and interpersonally optimal, which is utilitarian.

The ex ante situation is not the only social choice situation, but it is *a* social choice situation, and an important one.

3. Separateness of persons

3.5. Partiality is not necessary for a wedge

If two impartial individuals have differing degrees of risk aversion, then there is a wedge between the intrapersonally and interpersonally optimal

3.6. In sum (of 3.4. and 3.5), the fact that individuals have special connections to their own lives is neither necessary nor sufficient to drive a wedge between the intrapersonally and interpersonally optimal.

3. Separateness of persons

3.7. What is the independent criterion for "respecting the fact of special connections" or "respecting individuals' partiality"?

3. Separateness of persons

3.7.1. Individual utility functions have certain mathematical properties in virtue of these special connections. We respect these special connections if we adopt Social Welfare Functions that have the same mathematical properties.

  Pro: implies utilitarianism should be rejected

  Con: also implies that impartiality should be rejected

3. Separateness of persons

3.7.3. We respect these special connections when we don't let gains to *many* people outweigh the burdens to one person.

Pro: implies utilitarianism should be rejected

Con: My partiality is indifferent to the number of others, and cares only about me vs. non-me. If my partiality is a reason against balancing the gains of others against my losses, this reason is invariant with respect to whether there are many others or just one other.

3. Separateness of persons

3.8. The way to respect everyone's partiality is to be impartial. Utilitarianism is arguably impartial. If there is an argument against utilitarianism, it is not obviously SOP.