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THE RATIONALITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL EGOIST

BY

LECH BEKESZA

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degreee of Master of Arts.

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Lech Bekesza
3553 Verner Ave.
Cobble Hill, B.C. RR # 2
V0R 1L0

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Rationality Of The Individual Egoist submitted by Lech Bekesza in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dr. Wes Cooper
Co-Supervisor

Prof. Cameron MacKenzie
Co-Supervisor

Dr. Allen Carlson
Committee Member

Dr. Eamonn Callan
Commitee Member

ABSTRACT

The main intent of this essay is to question Kai Nielsen's insistence on the rationality of the individual egoist. The individual egoist is committed to the view of practical rationality based on the maximization of an agent's utility. I employ the game-theoretic device of the Prisoner's Dilemma to demonstrate the unwelcome outcomes of straightforward utility maximization. The 'straightforward maximizer' will do worse in the Prisoner's Dilemma type situation than a constrained maximizer.

I argue, that in order to preserve the claim of the rationality of the individual egoist, Nielsen must either provide a reason for the individual egoist to adopt a position of constrained maximization or, must restrict the possibility of adopting the individual egoist's stance to a solitary individual.

I point out that the question whether the individual egoist can be given a reason for abandoning his self-interested stance in favour of morality has to be answered from a 'convergence' or 'divergence' view of moral rationality. The convergence moral rationalists may argue along the lines recommended by R. Nozick. The may try to dissuade the individual egoist from his 'narrow' view of self-interest in favour of the 'broad' view of self-interest. Or, they may follow the recommendations of D. Gauthier who argues that iterated Prisoner's Dilemmas, an agent possessing a disposition toward constrained maximization will fare better than a straightforward maximizer.

The 'divergence' moral rationalist may prefer to appeal to Lippke's principle of 'significant difference'. In following this type of inquiry, the moral rationalists may attempt to demonstrate to the individual egoist the rational bases for rejecting his exclusive self-interest in favour of morality.

In conclusion of my essay I point out that the individual egoist's rationality will depend not only on his own commitments but also on the commitments of the other agents.

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No words could express my gratitude to Dr. Wes Cooper for his help with this 'eternal' project. He saved my life. His diligence and encouragement were the main reason why this thesis was completed.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a tradition in the study of moral philosophy which defends the thesis that morality is rational while immorality is contrary to reason. A moral person, it is argued, acts in accordance with reason, while the amoralist must necessarily act irrationally. Scepticism about this argument is perennial. An important form that such scepticism takes is found in the question asked from the point of view of rational self-interest, "Why should I be moral?".

The "moral rationalists" who attempt to supply an answer to this question divide into three distinct lineages. First, there are those who attempt to demonstrate that morality and self-interest converge, in such a way that there are self-interested reasons for being moral. Plato and Aristotle qualify as the proponents of this "convergence" strain of moral rationality.[1,2] Second, there are moral rationalists who insist on a separation of the reasons of self-interest and moral reasons. Those two types of reasons inevitably diverge. The goal of the moral rationalist in this picture is to make the sceptic aware of the force of moral reasons. Kant could be interpreted as a "divergence" theorist.[3] Third, some have argued that the question "Why should I be moral?" is ill-

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[1]T. Nagel suggests a distinction in categorizing Aristotle and Plato. For Aristotle, broadly speaking, the moral life is defined in terms of the self-interested life. For Plato, on the other hand, the good life is defined in terms of the moral life. In more general terms, both positions seek to forge a connection between self-interest and morality. See: T. Nagel, The View from Nowhere, pp. 195-6.

[2]Whether Plato and Aristotle (and later on, Kant) can, in fact, be classified under these categories is immaterial for the argument of this essay.

[3]In contrast to the 'divergence theory' emphasizing the force of moral reasons intended to convince the sceptic, there is a further strain of divergence exemplified in the writings of Nietzsche and more recently, Philippa Foot. Nietzsche argued that acting from moral reasons would be detrimental to the agent who ought to act on reasons of self-interest.

formed. In this view, it makes no sense to ask for a self-interested reason to adopt morality.[4]

Kai Nielsen, in opposition to the broad claims of moral rationalism, argues that an amoralist in the person of an individual egoist, remains rational in acting exclusively on reasons of self-interest. He is as rational in his self-interested stance as a moral agent is in his commitment to acting on moral reasons. In this paper, I will examine the strength of Nielsen's thesis against the backdrop of the three-pronged division of moral rationalism.

EGOISM: INTRODUCTION

Nielsen's quest in a defence of the rationality of amoralism commences with the extraction of the "common sense core of subjectivism." This "core" can be seen most readily "from a natural reaction to a refutation of ethical egoism."[5] Since the inception of the egoist thesis, its various species have before proliferated on the pages of many volumes of ethical literature. Prolonged controversies often yield a greater degree of precision. The debate on the merits of the various formulations of egoism before produced a similar by-product. In the course of the debate five fundamental formulations of egoism have been extracted. Baier distinguishes among the common-sense, the psychological, the "invisible hand" advocated by Adam Smith, the ethical and the rational formulations of egoism.[6]

The common-sense version treats egoism as a vice, the promotion of one's own good beyond the morally permissible. The second, psychological thesis, appeals to egoism as lying at the foundation of all of our actions. Adam Smith, in speaking of the third formulation of egoism, puts forth a

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[4]I am indebted for the suggestion of this tripartite division of 'moral rationality' to Dr. W. Cooper. A similar division of the correlation between moral and self-interested reasons can be found in T. Nagel's book The view from Nowhere, Chapter X, Section 3, 'Five Alternatives.' In his book, Nagel makes some additional distinctions, extracting further nuances between some positions incorporated within the broader distinctions of this paper.

[5]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 748.

[6]This fivefold division of the egoist thesis is found in the essay of K. Baier, Egoism, in Peter Singer (editor), A Companion to Ethics, pp. 197-204.

theory arguing that under certain conditions the promotion of one's own good is the best means of advancing the legitimate goals of morality. The ethical and the rational renditions of egoism portray it as practical ideals, ideals of respectively, morality and reason.[7]

Kai Nielsen, in his treatment of egoism, adheres to a tripartite division. He separates egoism into its psychological, universal and individual theses, while overlooking Baier's first and third formulations. Furthermore, Nielsen's division of egoism, especially its universal and individual varieties, is subject to a further division into rational and ethical. We will briefly examine these conceptions in the order in which they are listed.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EGOISM

First, let us examine the thesis of psychological egoism. In order to do justice to the subject, the discussion of psychological egoism ought to be separated into two distinct strands. First, we should examine the empirical or descriptive claims on which psychological egoism is founded. Second, we ought to examine the psychological thesis as an ethical theory purporting to be a prescriptive, normative guide for action.

"Psychological Egoism is a descriptive thesis about human psychology which is intended to be empirically informative."[8] In broad strokes, psychological egoism characterizes all of human motivation as self-interested. People, by the nature of their psychological make-up are so "wired" that they always act on that which they believe will enhance their desired ends. Psychological egoism could be divided into several formulations competing for recognition under that singular title. To begin with, the genuine conception of psychological egoism has to be carefully distinguished from two imposter-formulations of it, namely, tautological egoism and causal egoism.

Tautological egoism claims that people always act to satisfy their own desires. This way of construing egoism is a truism, if "desire" is formulated in its broadest sense to refer to any motivational force within an agent intended to produce an action. However, this formulation of psychological egoism fails to be informative, thus it remains philosophically uninteresting. It often further gives rise to

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[7]K. Baier, Egoism, pp. 203-4.

[8]G. Kavka (1986), p. 35.

a fallacy stating that since all acts originate in desires of the self then, all acts originate in selfish desires.[9]

Causal egoism, on the other hand, states that people desire states of affairs according to the amount of pleasure they have experienced in conjunction with similar states of affairs in the past.[10] This formulation fails to qualify as a proper formulation of psychological egoism because it confuses the origin of our desires with their object. "There are distinct logical criteria that allow us to pick out the real object of an agent's desire...and these operate in such a way that the real object of desire need not coincide with the cause of that desire."[11] Both the tautological and the causal egoism must be rejected on account of failing to capture the true essence of psychological egoism.

Psychological egoism as an empirical doctrine has been challenged as excessively reductive in its oversimplification of the source of human action. The problem of deciphering the origins of human actions, the reasons and motives underlying them is here to stay. Since motives remain unverifiable except by reference to their outcomes, most often the only appeal in determining those must make reference to the individual's testimony. It is here that we find vast array of complex motivational sources. We discover that even if quite often we act from a purely self-interested motives, there are times when we act from altruistic motivation. We exhibit a great concern for our relatives and friends. At times we are stirred by empathy to help those whom we have never met, whose well-being, when we set out to enhance it, may even take away from our personal gains. Psychological egoism then, on the strength of this objection,, would be incorrect in its sweeping claim that all motivation for action at its very source derives from an agent's self-interest.

Yet, it is this very feature of psychological egoism, its seemingly irrefutable nature, that attracted many to it. However, it is that same feature that is claimed to be its greatest vice. J. Rachels argues that psychological egoism must be rejected on the grounds that it is an unfalsifiable hypothesis. Once established, "nothing that anyone could do could possibly count as evidence against the hypothesis. The thesis is irrefutable but for that very reason it turns out to have no factual content."[12] There is no test that can be

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[9]G. Kavka (1986), p. 35.

[10]ibid., p. 36.

[11]ibid., p. 36.

[12]For a good discussion of psychological egoism see: James Rachels (1986), The Elements of Moral Philosophy, chapter 5.

used to abolish the broad claims of psychological egoism. No matter what we claim concerning the motivation for our actions, the proponents of the above thesis can always retort that "we acted so because after all that's what we wanted to do most."

The above objection, while true of some all-encompassing renditions of psychological egoism, can be avoided by other, more sophisticated formulations. One of these is put forth by G. Kavka under the heading of Predominant Egoism.

> In most general form, Predominant Egoism says that self-interested motives tend to take precedence over non-self-interested motives in determining human actions. That is, non-self-interested motives usually give way to self-interested motives when there is a conflict. As a result, we may say that human action in general is predominantly motivated by self-interest. This idea can be spelled our more precisely as the conjunction of four propositions:
> 1. For most people in most situations, the "altruistic gain/personal loss" ratio needed to reliable motivate self-sacrificing is large.
> 2. The number of people for whom altruism and other non-self-interested motives normally override self-interested motives is small.
> 3. The number of situations, for the average person, in which non-self-interested motives override personal interest is small.
> 4. The scope of altruistic motives that are strong enough to normally override self-interest is, for most people, small, that is, confined to concern for family, close friends, close associates, or particular groups or public projects to which the individual is devoted.[13]

The force of Kavka's formulation of predominant egoism as a viable construal of psychological egoism, lies in his recognition of the possibility of the non-self-interested reasons for action. The content of the above four propositions could be summarized by the formula "self-interest tends to be overriding."[14] Predominant egoism then, will tend to be overriding for most people until they reach a

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[13]G. Kavka (1986), pp. 64-5.

[14]ibid., p. 66.

particular level of well-being and security, at which they could become largely altruistic.

Even though the thesis of predominant egoism is somewhat loosely formulated, as a doctrine it is falsifiable. "The evidence might conceivably show altruism to be so widespread as to violate the conditions of the doctrine on any reasonable specification of the vague terms."[15] The objection that psychological egoism is an unfalsifiable doctrine, while fatal for some of its formulations, loses its sting against Kavka's improved version of it, imbedded in the thesis of predominant egoism.[16]

However, even though predominant egoism improves on objection of psychological egoism as unfalsifiable, it still remains overly pessimistic as a view of human nature. It gives little credence to the human capacity to rise above the concerns for personal benefit. It leaves a picture of humanity engulfed in self-interested pursuits only sporadically punctuated by actions stemming from other-interested concerns. This view of human nature, it could be argued, does not accurately describe the motivational forces underlying human behaviour.

Psychological egoism, while defensible as an empirical thesis under the guise of predominant egoism, proves more difficult to defend as a normative, ethical thesis. The difficulty lies in the inability of psychological egoism to bridge the purported "is\ought gap" which was coined as a result of the writings of D. Hume.[17] The supporters of the above distinction argue that conclusions containing normative concepts (e.g., an "ought judgment") cannot be derived from premises containing only descriptive concepts (e.g., an "is-statement"). While psychological egoism tells us what the main source of human motivation might be, it fails to have normative import in the strictly logical sense.

The is\ought distinction is certainly troublesome for the defenders of psychological egoism as a normative, ethical thesis. It is largely on the account of this difficulty that Nielsen finds psychological egoism indefensible as an ethical doctrine.[18] However, that is not to say that there are no moves and countermoves that could be made to demonstrate the possibility of incorporating the psychologically egoistic claims into a normative theory. We could conceive of a

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[15]ibid., p. 67.

[16]For an extensive discussion of the Predominant Egoism see G. Kavka (1986), pp. 29-80.

[17]David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, Book III, part 1, pp. 469-70.

[18]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 748.

division between the discussion of the "is\ought" gap in terms of a moral 'ought' and the rational 'ought'. In case of the former, an egoist may readily admit that the gulf between the demands of a common-sense morality and the agent's motivational 'wiring' is indeed unbridgeable. Human nature, according to a psychological egoist, takes us too far afield from what morality commonly demands. Thus, an egoist may concede that morally speaking one ought not to be selfish. However, he can still go on to argue that from the point of view of practical reason, an egoist is rational in his adherence to self-interest.

Kavka, for instance, may be construed as the proponent of the latter solution. He sidesteps or bridges the gap by appealing to a "weak, or noncontroversial" conception of practical rationality conjoined with the empirical claims of psychological egoism. Thus, while the empirical claim generalizes concerning common human ends, aims and goals, the weak conception of rationality says that "...it is rational to pursue the necessary means to your ends."[19] Morality, in this scheme, becomes a set of action-guiding principles recommending pursuit of specific necessary means to these shared ends and grounded in the requirements of practical reason and our natures.[20] This way of looking at "is\ought" gap makes it clear that the width of the gap between motivational wiring and the demands of morality is much greater than the void existing between motivational wiring and practical rationality.[21]

Kavka's suggestion recommending a "weak" bridge between the empirical doctrine and the normative import is quite plausible. However, it will not satisfy a through-going Humean bent on arguing that a prescriptive theory of action cannot be derived from purely descriptive premises.

UNIVERSAL EGOISM

The debate concerning the merits of egoism germinated another species of the thesis, namely: universal egoism. Universal egoism asserts that "...each person ought always to seek his own good as the sole end worth seeking for its own

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[19]G. Kavka (1986), p. 291.

[20]ibid., p. 291.

[21]This twofold division has been pointed out to me by Dr. W. Cooper.

sake".[22] The distinctive nature of this claim must be carefully noted in the expressions "always" and "worth seeking for its own sake." The thesis of universal egoism can be interpreted in a two-fold way: either as a moral or a rational doctrine.[23] The "ought" in "Everyone ought to seek his own good", could be construed as an "ought" of practical rationality, or as a moral "ought". We will begin by examining universal egoism as a moral doctrine.

In contrast to the psychological thesis, universal egoism can qualify as an ethical theory by virtue of its normative character. It does not merely resort to the explication of the nature of human motivation. Instead, it prescribes some action for the agent as one demanded by the egoistic principle.

There are egoistic moral principles which insist that we ought to pursue our own, personal ends only to the extent to which these do not conflict with the ends of others. However, such formulations are only partially egoistic. Universal egoism is categorical in that it urges that the pursuit of our own ends is the sole end worth pursuing and that we ought always to do it. A categorical egoist ought to prefer his own ends exclusively.

A further feature of the claim comprising universal egoism is found in its insistence that all rational agents, without exceptions, ought to follow this course of action. In this sense, ethical egoism is universal in its application. The egoistic course of action is prescribed for every rational agent.

However, this way of formulating the egoist thesis suffers from irreparable flaws. The initial difficulty pointed out by Nielsen, which does not prove fatal to the theory of universal egoism, is the difficulty of qualifying universal egoism as a meta-ethical theory purporting to analyze the meaning of moral statements. We could hardly be swayed to believe that in saying that morally "We ought to do what is good" we say nothing more than "we ought to realize our own ends." There are many individual ends which seem worthy of our pursuit, yet we would think some of them quite distinct from being morally good ends.[24]

When considered as a normative theory about the choice of actions, the theory must cave in under the pressure of

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[22]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 748.

[23]This twofold division has been suggested to me by Dr. W. Cooper.

[24]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 748.

contradictory claims.[25] In its categorical and universal emphasis, the theory fails to supply a definitive solution to the problem of conflicting values. If any two or more agents find themselves holding values which are mutually exclusive, implying actions which are simultaneously unrealizable, it is hard to see what solution is available to them. The theory does not provide a principle for adjudicating between such conflicting claims short of resorting to violence. In the light of these difficulties, Nielsen relegates universal egoism as an ethical doctrine to share in the fate of psychological egoism.[26]

The "nonmoral" version of universal egoism is construed in the same fashion as its moral counterpart, with the exception that the "ought" in its credo functions as an "ought" of practical rationality rather than the "ought" of morality. In this account, every agent is rational in pursuing his own ends exclusively. In order to specify this formulation further, we could stipulate that what is rational for all agents to do is to act on the principle of "utility maximization". From the point of view of practical reason, a universal egoist ought to maximize his own utility.

The nonmoral version of universal egoism could be interpreted as either a "divergence" version, or a "convergence" version. In the former case, morality and "divergent" universal egoism must inevitably conflict. Morality, in this view, takes into consideration everyone's well-being in such a way that everyone's utility ought to be maximized. What is rational to do from the moral point of view, is to maximize <u>everyone's</u> utility. Universal egoism, on the other hand, prescribes an exclusively self-interested course of action for each agent. Every agent is encouraged to maximize <u>his</u> own utility to the exclusion or disregard for everyone else's utility, unless of course, the other agent's increased utility will result in increased utility for the universal egoist. The difficulty with these two viewpoints emerges in the context of their conflicting outcomes. If all agents committed themselves to the exclusive maximization of their own utility, everyone's utility would be diminished. In order to eliminate this undesirable consequence of universal nonmoral egoism, an egoist ought to abandon his self-

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[25]J. Rachels points out that universal egoism is not a logically contradictory thesis unless we accept the assumption that 'one ought not to prevent another from fulfilling his duty.' However, even if not logically contradictory, the practical contradiction of mutually exclusive actions still leads to unavoidable confusion. For the discussion see J. Rachels, <u>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</u>, chapter 6, especially pp. 75-6.

[26]K. Nielsen (1963), pp. 748-9.

interested pursuits in favour of morality. The inevitability of this conflict is best exemplified in the game-theoretic device of Prisoner's Dilemma. In the latter part of this essay, we will explain in detail the nature of this conflict and its alleged inescapability.

The latter, "convergence" version of nonmoral universal egoism and the moral stance, can be construed in a way in which they do not necessarily exclude each other from running. Since the "divergence" view of moral rationality and egoism conflict, the "convergence" view could stipulate that under some specific conditions, every agent's utility could be maximized in following the moral course of action. In that sense, morality and self-interest could come closer, without excluding each other. Whether this "coming closer" of these two viewpoints can be accomplished, and to what extent, will be a question which we will attempt to address in the course of this work.

The latter part of this paper will give ample attention to the plausibility of this solution in the context of our discussion of individual egoism. In this respect, the answers and possible solutions to the problems plaguing individual egoism will mirror similar solutions applicable to nonmoral universal egoism in its "convergent" version. While Nielsen does not explore this alternative, we will examine it further in the context of our discussion of Symbolic Utility and the Prisoner's Dilemma.

The difficulty of finding a satisfactory formulation to the egoist thesis has deterred many philosophers from pursuing this line of inquiry. Nielsen cannot be counted in their ranks. In an attempt to formulate egoism in a way that would safeguard it against its troublesome problems, Nielsen formulates the egoist thesis as a thesis of individual egoism. "In order to remain intelligible, egoism must be put forth as an individual and not as a universal egoism."[27]

INDIVIDUAL EGOISM

What distinguishes individual egoism from its predecessors is the denial by its proponents that it qualifies as a moral theory while insisting on its rational status. Individual egoism does not intend to function as a moral theory. Instead, it is "...a personal, rationally thought-out plan or policy of action."[28] However, instead of arguing

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[27]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 748.

[28]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 748.

that everyone ought to pursue his own ends, it claims that as an individual "I" ought to pursue my own ends.

In view of the vast array of ends that an agent may choose to pursue, individual egoism, like its predecessor - universal egoism, could also be divided along the lines of aspiring to "converge" with morality or "diverge" from it. In case of the former type, an individual egoist, after some deliberation, may recognize that his ends ought to take into consideration the well-being of others. He may discover that in calculating his overall utility, he will maximize it by acting morally toward others. His initial view of what will generate the highest utility values for him may be too limited. Thus, in expanding his view of what is in his interest, he may encompass some of the moral reasons for action. Whether, and to what extent an individual egoist may actually adopt moral reason as action-guiding will be a subject of some further deliberations.

In contrast to the "convergence" individual egoist, the "divergence" individual egoist views moral considerations and reasons for action as detrimental to the maximization of his overall utility. He prefers to remain committed solely to the advancement of his own well-being, without any concern for the well-being of others. The inclusion of the welfare and well-being of his fellow human beings may be of no interest to him. A divergence moral rationalist, in this picture, would lack the recourse of appeal to a "broader" view of self-interest. Neither would he wish to make use of it. For him, morality cannot be justified by an appeal to self-interest. An individual egoist must see the superiority of moral life over self-interested life. Moral reasons, on this view, will always conflict with the reasons of individual egoism.

This way of formulating the egoist thesis, as a thesis of individual egoism, makes our opting for egoism a viable alternative, without the theory necessarily falling into disrepute on account of the difficulties besetting the other two formulations of it. An individual egoist, while legislating for himself, does not prescribe any course of action for the other agents. He still has use for the imperative 'ought'. However, the "ought" is not a moral "ought". It retains its imperative force exhibiting a commitment to a settled policy for living as opposed to an unprincipled choice of actions.

Furthermore, a policy of individual egoism, Nielsen argues, cannot be a moral position. The way in which it is stated does not provide a standard by which conflicting rival moral claims may be adjudicated. This apparent lack of standard frustrates the very reason for which we have morality. In a statement denying that individual egoism can count as a moral theory, Nielsen states the following:

> Thus self-interest, no matter how enlightened, cannot be our standard of moral appraisal.

> Individual egoism then, cannot possibly be an ethical or a moral doctrine. If we are to be consistent egoists we must be individual egoists, and this is to simply reject the claims of anything that could conceivably count as a morality.[29]

The policy of individual egoism, Nielsen contends, remains a rational option for anyone as long as it is not put forth as a rival morality. This conclusion concurs with Baier's conviction that for something to count as morality it has to be able to adjudicate among conflicting claims. Individual egoism does not provide such a principle.

It is in the stance of individual egoism that Nielsen locates the common sense core of the subjectivism. A person subscribing to such a way of living can hardly be accused of rational inconsistency. When wondering which way of life to embrace then, we are faced with two equally rational options: the moral and the amoral. There is no reason outside of an individual's decision, Nielsen asserts, that could be given in support for the preference of one position over the other. Both are equally rational and we must "leap", in a very much existential "leap of faith", to choose one or the other. The choice, however, cannot count as a rational choice. It will depend entirely on what kind of people we want to be, our interests, desires, preferences, etc.

INDIVIDUAL EGOISM - DETAILED OUTLINE OF ITS MAIN FEATURES

Since the entire subject matter of this paper oscillates around the person of individual egoist a more detail explication of this normative stance is warranted. There are several distinguishing features of individual egoism which were already outlined in somewhat cursory style. In the next sections of this paper, I will give a careful exposition of these features.

INDIVIDUAL EGOISM - A RATIONAL DOCTRINE

The first unique feature of individual egoism is put forth as the determination to remain a rational policy for

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[29]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 749.

living. In one of his earlier papers[30], Nielsen argues for the legitimacy of the question "Why Should I Be Moral?". It makes sense to ask "'Why should people be moral?' and 'Why should I be moral?' as long as we do not construe the 'should' in the above two questions as a moral 'should'."[31] The above question has been interpreted by some to be an absurd request for a moral justification of morality. The position of disqualifying the question as illegitimate and confused is one of the strategies used by a strand of moral rationalists in defence of the rationality of the moral stance. Morality, in their understanding, does not need a justification, neither can it be justified in terms of some other activity. Thus, if the question turns out to be logically absurd, Nielsen's efforts of vindicating the amoralist stance turn out to be in vain.

Nielsen, in disagreement with his opponents, argues that the practical language of human conduct, while including the moral uses of "ought", also includes other normative uses of "ought" which are not moral. There is not one, single moral notion of "ought". The principle of self-interest as formulated in the policy of individual egoism claiming that "I ought to pursue what advances my own good" has a use for the "ought" even though the "ought" is not a moral one. To follow Brunton's contention, "There can be intelligent, self-controlled people, with a plan of life, who care only for themselves."[32] Nielsen echoes this claim by insisting that "...there could be a deliberate, rationally thought out and consistently adhered to personal policy of individual egoism."[33]

There are two aspects of Nielsen's claim that need to be further illuminated. First of all, Nielsen insists that there is a variety of uses of the word "ought". We can distinguish among moral, rational, prudential, etiquette, or other uses of "ought". We would indeed be asking an absurd question if we were asking for a moral justification of morality. If "ought" in "Why ought I to do what I ought to do?" functions in both instantiations as a moral "ought", the request has to be discarded as confused and unanswerable. However, the former "ought" in our question can function as an "ought" of rationality, while the latter remains as a specifically moral one. Thus

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[30]See K. Nielsen (1958).

[31]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 748.

[32]J. Brunton, Egoism and Morality, Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. VI, 1956, pp. 298-9.

[33]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 750.

> ...a moral sceptic asking, "Why ought one to do what is right, anyway?" might well be questioning the good or the value of the whole activity of morals: the "ought" in, "Why ought one to do what is right anyway?" and "should" in "Why should I be moral?" are evaluative expressions but they are not moral expressions. Understood in this fashion, "Why should I be moral?"...[is] not unintelligible or logically absurd.[34]

In order to preserve the claim that our question is logically inconstent, its proponents must show that the "ought" must be used in its moral sense in both instantiations. This, Nielsen argues, has not be shown.[35] There is nothing in the nature of the question that requires the "ought" to function exclusively in its moral sense. This leads to the conclusion that an individual egoist can not only ask the question pertaining to the justification of the moral enterprise as a whole but also is able to formulate his own position using "ought" in a rational rather than a moral sense.

The "ought" of individual egoism is not intended to be a moral "ought". Nielsen argues that there is nothing "...logically inconsistent about individual egoism so long as we don't try to extend it into a new rival morality..."[36] As a result, it should not be surprising to find individuals pronouncing themselves free of intellectual error in subscribing to a rational policy of self-interest instead of a moral one. The individual egoist could be accused of error if he persisted in arguing that his self-interested policy for living were nonetheless a moral one. Individual egoism must remain amoral.

The second aspect of Nielsen's claim pertaining to the rationality of the egoist stance is found in his insistence on the normative character of "ought". The reason for this emphasis has to do with employment of "ought" which distinguishes a settled policy from an unprincipled procedure. It focuses on promoting individual egoism as a rational policy rather than an irrational one, stating that "I care about

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[34]K. Nielsen (1958), p. 26, brackets added.

[35]P. Singer in his book Practical Ethics discusses the faulty reasons underlying the desire to equate the question 'Why be moral?' with a similar sounding query 'Why be rational?' While the latter presupposes rationality in asking the question, the former does not stem from a similar presupposition pertaining to morality. See pp. 203-4.

[36]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 750.

myself only." While the latter indicates a momentary, unprincipled whim or emotion, the former expresses a principle which can be assessed rationally.[37] The point is an important one because it gives the thesis of individual egoism a normative structure which can then be scrutinized from the rational point of view.

Expressions of emotions or attitudes, if that is all that the individual egoist insisted on holding, would hardly fall under the umbrella of a rational theory. Suppose we attempted such a formulation, the following would result: If we said that "we only care for ourselves" because we feel like it at the moment, the statement would elude rational scrutiny. There is nothing to scrutinize from the rational point of view in a person's attitude. We cannot say that an attitude is correct or incorrect without a principled statement expressing the end which is pursued by the agent. To say: "I feel like doing this at the moment", cannot be judged for its rationality, unless we are aware of a goal or a rule on the basis of which the agent conducts his life. Thus, an individual egoist, in order to retain the claim or rationality for his principle, must have a use for the normative "ought".

Nielsen's argument in defence of the coherence of the question "Why Be Moral?", serves the purpose of disposing of the claims of the moral rationalists who perceive the question as ill-formed. The main thrust of Nielsen contention is that morality is not like rationality. In asking for the justification of the latter activity, we have to presuppose rationality. Thus, the question "Why should I be rational?" uses "should" in its rational sense, and in this way falls into incoherence. The same cannot be claimed about the question of the justification of morality. A rational person can quite consistently inquire about the reasons for adopting the moral point of view without presupposing morality. He does not need to fall into incoherence on account of his question. His question is posed from the point of view of reason rather than morality.

The claim that the individual egoist is rational in his stance outlined above, serves as a building block for the additional, indispensable feature. The essential thrust of this feature is found in its emphasis on the individual and personal nature of the egoist stance.

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[37]Nielsen's insistence on retaining the normative element in the amoralist stance can be contrasted with the conception of 'amoral' as it is employed by A.I. Melden in Why Be Moral, The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 45, No. 17, p. 451. Melden conceives the amoralist as an unprincipled individual guided by his moods and emotions rather than a normative credo.

INDIVIDUAL EGOISM - AN INDIVIDUAL, PERSONAL POLICY

The second distinguishing feature of individual egoism is that it is a personal, individual doctrine. An individual egoist is committed to the dictum "I ought to do what promotes my own ends" while maintaining "...a discreet silence on the topic of others' moral obligations. In somewhat different terms he refuses in principle to commit himself on the rights and duties of the remainder of the universe of moral agents."[38] The principle of individual egoism legislates for the individual agent without extending the same principle to all other agents.[39]

We ought to keep in mind, recognizing the two possible strands of individual egoism, that an individual egoist's silence in the context of others' moral obligations does not necessarily imply that he does not care about their choices or decisions. What the others decide to do may affect the outcomes of his calculations. In contrast to a universal egoist, an individual egoist does not prescribe a specific course of action for the other agents. Yet, he certainly holds preferences for what the other agents ought to do from his, self-interested point of view.

The reason for Nielsen's defence of the egoistic thesis in the form of individual egoism originates with the apparent failure of the other formulations, especially those in the guise of psychological and universal egoism. I alluded in the earlier part of this paper to the shortcomings of both theories. The individualist status of the thesis is further strengthened by an appeal to an assumption contending that:

> moral and evaluational utterances are parts of practical discourse and that a complete justification of any practical claim involves reference to the attitudes of the parties involved or to the decisions they would make.[40]

Nielsen does not defend this assumption, even though, as he himself admits, the claim is a controversial one. The above claim, if taken in conjunction with the two separate

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[38]Donald Emmons (1969), Refuting the Egoist, The Personalist, Vol. 1, No. 3.

[39]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 748-9.

[40]ibid., p. 747.

sources of motivation, the egoistic and the moral one, results in agent-relative and agent-neutral standpoints. Morality, as it is most commonly conceived, originates from equal consideration being extended to the preferences of all the agents. In this sense, the moral standpoint requires an agent-neutral approach to reasons. This standpoint insists on impersonal or interpersonal reasons for action.

The other side of our spectrum is occupied by the agent-relative considerations. An individual egoist will not reason from the agent-neutral point of view. Instead, he will accept only his own, agent-relative reasons as foundational for his actions. The exclusively self-interested agent lacks other-interested commitments, remaining untouched by moral motivation. "The immoralist free-rider on morality grants that [altruistic behaviour] plainly is what to do from an agent-neutral viewpoint but he is in effect asking "Why should I take an agent-neutral viewpoint rather than an agent-relative viewpoint?""[41] Nielsen goes on to add: "No non-question begging reason has been given why he must override that viewpoint or shift to an agent-neutral viewpoint to remain a rational individual rationally acting in the world."[42]

If we accept Nielsen's previously stated assumption, we will note a bifurcation of reasons into self-interested and other-interested reasons. An individual will be justified in subscribing to either a moral or an egoistic viewpoint. This choice will emanate from the preferences that the agent may have for either way of living.

INDIVIDUAL EGOISM - A NONMORAL THESIS.

The third feature of individual egoism is its nonmoral status. There are two reasons that Nielsen marshals in the defence of the amoralist nature of the egoist thesis. In the first place, as I have outlined above, he urges that "ought" in its various uses is not limited exclusively to a "moral" use. An agent weighing the pros and cons of morality can ask for the justification of the moral enterprise from the rational perspective. In turn, he can also formulate his own policy for living as a rational thesis without the necessity of rendering this commitment a moral one.

Secondly, Nielsen insists that in order to be consistent egoists "...we must be individual egoists, and this is to

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[41]K. Nielsen (1984), p. 85, square brackets added.

[42]ibid., p. 85.

simply reject the claims of anything that could conceivably count as a morality."[43] His insistence on the rational, yet amoral status of individual egoism, derives from the belief that there are some minimum criteria that must be met if a theory is to qualify as a moral one. For something to count as a moral standard, it must be able to adjudicate the conflicting interest of individuals and groups. Individual egoism, with its insistence on the individual's rational self-interest as the supreme standard, fails to meet this minimum condition. Therefore, as Nielsen argues, "...self-interest, no matter how enlightened, cannot be our standard of moral appraisal. The very raison d'etre of morality has been frustrated."[44]

Ethical egoism fails to provide a solution to the problem of conflict resolution. Individual egoism avoids the identical dilemma by its personal stance which retains its privacy in legislating a course of action. The individual egoist remains silent regarding the course of action chosen by other agents. The conflict may still occur in practice, however it does not arise from a singular principle urging contradictory actions from the agents.

The very reason for accenting the necessity of moral standards derives from the need to adjudicate among the clashing claims. Nielsen states his claim following Baier's argument in the following words:

> We have moral standards to impartially adjudicate the conflicting interests of individuals and groups; but if each individual's own rational self-interest is taken as a standard, in reality we have no standard by which to adjudicate these conflicting interests.[45]

Morality, as it is seen by Nielsen in agreement with Baier, has the function of providing a canon for the adjudication among various interests and claims. The standard of conflict adjudication then, is the necessary condition that must be fulfilled by any theory purporting to be a moral one. Individual egoism with its limited scope of instantiation, is legislated only for an individual agent. In this sense then, it does not count as a moral principle.

The three features of individual egoism outlined above set it apart from the other formulations of the egoist thesis.

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[43]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 749.

[44]ibid., p. 749.

[45]ibid., p. 749.

Nielsen defends these in the hope of vindicating the larger claim of his argument, namely, that a self-interested person is rational in his stance.

PRACTICAL RATIONALITY: CORRESPONDENCE OF ATTITUDES AND CLAIMS

Nielsen's depiction of an egoist as an individual egoist serves the purpose of establishing a subjectivist position which would be rationally unassailable. This is not to say that the amoralist position is to be taken as the sole rational stance which any rational agent ought to adopt. Instead, agent's rationality ought to be assessed in the light of his interests and commitments. In deliberating on which way of living to adopt, the amoralist is not guided by considerations of best reasons sans phrase or with what is the best thing to do for all concerned. He is concerned with what is the best thing for him to do. An individual egoist, guided solely by concerns of promoting his own advantage, wants to know what reason can be given him to abandon his self-interest in favour of morality. From where the amoralist sits, Nielsen contends, no reason can be supplied for him to this end.

Since an individual egoist questions the value of the moral enterprise as a whole, moral reasons will not weigh with him at all. He does not reason from the moral point of view. To accuse the amoralist of irrationality in not accepting moral reasons is to beg the question against him. He understands the demands of morality, however he wants a self-interested reason to convince him that he ought to adopt morality. In his stubborn insistence on the exclusivity of self-interested reasons, an individual egoist remains rational in his adherence to a self-interested policy for living, just as much as a moral person is rational in his commitment to morality. As Nielsen points out: "It is a truism that, morally speaking, we should always do what is right, but it is also a truism that from a self-interested point of view an individual should always do what is in his self-interest."[46]

An individual egoist wants to know "What (if any) intellectual mistake he has made"[47] in following a self-interested policy for living? He wants to know "why he should be moral rather than non-moral?"[48] The hope of the advocates of the traditional view of moral rationality is to be able to

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[46]K. Nielsen (1971), p. 317.

[47]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 755.

[48]ibid., p. 755.

give the self-interested agent a reason for abandoning his self-interest. If it can be shown that the individual egoist has a legitimate reason for abandoning his self-interest, the rationality of an exclusive devotion to amoralism will be undermined. Whether this hope can be realized is the topic of the next section.

There are two ways to proceed from here: either in line with the convergence view of moral rationality, or by following the divergence view. The former approach will seek to expand an amoralist's view of self-interest in such a way that he will realize the value of moral considerations. What the convergence moral rationalist desires is to demonstrate to an individual egoist that his overall self-interest will be best served by acting morally.

A divergence moral theorist, on the other hand, will seek to give an individual egoist some reason to abandon his exclusively self-interested stance in favour of morality. The question before us is, is there any such reason that a person committed to acting solely on the reasons of self-interest will accept? What considerations, if any, will weigh with him sufficiently to shift his preferences from self-interest to morality?

The contrast which we are after, is the distinction between a person <u>acting morally</u> and a <u>moral</u> person. This differentiation is heeded by Nielsen when he points out that "Indeed, <u>only</u> to be a man of good morals is not, as Kant stressed, to be a morally good man."[49] The distinction is between:

> ...a man whose actions are (at least very often are) of a certain sort (they are of the sort that a good man would perform), and a man who acts, or at least attempts with considerable success to act, from moral considerations. What we seek are reasons which are to convince a man to become the second sort of man: someone who is genuinely unselfish. He is not merely for self-interested reasons to keep from doing selfish acts. He is (for self-interested reasons) to become someone who is unselfish...a "moral agent"...someone who appreciates and is claimed by moral considerations. "To be moral" then is to be a morally good man, a moral agent, in these senses.[50]

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[49]K. Nielsen (1971), pp. 317-8.

[50]R. Beehler (1972), <u>Moral Life,</u> p. 149.

R. Beehler, whose words these are, goes on to add that: "We are to Give him a reason...We are to give the man a reason by pointing out to him a reason which is there but which he does not perhaps appreciate."[51]

An amoralist, committed to reasons of self-interest, will not accept moral reasons. These two types of reasons, Nielsen claims, belong to separate strands of practical discourse. They also comprise their own canons of rationality. A moral person will accept agent-neutral reason as determinative of his course of action. An individual egoist, on the other hand, will accept only agent-relative reasons as the overarching reasons guiding his choice of conduct. Both moral and amoral persons, according to Nielsen, are equally rational in their respective pursuits. A person advocating his self-interest to the exclusion of any other considerations, will have no use for moral reasons. He can accept only reasons of self-interest as guiding his behaviour.

How then are we to supply an amoralist with self-interested reasons to abandon his self-interest and embrace morality? Hospers argues that an attempt at accomplishing this feat must inevitably lead to a contradiction. In speaking of an amoralist, he says the following:

> What he wants, and he will accept no other answer, is a self-interested reason why he should keep on playing. But the situation is ex hypothesi one in which the act required of him is contrary to his interest. Of course it is impossible to give him a reason in accordance with his interest for acting contrary to his interest. That would be a contradiction in terms. It is a self-contradictory request...It is no wonder that such a questioner must be disappointed. So must the seeker after square circles.[52]

Does the above contention destroy the defence of the rationality of an amoralist? Is his request for a reason, after all, only a confused demand which cannot be fulfilled? I have noted earlier that the amoralist will not be moved by moral reasons. Now, as Hospers argues, it ought to be apparent that it is impossible to give the amoralist a self-interested reason to dissuade him from his egoistic pursuits. If we cannot give an amoralist either moral or self-interested

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[51]R. Beehler (1972), Moral Life, p. 149. The other possible option is to give the individual a reason which he does not yet have.

[52]J. Hospers (1970), p. 746.

reasons, in asking for a reason to be moral, is he not irrational after all?

A divergence moral rationalist may be tempted, at the conclusion of Hospers' argument, to throw in the towel. A convergence moral theorist, in contrast to his rationalist counterpart, does not have to be equally pessimistic about his chances of improving the situation. He can adopt a strategy of expanding the conception of self-interest. A self-interested agent, in this picture, could be shown that his conception of what is good for him is unduly narrow and limiting. When his idea of self-interest is broadened appropriately, he may realize that there are weighty self-interested reasons to do the "moral thing".

R. Nozick suggests this strategy in the context of his discussion of the constituents of decision theory. One of the essential features of an adequate decision theory must be symbolizing. Symbolizing is a process by which a particular act

> ...stands for all the others that the principle excludes (or includes); doing this one symbolizes doing the rest...The action (or one of its outcomes) symbolizes a certain situation and the utility of this symbolized situation is imputed back, through the symbolic connection, to the action itself.[53]

Nozick views symbolizing as a further fact which is not exhausted by calculating the utility of an act in light of the probability of doing that act again. Many actions produce consequences which have a further symbolic significance which may not be obvious. Thus, an act or a symptom X, may have a symbolic utility S. That symbolic utility of an act in turn accounts for the persistence of the recurrence of an act X. What the act X symbolizes for the agent, namely S, itself has some utility which is imputed back to the act, thus giving it greater utility than it appeared to have initially. In the final analysis then, it may be the presence of the act's symbolic utility that explains why the act has been chosen repeatedly.[54]

Actions may symbolize certain situations, and the utility of this symbolized situation is imputed back, through the symbolic connection to the action itself. While the standard decision theory recognizes the kind of imputation along the path of expected utility, the symbolic connection allows for imputation along the lines of symbolic utility. In this view then, the utility of an action can flow back, or be imputed

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[53]R. Nozick (1993), pp. 26-7.

[54]ibid., p. 26.

back, not solely along the causal connections but also along symbolic ones.[55]

Symbolic actions often are expressive actions. In these cases,

> ...the symbolic connection of an action to a situation enables the action to be expressive of some attitude, belief, value, emotion of whatever. Expressiveness, not utility, is what flows back. What flows back along the symbolic connection to the action is (the possibility of) expressing some particular attitude, belief, value, emotion and so on. Expressing this has high utility for the person, and so he performs the symbolic action.[56]

Moral or ethical principles give us a code of behaviour toward others which recognizes their value and our attitude toward them as fellow human beings. Our appeal to symbolic utility enables us to express ourselves in ways in which we could not express ourselves otherwise. Holding and following ethical principles then can also have a symbolic utility for us which goes beyond the particular purposes which holding such principles serve. Our opting to act morally may symbolize to us taking a stance on the side of moral value and all that this entails.

In acting morally toward others, as Kant suggested, we act as members of the kingdom of ends, as free and rational legislators. The moral act does not cause us to become a member of that kingdom. It is rather what we would do as a member, it is an instance of what would be done under such circumstances, and hence it symbolizes doing it under those circumstances.[57] The moral act allows us to express our membership in the kingdom of ends. 'Such act has the symbolic meaning of "I am a free and responsible agent, capable of rising above selfish desire and acting according to a principle."[58]

Nozick further stipulates that:

> There are a variety of things that an ethical action might symbolically mean to someone: being a rational creature that gives itself

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[55]ibid., p. 27.

[56]ibid., p. 28.

[57]ibid., p. 29.

[58]This was suggested to me by Dr. W. Cooper.

> laws; being a lawmaking member of a kingdom of ends; being an equal source and recognizer of worth and personality; being a rational, disinterested, unselfish person; being caring; living in accordance with nature; responding to what is valuable; recognizing someone else as a creature of God. The utility of these grand things, symbolically expressed and instantiated by the action, becomes incorporated into that action's (symbolic) utility. Thus, these symbolic meanings become part of one's reason for acting ethically.[59]

A convergence moral rationalist, following Nozick's exposition of symbolic utility, could demonstrate to an individual egoist that his self-interest would be greatly enhanced by acting morally. The symbolic utility of moral actions could enrich his life beyond the possibilities offered by exclusively self-interested choice of actions. Since we live in a world which is rich in symbolic meanings and utility, much of which stems from our interaction with others, an individual egoist would be greatly impoverished by rejecting the utility which moral acts can impute to the overall utility of his life.

An appeal to symbolic utility in the calculation of the utility of specific acts may bring an individual egoist closer to morality. In so doing, we can certainly narrow the gap between the two stances significantly. However, this will not guarantee that an individual egoist will always act morally. To be sure, this cannot be guaranteed by any philosophical argument. On the other hand, neither will this serve as a proof that it is necessarily rational to be moral. Whether a sceptic will accept the recommendations of the convergence moral rationalist will depend entirely on what has meaning for him.[60]

A convergence moral rationalist may be quite satisfied with getting a self-interested agent to realize that he ought to broaden his conception of self-interest and incorporate moral reasons into it. The "narrowing of the gap", however, will leave (I think) a bad taste in the mouth of a divergence moral rationalist. What he wants from an individual egoist,

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[59]R. Nozick (1993), pp. 29-30.

[60]P. Singer, for instance, suggests that a psychopath may remain unmoved by "moral talk" and most probably Nozick's appeal to symbolic utility. However, both Nozick and Singer may still prefer the good results from all the others expanding their conception of self-interest. See P. Singer (1979), pp. 214-16.

is to abandon his self-interest entirely. He does not want him to act morally but to become a genuinely moral agent.

A convergence moral theorist demonstrated that Hosper's claim that a self-interested person makes a contradictory request, in asking for a self-interested reason, could be avoided by aligning morality with self-interest. However, on another level, Hospers may insist that what troubles him about the above solution is the lack of "total proof" that morality is rational and self-interest is irrational. It is at times when self-interest and morality clash that a convergence moral rationalist will be at a loss in trying to convince a self-interested person to nonetheless opt for morality. It is at times like these that Hospers' argument acquires greater plausibility. Does Hospers' argument, in cases of conflict between self-interest and morality, show Nielsen's individual egoist to be irrational?

Nielsen does not think so. Hospers' observation, according to Nielsen, supports his defence of subjectivism and the rationality of individual egoism. What Hospers has demonstrated is the bifurcation of practical discourse. It is the case that "... from a moral point of view I have no alternative but to try to do what is right and from a self-interested point of view I have no rational alternative but to act according to what I judge to be in my rational self-interest."[61]

R. Beehler marshalls an argument which supports the above thesis. He argues that as long as our amoralist remains committed to self-interest, it is impossible for him to become a moral person. He suggests that a person adopting the moral point of view because it is in his self-interest is already self-interested and acts from the self-interested point of view. The only reasons for adopting morality which such an individual will accept are self-interested reasons.

> If a man undertakes to do something because it is in his interest to, that means that he is concerned to do or secure what is in his interest. But to be concerned to do or secure what is in your self-interest is to be self-interested. How then are you to adopt EITHER the moral view OR the self-interested view? You are already self-interested.[62]

Beehler's argument is intended to demonstrate that the initial commitment that a person makes to the self-interested way of living prevents him from abandoning his initial position in favour of morality. That is not to say that the

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[61]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 758.

[62]R. Beehler (1972), Moral Life, p. 153.

person cannot act morally. He has some use for moral reasons and moral actions, as long as those can be shown to increase his personal, self-interested gains. In this sense, Beehler's stance is consistent with the attempts made by the convergence moral rationalist. What Beehler's argument is intended to show is that the initial commitment to a way of life, determines the kind of reasons that an agent will allow to weigh with him in the process of decision-making.

We ought to keep in mind that Beehler's argument appeals to the "narrow" notion of self-interest. The tone of the argument assumes a divergence notion of moral rationality. On this view, morality and self-interest necessarily stand at opposite ends of the spectrum of practical rationality. However, the assumption underlying Beehler's understanding of self-interest in its narrow sense begs the question against Nozick's postulate of expanding the notion of self-interest by an appeal to the symbolic utility of moral acts. Thus, Beehler's argument remains unpersuasive with regard to the "broad" notion of self-interest.

Where does this leave us in our critique of Nielsen's argument? Is Nielsen, after all, right to insist that both the amoral and the moral viewpoints are equally rational? If that were so, then the traditional view defending the rationality of morality, while insisting on the irrationality of the self-interested stance, was mistaken all along. We would have to agree with Nielsen that there is no one, overarching rational viewpoint. Instead, there are many viewpoints with their own, peculiar canons of rationality.

In the final analysis then, Nielsen points out, "There seem to be no decisive reasons for our choice here; nor can we conceive of a non-question begging general procedure that would enable us to decide between these conflicting policies."[63] When deciding which way of living to embrace, "...we are tempted finally to say that you must just decide what sort of person you want to be. No intellectual considerations will settle the matter for you here."[64] If this is so, then calling a self-interested person "irrational" or "unreasonable" is out of place here. It would be consistent to do so only if "rational" carried a specifically moral flavour. Instead, "...criteria for what is to be called 'irrational' differ"[65] with the context of a person's commitments and preferences.

But how is the initial choice of a stance to qualify as either rational or irrational? An agent in our example does not choose his initial position of either self-interest or

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[63]K. Nielsen (1963), p. 751.

[64]ibid., p. 751.

[65]ibid., p. 756.

morality for a reason. Instead, his choice depends entirely on his preferences and attitudes. There are no reasons which guide the person prior to his choice of a position. Once he adopts one or the other, he will act on reasons. However, his initial choice does not involve reasons. Instead, it derives from the agent's conative make-up.

The difficulty with Nielsen's thesis goes back to the assumption tying the justification of any practical claims to the agent's conations. Nielsen contends that a complete justification of any practical claims, of which self-interested and moral claims are examples, depends on the presence of appropriate preferences or attitudes in the agent.[66] An amoralist, exhibiting preference for the exclusive promotion of his own well-being, is justified in acting solely on reasons of self-interest. In this preference, he is said to commit no intellectual mistake. He is as rational as a person who prefers to do what is right, and opts in favour of morality.

The root of the problem in Nielsen's assumption lies in the ascription of rationality to a conative realm which does not lend itself to rational scrutiny. There is no rational judgment that can be made concerning person's preferences which themselves do not derive from reasons. To say that a person prefers this or that way of living for no reason whatsoever, is to relegate the question of initial choice of a person's way of living to a nonrational realm. The choice of a lifestyle is said to depend entirely on the preferences, attitudes or the decisions that he would make. The original choice, in favour of either self-interest or morality, stems entirely from the person's conations. In this sense, the initial choice cannot be said to be rational. It is arational or nonrational.

In this picture, it is not hard to see why Nielsen would argue that both the moral agent and the amoralist are essentially "in the same boat." He is correct to argue that in the initial state neither agent has a reason to opt for one viewpoint or another. The choice of a position will derive entirely from the inclinations toward doing that which is right, or that which is self-interested. However, this initial choice will lie outside the realm of rational jurisdiction. Therefore, Nielsen's denial of a logical or rational mistake in the initial choice of the individual egoist is out of place here. The initial choice of an agent for one way of living or another is arational, thus any talk of rationality or irrationality misses the point.

Roger Beehler, in this context, notes a further difficulty with the amoralist's demand for a reason to abandon self-interest and adopt morality. Beehler points out an apparent ambiguity in Nielsen's conception of the amoralist

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[66]ibid., p. 747.

thesis. On the one hand, Nielsen presents a picture of an amoralist as a self-interested person, committed to act solely on agent-relative reasons. This person is a "practical sceptic". As such the individual egoist asks "'Why should I be moral?' in those cases where acting morally will not be in my rational self-interest?"[67] He further declares "I am only concerned with what is a good reason for me."[68] An amoralist, in this example, is a thoroughly self-interested person, and he is motivated by the idea of maximizing his own utility.

On the other hand, Nielsen conceives of an amoralist as a man deliberating on the question "Why ought I to be moral?" from the point of view of "no-reasons". This person is an "abstract sceptic". He is said to be neither self, nor other-interested. Nielsen admits that a person asking "Why should I do what is right when it is not in my self-interest?" has made a self-contradictory request when he is asking this question as a self-interested question.[69] There is no such contradiction when the question is asked by an "abstract sceptic" about morality. He then proceeds to outline the peculiar standpoint occupied by an abstract sceptic . He reasons as follows:

> As I see it, there are two alternatives; either I act from the moral point of view, where logically speaking I must try to do what is right, or I act from the point of view of rational self-interest, where again I must seek to act according to my rational self-interest...But what I want to know is what am I to do: Why adopt one point of view rather than another?[70]

In this conception of amoralism, an individual or an abstract amoralist, is said to be in a reasonless or nonrational state. A reasonless state is one in which all reasons for action are completely absent. Furthermore, the agent exhibits no preferences nor does he have any inclinations toward one way of living or another. The person is neither self nor other-interested. He has no reasons to enhance his own well-being, nor does he care about the welfare of others. He has no point of view, and does not prefer one set of reasons over the others. After all, to have a point of

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[67]ibid., p. 754.

[68]ibid., p. 757.

[69]ibid., p. 758.

[70]ibid., p. 758.

view is to prefer one state of affairs over another. The difficulty with this depiction of the amoralist is to see how anything could count for him as a reason.

A rational person, in Nielsen's account, "has a sense of his own interest" and "will act in accordance with his own interests". Even though to "have" interests and to "act" on one's interests is not the same, as Beehler suggests, we can quite readily give an answer to the question:

> Why will the rational man act in accordance with his interests? The answer (or better, the assumption) is: because it is in his interest to; and, he is interested in what is in his interest. Being rational, he will therefore do what is in his interest to do.'[71]

Beehler goes on to argue:

> If a man we are discussing is not concerned about himself (i.e. self-interested), and if he is not concerned about others (i.e. morally interested), what interest is he to have in either of these "points of view'. What reason is he to have to adopt one or the other? It seems to me that nothing could be a reason for him.[72]

We ought to keep in mind that in speaking of reasons, in this context, we are speaking of reasons which the person "takes in" as reasons, rather than reason which we perceive the person to have. Beehler points out that even though we may clearly see that this 'abstract amoralist' has a reason to obtain food, clothing, shelter, or secure some protection of his life, he does not take it as his own reason. He does not feel the force of any such reason.

The abstract sceptic whose position we are discussing, can certainly leap to choose one way of living as opposed to the other. He can follow his inclinations of the moment, or even a more persistent urge to be a self-interested person. On the flip side, stirred by emotion toward his fellow-human beings, he can embrace morality. What remains true of that person, in both cases, is that he cannot claim to choose for a reason. His initial choice is arational and arbitrary. In this sense then, the amoralist can hardly qualify as a rational person. He is nonrational in his initial choice of a stance.

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[71]R. Beehler (1972), Moral Life. p. 156.

[72]ibid., p. 157-8.

What are we to conclude at this juncture about Nielsen's claim that the individual egoist is rational in his initial choice of a stance? We can certainly agree with him in asserting that the initial choice in adopting either morality or self-interest is not based on reasons. As a result, we must be cautious not to ascribe rationality to either one of the positions. The initial choice is neither rational nor irrational. It is arational.

This point is important in my critique of Nielsen's thesis. Nielsen insists that the individual egoist commits no intellectual mistake in adopting the self-interested point of view. As such, his choice is said to be an arational leap stemming from the person's preferences. But here we ought to keep in mind that we are talking about an abstract sceptic. In his case, there are no preferences, attitudes and inclinations. He has no reasons for doing or choosing one way or another. He is neither rational nor irrational. In this context then, Nielsen's claim of the rationality of the self-interested position in the guise of an abstract sceptic, is beside the point.

INDIVIDUAL EGOISM: THE MAXIMIZATION OF THE AGENT'S UTILITY

If the argument advanced in the preceding section is correct in its conclusions, the initial commitment that an agent makes to either the moral or the self-interested way of living does not spring from rational deliberations. Instead, an agent commits himself to either viewpoint on the basis of his preferences or inclinations. However, if the initial "leap" toward a self-interested stance falls outside the realm of rational scrutiny, does this mean that Nielsen's amoralist is doomed to arationality from the very beginning? Is it the case that Nielsen's claim that a self-interested agent's viewpoint must be relegated to the sphere of conative deliberations in which reason has no authority? If not, what theory of practical rationality may Nielsen employ to argue that the amoralist is rational in his self-interested viewpoint?

Before these questions can be answered we ought to clarify which of the twc formulations of amoralism we are examining. The ambiguity in Nielsen's account points to two possible construals of an amoralist stance mentioned previously: the disinterested or abstract one and the self-interested or practical one. The former, as ought to be apparent from the discussion of the preceding section, cannot be a true object of our inquiry. A person who has no preferences toward either a self-interested or a moral way of life, who appreciates no reasons whatsoever, as long as he

remains in this state, can never come to appreciate the force of any reasons. As a result, he will remain arational. The very request for a reason to adopt morality, put forth by a person who will accept no reasons, is incoherent. A person soliciting a reason where no reason can be had, makes a nonsense request. Amoralism, so construed, is doomed to remain arational from the very outset. There is no hope for this conception to ever enter the sphere of rational deliberations.

The latter depiction of an amoralist - as a person who prefers to advance his own welfare, a person who is exclusively self-interested, and wishes to maximize his own utility, is a more hopeful formulation. Initially, we must reiterate the point that his request for a reason to abandon self-interest in favour of morality does not have to be contradictory, contrary to what Hospers claims. At most, what Hospers and Beehler have shown is that an individual egoist, as long as he remains self-interested, will retain his original status. He is and remains a self-interested person who chooses to act morally only if it is in his self-interest. In so doing, is the amoralist not self-interested after all?

In spite of its problems, this formulation of amoralism is a more hopeful one because in it, an amoralist is committed to <u>acting on reasons</u>. The initial commitment may still be reasonless or arational, springing from an agent's preferences and attitudes which precede his having reasons for action. However, this is not to say that an amoralist stance cannot be assessed for its rationality once the reasons for action are adopted. An amoralist is committed to acting on reasons of self-interest and those are the reasons which will weigh with him in his deliberations on what to do. Once his stance is adopted, he acts on reasons. The first step may be arational, every step thereafter, will be based on reasons.

The initial exclusive adherence to self-interested reasons will make it possible for an individual egoist to make use of moral reasons only to the extent to which those advance his self-interest. While he may act on moral reasons, the final authority in the choice of reasons will always appeal to the promotion of an individual egoist's self-interest. All the other reasons will only matter to the extent to which they contribute to his personal gains. All reasons, except the agent-relative reasons, will take a secondary role in the amoralist's deliberations on what to do.

Since the self-interested amoralist acts on reasons of self-interest, is his stance not rational to the extent to which he is guided by these reasons? An amoralist acting from agent-relative reasons will be partial to the advancement of his own good to the exclusion of the claims that anyone else makes on him. A moral agent, on the other hand, would be moved by agent-neutral reasons. Each individual, Nielsen contends, is justified in subscribing to a preferred way of living. Why then should an amoralist be irrational in

subscribing to the dictum "I ought to promote my greatest good alone", if this is what he cares about? Why can't he pursue acting on self-interested reasons, when these are reasons which he takes as determinative of his actions? Can the rationality of a position be construed in terms of the correspondence of an agent's preferences and his practical claims?

There is a difficulty in ascribing rationality to a person's position on the basis of his having a preference, which in turn gives rise to his practical claim. Nielsen assumes the correctness of the assumption that any practical claim is justified by reference to the agent's conations. To say this, is to claim that an agent's preference is a sufficient reason for the correctness or truth of the practical claim which he makes. However, if an agent's practical claims are justified in this fashion, then it is hard to see how an agent's rationality will not become all-permissive.

It is the normative impotence of this possible theory of practical rationality to this point that renders any ascription of rationality to the agent utterly empty and hopeless. We can safely conclude that ar attempt to formulate the nature of practical rationality in terms of the correspondence between the attitudes and practical claims then, falls short of capturing the desired normative essence of rationality.

Where does this leave us in respect to Nielsen's defence of the rationality of a self-interested stance? The above argument ought to have demonstrated that the rationality of the amoralist's position cannot be founded solely on Nielsen's view about the justification of the claims of practical discourse. The difficulty with construing practical rationality in this way ensues in light of Nielsen's claim that an agent's preferences constitute a sufficient reason for the justification of his practical claims. In this view, an individual egoist, could be declared rational only at the price of rendering the notion of rationality normatively empty.

We ought to keep in mind that the above discussion has to do with initial preferences and the question of rationality. The goal of the preceding argument was to demonstrate that the rationality of an amoralist position cannot be established on a claim that the initial choice of a stance, either self-interested or other-interested, is equally rational or irrational. Instead, the initial choice is nonrational. Whether the stance of individual egoism is rational will have to be discussed in the context of utility maximization.

Let us take stock of the argument to this point. I have agreed with Nielsen that the initial choice of a position is arational. The choice of a way of life will depend on the agent's preferences, inclinations and attitudes. In this department, the 'abstract sceptic' who has no preferences for

any way of life whatsoever, will remain suspended in his arational position. A "practical sceptic", on the other hand, who possesses strong preferences for advancing his own, personal well-being, will seek to maximize the satisfaction of his preferences. The latter sceptic will be the object of our further inquiry.

In the course of our deliberations we have been dealing with a person who questions the very foundations of the moral enterprise. His scepticism is not directed against the possibility of moral knowledge. Instead, while he admits that moral knowledge is possible and morality ought to be the practice followed by agents acting from a moral point of view, he denies that he ought to engage in morality. He is self-interested and has no interest or inclination to pursue acting on moral reasons.

Throughout our dealings with the amoralist, we noted his exclusive commitment to the reasons of self-interest. His life dictum of "pursuing the course of action which best satisfies his rational self-interest" emerges with clarity and force. And it is on this formulation of his policy that I would like to focus my attention next.

An amoralist in our account is concerned solely with the promotion of that which is in his best interest. What is rational for him to do, from his point of view, is to maximize his own utility. Moral considerations will weigh with the amoralist only to the extent to which their adoption will increase his overall utility. This last formulation of rationality, in terms of utility maximization, is what is at stake in determining the success of Nielsen's argument vindicating the rationality of the amoralist position.

PRACTICAL RATIONALITY: NIELSEN'S VIEW OF MAXIMIZATION

The concept of practical rationality which would enable us to establish the rationality of the self-interested position, while avoiding some of the previously outlined difficulties, is the notion of utility maximization. The appeal to utility maximization in the construal of the theory of practical rationality is by no means a novel idea. "The dominant conception of rational action in recent years", as J. Narveson points out, "has been that the rational individual "maximizes his utility..."".[73] The utility, in this view, is

[73]J. Narveson (1985), p. 228.

construed in terms of a measure of preference.[74] The agent's preferences, in turn, will derive from his assessment of what is valuable, desirable and worthy of pursuit from the point of view which he decides to adopt.[75] An agent will be rational then, to the extent to which his choice of actions serves the purpose of maximal satisfaction of the goals and ends which he esteems as valuable.

In all fairness, I ought to point out that Nielsen does not employ the terminology of "utility maximization" in his defence of the rationality of individual egoism.[76] Instead, he appeals to the agent's "rational self-interest", "furtherance of his own good", "a best thing for me to do" or, "what will make for my greatest good." It is apparent from the evaluation of these references that the intent underlying Nielsen's phraseology is identical to the intent expressed in terms of utility maximization. Either way of depicting the agent's rationality may be reduced into the other.

That this is so, ought to be evident from the parallelism in both accounts. We should note that Nielsen's description of the agent's rationality makes reference to what the agent deems worthy of pursuit. The practical claims, for their justification, depend on a reference to the agent's attitudes and preferences. Our individual egoist, by the nature of his egoistic conations, is committed to acting solely on reasons of self-interest. What the agent takes to be in his self-interest will depend entirely on his attitudes and preferences. The agent's conations establish the basis for the reasons which he will accept as overriding. There are no reasons for action which derive from an objective point of view, independent of the agent's attitudes. What is valuable for the agent to pursue is what the agent deems worthy of pursuing.

The same idea is contained in the concept of utility. Utility is a measure of an agent's preferences. The preferences of the individual egoist are expressions of his conative nature. In this way, in the final analysis, they are derived from what the agent sees as worthy of his pursuit. The concept of what is good for the agent, in Nielsen's account, and the concept of utility are expressible in analogous terms.

A similar claim may be made about the concept of "the greatest" good and a parallel concept of "maximization" of

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[74]J. Tilley (1991), Altruism and the Prisoner's Dilemma, p. 266.

[75]J. Narveson (1985), p. 228.

[76]This is to say, that Nielsen does not explicitly formulate or defend this thesis in the context of his argument defending the rationality of the amoralist stance.

utility. Nielsen's depiction of the agent's good is qualified by the usage of the adjective in its superlative form. What this signifies is that the agent's highest good is what is desired. What the agent is rational in pursuing is that which will allow him to obtain the greatest good among the alternatives. The choice of this "good", we ought to keep in mind, is dependent entirely on what the agent will esteem worthy of pursuing.

The pursuit of the greatest good, in turn, corresponds to the concept of maximization in the account of utility maximization. To opt for what maximizes the agent's utility, is to choose the course of action which will bring about the highest degree of satisfaction of one's preferences. The idea of "utility maximization" and the "greatest good" are conceptually equivalent ideas. The preference for using the terminology of "utility maximization" in this paper stems from its succinctness and conceptual clarity.

UTILITY MAXIMIZATION - CRITIQUE

There would be no difficulty in ascribing equal rationality to both the amoral and the moral positions, were it not for the conflict in utility maximization resulting from the various self-interested pursuits. The conflict, in the context of our present discussion, springs from the possible situations in which the pursuit of the exclusively self-interested course of action by the amoralist results in suboptimal gains in his utility. We can conceive of situations in which the individual egoist would increase his overall utility by abandoning his self-interested reasons in favour of moral reasons. If that were the case, the individual egoist insisting on acting solely on the reasons of self-interest would be irrational in his pursuits. This conflict is well elucidated by reference to the game-theoretic device of a Prisoner's Dilemma.[77]

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[77]A game is a case of Prisoner's Dilemma when it is a 2X2 game with the following feature: Each player has a dominant strategy, but if those strategies are chosen, the players are condemned to a deficient outcome. An excellent discussion of Prisoner's Dilemma can be found in J. Tilley (1991), Altruism and the Prisoner's Dilemma, Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 69, No. 3.

THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA - SUB-OPTIMAL UTILITY MAXIMIZATION.

The classic depiction illustrating the sub-optimal gains in utility maximization may be found in the story attributed to A.W.Tucker. In a story, Fred and Ed committed a serious crime. However, the District Attorney even though convinced of the correctness of his accusations, does not possess all the evidence necessary for the conviction of the two suspects. In order to secure their convictions, she will have to persuade them to confess to their crime. The two suspects are presently in custody and are not able to communicate with each other. The Attorney is convinced that she possesses the proof of a lesser crime on which they could certainly be convicted. What she wants however, is to bring about their conviction on the more serious charge.

Ed and Fred are then interrogated separately. Each is presented with the same options and the same offer is put before each one. Each is told to confess. However, Ed is told that if he confesses to his crime and Fred does not, the Attorney will convince the jury of the genuiness of Ed's repentance while accusing Fred of criminal hardness. In such a case, Ed will get one year in jail, while Fred will be locked up for ten years. An identical option is presented to Fred. Another option put before both of the accused is that if neither Ed nor Fred confess, each will be convicted of the lesser crime and sentenced to three years in jail. If both happen to confess, the Attorney will allow the natural course of justice to take its course and each will get five years in jail.

Both criminals are interested in minimizing the time spent behind bars. This is consistent with the conception of utility maximization except, instead of maximizing one's utility, one is concerned with minimizing one's disutility. Thus, on the assumption of each of the accused's commitment to the view of rationality seeking to minimize their overall disutility, each reasons as follows: If I confess, and he does not confess, I'll be out in a year while he will spend next ten years in jail. However, if I do not confess and he confesses the reverse will be true. If I keep my mouth shut and so does he, we'll both be out in three years. However, if we both squeal, we'll be stuck in jail for the next five years.

What becomes evident from our example, is that each agent's commitment to the maximization of his personal utility will inevitably lead to suboptimal results. Each agent's disutility will be minimized if he chooses to confess while the other does not. It would appear, from the point of view of rational utility maximization, that this is what each person ought to do. However, if both confess, each will be worse off than if neither one confesses. Thus, from the point

of view of each person's rational self-interest each agent would be better off in abandoning his exclusive commitment to maximizing his own utility in favour of the sub-optimal result. In any situation paralleling that of Fred and Ed, the utility maximizers do much worse for themselves than could the presumed irrational optimizers.[78]

The employment of the Prisoner's Dilemma in the context of our considerations, serves the purpose of depicting those scenarios in which the amoralist's exclusive commitment to the maximization of his own utility results in a deficient outcome. The foundation of the individual egoist's stance is that in acting on the reasons of self-interest he will maximize his overall utility. As it turns out, there are circumstances in which the amoralist would benefit more by acting on altruistic rather than self-interested reasons. What follows from it, is that there are circumstances in which the amoralist ought to abandon his self-interested reasons to attain his highest utility. An individual egoist then, is not always rational in acting solely on the reasons of self-interest.

The situations arising in the context of the Prisoner's Dilemma, in which the amoralist ought to abandon his self-interested pursuits in favour of moral action, play well into the hands of the convergence moral rationalist. His hope is to be able to demonstrate to the individual egoist that it will pay for him to adopt moral reasons at times when his utility maximization may be jeopardized. However, the outcomes of the dilemma will be cold comfort for the divergence moral rationalist. His stance prevents him from advancing the rationality of the moral position by appealing to an individual egoist's self-interest.

What we ought to note further, is that the utility outcomes for the amoralist depend on the choices of action made by the other agents. Human interaction is multilateral in character. The multilateral nature of human motivation coupled with the possibility of every agent's pursuing of his self-interest, is what spoils the perfect picture for the amoralist. J. Narveson summarizes the problem in claiming that: "The trouble is due to interdependency."[79] The dictum, that a person acts rationally only to the extent to which the outcome of his action produces utility at least equal to any other action which is available to him, remains unproblematic in a universe comprising a single agent following this standard. "When we act independently, the

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[78]There is no claim to originality in my depiction of the Prisoner's Dilemma. In my presentation, I have paraphrased the account found in D. Gauthier (1986), pp. 79-80.

[79]J. Narveson (1985), p. 238.

above maxim maximizes one's utility. But when there is interdependency, it does not."[80]

What this means is that human interaction is a two-way street. We both affect others by the choices we make and are affected by the others' choices of actions. However, this in itself is not a sufficient condition for the dilemma to arise. In addition to the multilateral quality of human interaction, we ought also to point out, that what causes the real difficulty for the amoralist is the other agents' commitment to the same rational principle of the exclusive pursuit of their individual self-interest.

The Prisoner's Dilemma is a game-theoretic device in which the utility payoffs are defined in a specific way for each of the possible outcomes. Once those utility payoffs are determined for each outcome, we can determine whether the structure of our game qualifies as a Prisoner's Dilemma.[81] In our case, the dilemma would not arise if at least one of the agent's utility payoffs were determined by reference to other-directed motivation. This is not to say that altruism provides a solution to the puzzle presented in the Prisoner's Dilemma. The dilemma, in the context of our considerations, would not have arisen at all, unless both agents were committed to individual egoism. The Prisoner's Dilemma, in our example, is constructed in such a way that the utility payoffs reflect the preferences of the self-interested agents.

Practical rationality runs into difficulties when both of the agents choose their dominant strategies - those of maximizing their own utility. What is most rational for an agent to do, in accordance with the notion of practical rationality embedded in utility maximization, is to choose those actions which will maximize his personal utility. However, if the other agent chooses to follow the same strategy, the result will produce sub-optimal gains in utility for both agents. What we need to determine, in the light of this apparent snag in our theory of practical rationality, is whether this unwelcome consequence can be avoided? Is there anything in Nielsen's depiction of the rationality of the individual egoist which could help us escape the dilemma?

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[80]J. Narveson (1985), p. 238.

[81]My claim here is concurrent with the assertion that the Prisoner's Dilemma as a theoretic device does not depend for its origin on the determination of the agent's inclinations or reasons for action. In the case of individual egoism, the dilemma reflects the utility payoffs for individual egoists. In this case, the self-interested preferences of our agents are essential for the determination of utility payoffs. This is consistent with the claims made in J. Tilley (1991).

It could be argued, that in cases when other agents opt for the self-interested stance, the individual egoist may do better to pretend to embrace morality. At the same time, he ought to convince others to wholeheartedly adopt morality. He himself can quite readily act from moral reasons, while retaining the self-interested reasons for action as preeminent. It would be better for him, of course, if the others adopted morality for its own sake. On the surface of it, there would be nothing inconsistent about an individual egoist, in a chameleon-like fashion, doing whatever it takes to obtain his greatest good. He certainly would not want to be discovered to be an exclusively self-interested person. In a world of moral agents who recognize his amoralistic stance, he would be shunned at the least, and severely punished at the most. If the self-interested agent were discovered, his utility gains would diminish drastically.

In the context of the Prisoner's Dilemma, the amoralist stands to lose more if he acts self-interestedly, than if he acts morally. When all things are considered, and everyone's self-interested commitments taken into account, acting from moral reasons will pay better than acting from self-interested ones. Thus, whenever the maximization of his utility was jeopardized, the amoralist could retain his self-interested reasons as overarching by temporarily adopting the moral reasons as supreme. In this way, he could remain self-interested while preserving a utility payoff at least equal to those of other agents.

The above considerations would indicate that the individual egoist, in Prisoner's Dilemma kind of situations, can retain his self-interested stance even though he acts on moral reasons. He can adopt moral reasons and act morally, without necessarily having to become a moral agent. It would be abundantly obvious for the amoralist, in situations in which he could coordinate his behaviour with the other prisoner so that they could each agree to perform the cooperative action, that he would diminish his overall utility by sticking with his self-interested reasons for living. He would do better, if at least for the time being or to appease his moral compatriots in the dilemma, he acted on moral reasons. Could he not, after all, still remain self-interested? Why should we think him irrational in this case? Is his choice of sub-optimal gains in utility not the best overall option considering other agents' commitments?

Plausible as the above suggestion sounds, it misses the point. The force of the Prisoner's Dilemma derives from the paradox which it generates. A self-interested person will maximize his utility if the other agents act from moral reasons. However, what guarantee is there that everyone else, with the exception of the single individual egoist, will act morally? If the individual egoist can adopt his amoralist stance, so can anyone else. In those circumstances in which

the other agents discover the amoralist's true intentions, will they not be justified in becoming like him?

In situations where more than one individual follows the policy of self-interest, everyone will be worse off. Therefore, in these situations, it would be better for all involved to act from moral reasons. But in this way, the amoralist will obtain suboptimal gains in utility. Acting from self-interested reasons may be his best response to what everyone else is doing. However, if he so acts, he will not maximize his utility. He must abandon the maximization of his greatest good in favour of a suboptimal result.

In addition, if he remains self-interested all throughout this ordeal, as soon as everyone adopts moral reasons for action, he ought to abandon his commitment to moral reasons in favour of self-interested ones. Since the moral option is the suboptimal option, he will do best if he pursues his self-interest to the exclusion of moral reasons. This, of course, ought to be done as soon as the amoralist makes sure that everyone else is committed to moral reasons for action. The end result of this type of commitment on the part of the amoralist will be evidenced by a complete <u>instability</u> of the system. If the other agents reason in a similar fashion, they also will abandon their moral considerations as soon as they suspect that everyone else had committed themselves to following them. If the amoralist desists from his temporary adherence to moral reasons, the others ought to do the same in order to enhance their utility. What solutions to this problem can be found in Nielsen's account of practical rationality?

The conclusion to be derived from the consideration of a Prisoner's Dilemma is that acting on reasons of self-interest will not always maximize the amoralist's utility. The equation is muddled by the variable of other agents' choices. The maximization of an amoralist's utility will not always be directly proportional to his acting on self-interested reasons. Instead, at times his commitment to reasons of self-interest may diminish his overall utility. In these situations, an individual egoist will do better by acting on moral reasons than by pursuing his self-interested course of action. He can still maintain that any action on reasons other than those of self-interest ought to be justified by self-interest. Is there anything in Nielsen's account which would enable him to preserve the claim of the rationality of an individual egoist maximizing his own utility by his exclusive adherence to the self-interested course of action?

<u>THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA: POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS</u>

There are a few fundamental features of individual egoism which we have outlined at the outset of this paper. One of the key ones is its commitment to legislate for the individual alone. The individual egoist is described as an agent who opts for a self-interested course of action. He decides to act only on the reasons which will promote his self-interest to the exclusion of anyone else's interest. While the individual egoist subscribes to this individual policy for action, he remains silent on what other agents ought to do. In this sense, our policy for living is personal and not universal. In this scheme also, the individual egoist avoids making moral commitments.

The preceding section of this paper, discussing the merits of utility maximization in the context of the Prisoner's Dilemma, pointed in the direction of the origin of the difficulty for the individual egoist. The dilemma surfaces as soon as more than one agent commits himself to the policy pursuing the maximization of the individual self-interest. In the case in which all members of society, with the exception of the egoist, acted out of their commitment to the moral principle, the individual egoist would indeed maximize his utility. In this case, the Prisoner's Dilemma would be avoided.

Nielsen, in response to the Prisoner's Dilemma, would be justified in arguing that there is no logically necessary connection between the individual egoist's stance and the Prisoner's Dilemma. In other words, the adoption of the self-interested viewpoint by the individual egoist does not logically imply a simultaneous generation of the Prisoner's Dilemma. One is logically independent of the other. The dilemma occurs as soon as at least one other agent opts for the self-interested viewpoint. However, each individual's choice is logically independent of the other's. In this sense, Nielsen's position defending the rationality of the individual egoist in his commitment to the self-interested stance is defensible and correct.

The difficulty with this defence, however, is that there is nothing in Nielsen's theory of individual egoism which prevents other agents from adopting the self-interested credo as their guide for living. Every individual, in accordance with Nielsen's theory, is equally justified in adopting the self-interested point of view. Initially, there is nothing that prevents any person whatever from adopting the amoralist position. However, in the above scenario, each person subscribing to the self-interested credo will inevitably fail to maximize his utility. Even though there is no logical connection between the single egoist's stance and the Prisoner's Dilemma, neither is there anything in Nielsen's account which would prevent the dilemma from arising in the context of more than one agent subscribing to a self-interested policy for living.

Two possible solutions are available to us at this juncture. Either, as some have suggested, we recommend that the individual egoist restrain his pursuit of utility maximization in favour of the suboptimal option[82]; or, we provide some principle which would restrict the possibility of adopting the principle of the exclusive pursuit of individual self-interest to one, solitary individual. In the former case, we would appeal to what maximizes the utility of all the agents. In the latter case, we would point toward something in the thesis of individual egoism which would permit only one, single individual to adopt it.

There are no clear signs that Nielsen favours either one of these solutions. In a limited way and somewhat indirectly, he explores these two options. However, he does not seem to be troubled very much with the difficulties posed by the Prisoner's Dilemma. In his defence of the rationality of individual egoism, he seems satisfied to point out that an individual egoist is not under the yoke of morality. An amoralist, in spite of the pressure of the moral considerations, may retain his position inwardly, while outwardly attempting to remain undetected. He can be rational in his self-interested pursuits.

INDIVIDUAL EGOISM: SUBOPTIMAL OPTION

Let us first attend to the examination of the former alternative. Is there any way, in Nielsen's account, in which we could convince the amoralist to act from moral reasons in situations resembling those of the Prisoner's Dilemma?

The self-interested person, in the Prisoner's Dilemma situations, will inevitably realize that his exclusive pursuit of self-interest will result in diminished utility value for him. Whenever other agents opt for a self-interested course of action, the utility of every agent will attain a suboptimal value. The individual egoist, together with all the other self-interested agents, will be at a disadvantage in sticking to his self-interested policy.

In order to save the day, each self-interested agent would be better off in adopting other-interested behaviour as preeminent in guiding his behaviour. In this way, even though no individual will get his highest payoff, everyone nonetheless will arrive at the optimal payoff. The optimal payoff will be such that no agent could be made better off

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[82]This option has been recommended among others by: T. Hobbes in the Leviathan; K. Baier (1958), (1985), and D. Gauthier (1967), (1974), (1986).

without making the others worse off. Furthermore, the suboptimal utility gained by all the agents will be greater than the diminished utility gains in cases when all the agents continue in their self-interested course of action. The question before us is: Will the amoralist, in Nielsen's account, be swayed to act on moral rather than self-interested reasons?

The claim that the amoralist will abandon his self-interested stance in favour of morality is defended at length by Kurt Baier. Baier's account certainly falls on the "convergence" side of moral rationality. This convergence account of moral rationality, however, will not resolve the problems for the divergence moral rationalist. The latter would not appeal to self-interest in defence of morality.

It should be evident from the outcomes of the utility payoffs in the Prisoner's Dilemma, that in a world comprising the exclusively self-interested utility maximizers, everyone will be worse off. Baier contends that in a community of rational egoists, every agent would be suspicious of the others' intentions. It would be in the interest of every person to promote the implementation of the most stringent moral norms. At the same time, everyone would wish for the moral norms not to apply to him. Those put in charge of enforcing the moral code (as in Hobbes' Sovereign) would be prone to advancing their own well-being by bending the law in their own favour. The society would inevitably move in the direction of "increasing unjust absolutism".[83]

The fundamental difficulty with the order established on the sole recognition of what Baier comes to term "self-anchored reasons," is that:

> it cannot recognize as overriding reasons and directives (principles, rules, precepts) designed to adjudicate interpersonal conflicts of self-anchored reasons. To the extent that they approximate perfect rationality, the members of such an order will therefore endeavour to modify their compulsory social order, its laws, customs, and conventions, in a direction counselled by their self-anchored reasons...Such persons will necessarily regard the social order as no more than a row of hurdles in the race of self-fulfilment or, in the worst case, self-aggrandizement. Their aim must always be to remove such hurdles from their own path and place them in the path of others with conflicting claims.[84]

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[83]K. Baier (1978), p. 243.

[84]K. Baier (1978), pp. 243-4.

The instability of the social system described above could be avoided, Baier insists, by its members adherence to the other-interested reasons and the recognition of such reasons as overriding the reasons of self-interest. The solution then is to abandon the stance of rational egoism in favour of rational conventionalism.[85] Rational people, according to Baier, will want a set of coordinative guidelines which is sound. A sound system of guidelines is one whose precepts everyone has equally good reasons to regard as paramount practical reasons.[86]

In order for the system to be sound, Baier argues, two conditions need to be satisfied. First, the system must fulfil the condition of generality. This requirement recognizes what has already been pointed out in conjunction with the outcomes of the Prisoner's Dilemma. It contends that the appeal to other-directed behaviour will benefit every agent as long as all agents subscribe to it. It is not desirable for an individual to adopt the moral point of view in the absence of a similar commitment on the part of the other agents. However, if the condition of generality is guaranteed, all agents will benefit from their resolution to follow the moral code.

The second condition concerns the content of the social requirement. It recognizes the insufficiency of the first condition in its insistence on the social requirements' being for the good of everyone. It adds that what is needed is that social demands be good for everyone alike. Baier insists that "...only social requirements which are just, that is, for the good of everyone alike, provide adequate self-anchored reasons for everyone to accept the social requirements of overriding reasons."[87]

Baier then goes on to insist that "We should be moral because being moral is following rules designed to overrule reasons of self-interest whenever it is in the interest of everyone alike that such rules should be generally followed."[88] "The very raison d'etre of morality is to yield reasons which overrule the reasons of self-interest in those cases when everyone's following self-interest would be harmful to everyone. Hence moral reasons are superior to all others."[89] Thus, an individual egoist, together with the other agents, on Baier's theory, will inevitably come to adopt

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[85]K. Baier (1978), p. 244.

[86]K. Nielsen (1985), p. 217.

[87]K. Baier (1978), p. 246.

[88]K. Baier (1968), p. 163.

[89]ibid., p. 159.

the moral point of view as his best response to the difficulties arising from the Prisoner's Dilemma.

The main thrust of Baier's contention is found in the assertion that a rational egoist, in Prisoner's-Dilemma situations, would want a social order utilizing coordinative guidelines. He proceeds to argue that the egoist would want, or would come to want to follow those guidelines even in circumstances in which following them did not constitute his best reply to what others may, or may not be doing. "Any egoist, if he were rational, would come to regard such nonegoistic principles to be the supreme principles of practical reason."[90] The reason for this claim stems from Baier's conviction that the coordinative guidelines are sound. This means that "everybody subject to these guidelines have adequate reason to regard them as paramount practical reasons."[91]

Baier's insistence on the individual egoist's preference for moral reasons in view of the Prisoner's Dilemma sounds promising for the proponents of the convergence theory. However, even if the agent could be persuaded to adopt moral reasons, these would be justified by an appeal to self-interest. This is exactly what the divergence theorist rejects as a possibility. Morality, on this latter view, must not be justified by reference to an agent's self-interest.

The individual egoist, whose stance we are examining in the light of Baier's argument, is committed to the policy of the maximization of his self-interest. If Baier is correct, the amoralist could avoid falling into disrepute on account of only suboptimal utility maximization, in the Prisoner's Dilemma type of situations, by abandoning his position in favour of morality. Everyone would be better off if all agents subscribed to morality. Does Baier's answer save the amoralist's position from falling into incoherence on account of its suboptimal gains in utility? Is the amoralist not rational in acting morally rather than self-interestedly?

What Baier has shown is that from the moral point of view it is rational to do what is for the benefit of all agents alike. "Baier may have established", Nielsen points out, "that it is rational to have a sound system of moral practices and irrational not to have one, but he has not shown that a person who acts immorally necessarily acts irrationally or indeed in any way acts with diminished rationality."[92] Nielsen goes on to say that:

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[90]K. Nielsen (1985), pp. 216-7.

[91]ibid., p. 217.

[92]ibid., p. 220.

> ...if the social choice (a choice that involves considering everyone in the society) is between a system governed by the principle of self-anchored egoism and a system governed by coordinative guidelines, the latter system is clearly preferable, that is, the better social alternative, the better system to see instantiated in society, for such a social acceptance of the former would have suboptimal results. But that does not establish that an individual's acting immorally in certain determinate situations must be, or even is, contrary to reason.[93]

From the individual egoist's point of view, it would be rational to want everybody to follow morality, without necessarily wanting himself to follow it. As the utility payoffs of Prisoner's Dilemma demonstrate, the amoralist's utility would be maximized if everyone else acted morally while he retained his initial commitments. Once everyone's commitment to morality was secured, the amoralist would be irrational in not quietly opting out of it.

At this juncture, we must fall back on Nielsen's claim denying that there is anything properly called "the point of view of reason."[94] "Instead, we can only properly speak of what it is rational to do from a particular point of view."[95] It is indeed true, in a trivial sense, that from the moral point of view, no single point of view must guide our considerations of overriding reasons. However, it is also trivially correct to say, Nielsen claims, that from the self-interested viewpoint, reasons of self-interest are overriding.

The option of urging the individual egoist to act from moral reasons is not open to us on Nielsen's account.[96] The reason for this lies in the slightly different question which such an appeal attempts to answer. Nielsen recognizes that

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[93]ibid., pp. 221-2.

[94]ibid., p. 222.

[95]ibid., p. 222.

[96]Nielsen discusses this option in response to K. Baier's claims in K. Nielsen (1963), p. 757. A similar point is made in Nielsen's critique of A. Gewirth's theory. This debate is conducted in the context of 'rights'. Nielsen, generally speaking, denies that the amoralist, by the very nature of his use of the concept of agency must extend the rights of freedom and well-being to all other agents. See K. Nielsen (1978).

the contention promoting the good of everyone alike is valid. "In morality we are concerned with what is right, what is good and what is supported by the best reasons."[97] "Best reasons", in this case meaning, "what is the best thing to do for all concerned."[98]

However, the validity of the moral viewpoint is conditional. When the question which we are trying to answer asks "Why should we be moral?", the answer stated in terms of the pursuit of the suboptimal measure of utility by all agents, makes perfect sense. If everyone acts from self-interested reasons, everyone's utility gains will be compromised. In order to avoid this unpleasant consequence, we ought to opt for the moral reasons for action. In so acting, everyone's utility will be optimized. Having said this, we must note that this answer does not help us with our query. The question before us, as it is posed by the amoralist, asks: "Why should I be moral?" To claim that I ought to act on the principle which fails to maximize my utility is to compromise what it is rational for me to do from my self-interested point of view.

Or so it appears. But the Prisoner's Dilemma shows that following the policy of straightforwardly maximizing expected utility can prevent us from exploiting cooperative strategies that would make us better off. That policy leads to each prisoner's third-best payoff, the payoff from not cooperating. Acting exclusively from reasons of self-interest, as defined by straightforward maximization of expected utility, prevents them from receiving their second-best cooperative payoff. (The other "player's" rationality keeps you from receiving your first-best payoff, in which he cooperates (remains silent, etc.) but you don't.) This does not mean that straightforward maximization is irrational, since it may be the best you can do, given what it is rational to expect the other to do.

But the Prisoner's Dilemma reveals a potential rift between self-interest and straightforward maximization. The rift has been explored by David Gauthier, who has shown that[99], in repeated or iterated Prisoners' Dilemmas, an agent can do better by eschewing opportunities for straightforward maximization, in order to gain the trust of those who are similarly willing to constrain their maximization now, in order to cooperate in mutually beneficial enterprises later on. Constrained maximizers in Gauthier's sense sometimes act from 'moral' reasons rather than self-interested ones, and in

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[97]K. Nielsen (1968), p. 757.

[98]Ibid., p. 757.

[99]D. Gauthier (1986).

so doing they serve their interests better than those who simply act from self-interest.

So egoism as it is understood in this essay, as acting on reasons of self-interest (see page 2 of this thesis), is irrational even by the egoist's measure of self-interest, at least when PD-like situations are not isolated from future prospects of cooperation.

However, and here we arrive at a very different criticism of egoism, the convergence moral rationalist can reject the measure of self-interest, and Nozick has shown how this rejection could render it rational to make the moral or cooperative choice even in the classical one-shot Prisoners' Dilemma, in which there is no prospect of future cooperation to influence the prisoners' choices. If the moral choice has high symbolic utility for the agent, Nozick recommends, this utility should be incorporated into the agent's reasoning about which choice maximizes utility of him in the Prisoner's Dilemma. Nozick suggests the following way of incorporating symbolic utility into PD reasoning.[100]

> If an act symbolizes "being a cooperative person," it will have the meaning not simply because it has the two possible payoffs it does but also because it occupies a particular position within the two-persons matrix - that is, being a dominated action that (when joined with the other person's dominated action) yields a higher payoff to each than does the combination of the dominant actions...An act's symbolic value may depend upon the whole decision or game matrix.[101]

In this way, the symbolic value of being a "cooperative person" may tip the scales for an individual egoist in favour of acting morally. This, of course will depend on what matters to a person. Someone else may argue, in contrast to the convergence moral rationalist, that what has symbolic value for them is to be rational person, not swayed by moral sentiments or talk of cooperation. Finally, all this talk of narrowing the gap between morality and self-interest will be of no use to the divergence moral theorist.

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[100]The distinction between single-shot PDs and multi-shot PDs, and the way in which they affect Gauthier's and Nozick's treatment of the rationality of a straighforward maximizers, was brought to my attention by Dr. Cooper.

[101]R. Nozick (1993), p. 55.

INDIVIDUAL EGOIST: A SINGLE RATIONAL ENTITY OPTION

The second possible alternative which we need to probe is concealed in the claim that the possible solution to the unwelcome implications of the Prisoner's Dilemma could be found in limiting the adoption of the amoralist stance to a solitary individual. The dilemma, in the previously depicted picture, stemmed from the structure of utility payoffs of our game. If both players opt for the self-interested reasons for action, the utility of both will be diminished. However, if only one of the two players were allowed to adopt individual egoism as his policy for living, with the other following morality, the dilemma would be avoided. It is this intention which underlies the hope that the amoralist has in adopting the self-interested viewpoint.

Morality, and its adoption, entails a dual pursuit. The first is that, the agent embracing morality, in order to be a truly moral person, must internalize the moral code. He must, in the words of Beehler, "...[be] concerned to do what it is right to do...The good man acts out of a regard for what is good or right to do."[102] A moral person will "love what is right", which means that it will matter to him that he did right. Unless this is the case, we could not distinguish between a moral man and a man acting morally. Thus, it is the task of the agent promoting morality to wish for those adopting it to internalize its code.

The other pursuit stemming from the adoption of morality is its promulgation. This is the external aspect of the agent's commitment to morality. A person adopting a moral code as his own would not only like to make it his very own by internalizing it, but also would like to encourage others to follow it. "Morality is social..."[103] as Narveson points out, and this consists in "...one's participation in the social reinforcement of the behavioral tendencies in question: praising and blaming in such a way as to stimulate the relevant behaviour in the persons at whom these activities are aimed..."[104]

It has been argued that in order to hold a coherent position, the egoist, benefitting from the exclusive pursuit of the self-interested mode of living, must engage in a two-fold practice. On the one hand, he must encourage the internalization of morality in all agents. He must also

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[102]R. Beehler (1972b), p. 13.

[103]J. Narveson (1985), p. 235.

[104]ibid., p. 241.

promulgate morality to encourage others in its adoption. On the other hand, he must try to avoid either promulgating his own self-interested stance or wishing for morality to be internalized by him. He must want to remain undetected in his egoistic pursuits, while urging everyone else to adopt morality as the sole way of living. Nielsen recognizes the need for the amoralist to engage in this two-fold process. He claims that:

> ...an intelligent individual egoist will not go around proclaiming that everyone should only look after himself. He may, if he is so inclined, pass on his insight to his family and some close friends, but he will not try to become an ethical egoist or try to base conventional morality on egoism. This would be the very epitome of foolishness. In certain contexts, he may even find it expedient to mouth "the high-minded pomposities" of this morning's editorial. Such behaviour, so to say, gives him good press. But he has decided to act on the personal principle: Always look after yourself and no one else, unless looking after someone else will benefit you.[105]

It ought to be apparent, that if the egoist succeeds in both ventures, he will maximize his utility. The highest utility payoffs for the egoist, in the Prisoner's Dilemma, were generated in cases when all agents acted morally with the exception of the egoist himself. This practice undoubtedly favours the egoist from his own self-interested point of view. However, from the point of view of the other agents' maximizing their own utility, the egoist ought to be restrained in his pursuits, as those are detrimental to the maximization of their overall utility.

It is at this juncture that the amoralist has often been accused of hypocrisy and inconsistency. G.R. Carlson is an avid exponent of this alleged inconsistency, while J. Kalin argues for the impeccable coherence of the egoist position. The difficulty for the egoist stems from the opposite nature of his practice with regard to himself and with regard to others. The individual egoist can neither consistently recommend his own principle to be internalized by everyone else, nor does he wish to promulgate it. While he wishes to remain solely self-interested, he is simultaneously geared toward trying to get the others to adopt morality. It is this alleged egoistic schizophrenia that I wish to examine next.

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[105]K. Nielsen (1963), pp. 749-50.

J. Kalin argues for the consistency of the egoist's position. The individual egoist is perfectly consistent in retaining his stance for himself alone without wishing that anyone else follows suit. Kalin contends that the egoistic principle stated as follows: "(X) (Y) (X ought to do Y if and only if Y is in X's overall self-interest)," may be adopted by the egoist in its weak sense. In such a case, the egoist is not required to either promulgate it, or to desire or want others to adopt it.[106] This position is strengthened by Kalin's analogy of competitive games. The analogy is intended to demonstrate that the egoist, for the sake of logical consistency, may believe that other agents ought to pursue their individual self-interests to the exclusion of his interests, however, he does not need to want them to do so. Kalin probes the following scenario:

> But does believing that A ought to do Y commit one to wanting A to do Y? Surely not. This is made clear by the analogy with competitive games. Team A has no difficulty in believing that team B ought to make or to try to make a field goal while not wanting team B to succeed, while hoping that team B fails, and, indeed, while trying to prevent team B's success. Or consider this example: I may see how my chess opponent can put my king in check. This is how he ought to move. But believing that he ought to move his bishop and check my king does not commit me to wanting him to do that, nor to persuading him to do so. What I ought to do is sit there quietly, hoping he does not move as he ought.[107]

If the analogy is successful and does its job, as Kalin intends, it will not be correct to insist that the egoist is inconsistent in his attitude toward his own pursuits and those of other potential egoists. An egoist can secretly adopt the egoistic axiom, firmly believing that others are entitled to the same, without actually wanting them to adopt it or promulgating his chosen position. The egoist knows very well that his success in the pursuit of the self-interested ends, to the exclusion of other agent's concerns, hinges on the existence of moral institutions. He is consistent in his belief that others should abandon morality in favour of egoism, yet, he, in fact, does not want them to do so. The

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[106]G. Carlson (1973), p. 27.

[107]J. Kalin In Defense of Egoism, in D. Gauthier (1970), (editor), Morality and Rational Self-Interest, pp. 73-4.

egoist does not need to universalize his principle in a strong sense, but only in a weak one.

Carlson rejects the correctness of the analogy and Kalin's defence of the egoist's logical consistency. The difficulty with the analogy, Carlson points out, is found in its lack of proper distinction between winning a game and trying to win it. The distinction is "... between what ought to be done, if the game is to be won (according to the rules) and what one participant in the game believes the other ought to do in fact."[108] Carlson proceed to apply the distinction to the analogy when he argues that:

> ...team A is justified in believing that team B ought to make or try to make a field goal, while not wanting them to succeed at it, forgetting that A's not wanting B to succeed at scoring a goal logically presupposes that A believes B's attempt to try at scoring a goal ought to fail. But then surely (as against Kalin) A does not believe that B ought to make a field goal, or that B ought to win the contest; only (as is normally the case in fact) that B ought to try to do so, and Kalin is therefore unjustified in conflating two very different beliefs, that is, A's belief in what B ought to accomplish and A's belief in what B ought to try to accomplish.[109]

The force of Carlson's objection to Kalin's analogy comes in the distinction between the two logically independent beliefs. The distinction is between wanting the opponent to win the game, and wanting him to try to win it. When applied to egoism, the counterexample is designed to demonstrate that the egoist, in adopting his exclusively self-interested point of view, does not really want other egoists to succeed in their self-interested pursuits. He may consistently believe that they should try, without believing that they should be successful in their practice. While he cannot consistently wish for them to be successful, he nonetheless, wishes such a success in his own undertakings. In this sense then, the egoist exhibits imbalance in his treatment of himself and others. He applies one standard for himself and the different one in his convictions pertaining to other egoistic agents.

If Carlson's argument is correct, what implications will his conclusion have on the position put forth by Nielsen? What is of paramount importance to note, is that the discussion of the apparent inconsistency of the egoist's

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[108]G. Carlson (1973), p. 27.

[109]G. Carlson (1973), pp. 27-8.

beliefs with regard to himself and others, while fatal for a universal egoist, does not affect the stance of an individual egoist. The difficulty for an egoist stems from his subscription to the weak universalizability propounded by Kalin. The egoist, in our example, while not wishing for his egoistic principle to be restricted to his own person, failed on account of his inconsistent beliefs with regard to himself and others. Carlson insists that:

> ...the weak sense of universalizability turn out not to be a legitimate case of universalizability at all...universal egoist not only wants two different things for himself and others, but believes that two different states of affairs ought to obtain with respect to each...[110]

It is at this point that Nielsen's insistence on the intelligibility of egoism in the form of individual egoism over its universal formulation gains greater momentum. The strength of individual egoism, as compared to its universal counterpart, stems from its individualistic emphasis. In this account, the individual egoist refuses to legislate his stance for anyone else. His position is not universalizable in a sense in which universal egoism intends to extend its principle to all agents. In this sense, the charges brought against Kalin's universal egoist will not apply to an individual egoist.

An individual egoist is consistent in his adherence to the self-interested course of action while maintaining silence on what others ought to do. There is no inconsistency in his silent subscription to the exclusive promotion of his own self-interest while outwardly promulgating morality. The sole principle guiding such behaviour derives from the agent's commitment to the promotion of his own, individual self-interest or maximization of his own utility. All other reasons and considerations have instrumental value to this single, intrinsic pursuit.

The issue underlying the above debate rests on the question whether the self-interested policy of an amoralist must be universalizable in a strong sense? It would have to be if the agent reasoned from the agent-neutral point of view. However, what Nielsen argues, is that an individual egoist is questioning the necessity of his adopting the moral rather than the amoral point of view. This view is echoed by R.M. Hare who restricts prescriptivity and universalizability to the realm of moral discourse. Hare claims that: "It would thus be perfectly consistent for someone to admit that he was a purposive agent, and therefore bound to assent to singular

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[110]G. Carlson (1973), p. 28.

prescriptions ...which [are] not universalizable...to refrain from prescribing universally..."[111]

Individual egoism, as Nielsen contends, is not a moral theory. It is a rational policy for living, without the pretension of legislating its principles for every rational agent. This apparent lack of interest in legislating for everyone enables an individual egoist to escape the charges of inconsistency to the extent to which his principles for living ought not to apply to others. Universal egoism, which has been put forth as a rival moral theory, falls prey to just this charge. It is inconsistent when universalized. The individual egoist, following a path of exclusive self-interest, on the other hand, can be quite consistent in both concealing his own egoistic policy for living, while urging others to retain morality. There is no contradiction in his behaviour or beliefs judged from his own point of view. In this sense then, the individual egoist would seem to avoid the unwelcome consequences of the Prisoner's Dilemma.

This last sentence, of course, ought to be taken with qualification. An amoralist, while consistent in quietly following his self-interested policy, cannot guarantee that others will not detect his stance. He may be very good at disguising his true, self-interested identity. However, the other agents will most probably be as good at detecting those who prey on the moral system. As a matter of fact, human beings seem to have developed a strong sense for recognizing amoralists in the crowd. This fact certainly stands at the foundation of the problem for the amoralists in our midst.

In many instances, an individual egoist may outmanoeuvre the system and its checks. Yet, there is no guarantee for him that his strategy will remain concealed. The penalties and disadvantages, in a case where his commitments are discovered, would most certainly outweigh the self-interested gains. Thus, while an amoralist can remain silent on the duty of others, and is not obliged to extend his self-interested policy to them, he must consider the possibilities of being exposed and the loss of utility associated with it. The individual egoist, committed to the rationality of the "half-way house"[112], can quite consistently pursue the policy of the maximization of his own utility to the utter disregard or detriment of other agents' utility. The accusation of inconsistency with regard to the individual egoist makes sense solely when made from the point of view of morality. However, the amoralist is not acting from a moral but rather self-interested point of view. When viewed from this latter

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[111]R. Hare (1978), p. 56, parenthesis added.

[112]Terminology introduced by K. Baier (1978), pp. 231-256.

viewpoint, he is justified in pursuing the chosen policy of advancing his individual utility.

There does not appear to be anything in the principle of individual egoism that requires the egoist to extend his self-interested policy toward any other agent. The individual egoist does not have to be concerned with universalizing his principle. The inconsistency in beliefs toward his own stance and that of the others does not really carry much weight against him. He does not have a commitment to sincerity. Sincerity is a quality demanded in a person by morality. An amoralist does not subscribe to morality. However, there is a query which still persists. The principle of universalizability seems to be foundational to the concept of rationality. If an individual egoist does not have to universalize his principle in a strong sense, can his position retain its claim to rationality?

The notion of "universalizability", in its strong sense, insists that an agent legislating for himself must will that his principle be also applicable to any other agent in similar circumstances. An amoralist, following the policy of individual self-interest, does not will that his principle extend to any other agents. While an amoralist may not object to the universalizability of the maxim "I ought to maximize my own utility", he will not want the maxim "I want me to do what I ought to do" to be universalized. That is, he does not want others to want to do what they ought to do.[113]

He does not need to either declare his position, or urge others to follow it. He remains silent as to the course of action which other agents ought to follow, hoping that the others will not adopt a stance similar to his own. In this case, our amoralist need not be excessively concerned about the adoption of his principle by those with whom he will not be cooperating. Instead, his concern focuses on those around him with whom he will be engaged in interpersonal interaction.[114]

What we ought to examine next, is whether this 'quiet pursuit' will prevent the Prisoner's Dilemma from arising? If it will, the amoralist's stance will be rendered rational. Is the amoralist's concealed inward pursuit, coupled with his outward promulgation of morality, sufficient to ensure that he will be the sole utility maximizer? If he can ensure that his policy of individual egoism will be available to him alone, or that others will never catch on to his scheme, he will maximize his utility. If he is found out, or others are able

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[113]The point of the two different formulations of a maxim was suggested to me by Dr. W. Cooper.

[114]This last exception has been suggested to me by Dr. W. Cooper.

to subscribe to the same principle, his utility maximization will be jeopardized.

There are two issues here that need further clarification. First, there is the question of the practical application of the amoralist's scheme. If an amoralist can hide his true intentions from others while persuading them to act morally, he will maximize his utility in a straightforward fashion. As has been mentioned earlier, this two-faced posture will be difficult to sustain in view of other agents' scrutiny. Nielsen's argument does not guarantee that a self-interested person can accomplish his scheme successfully in practice. However, this ought not to prevent us from examining those situations in which the agent succeeds at concealing his true identity. The discrepancy between theory and practice gives rise to the most common hazard in philosophizing. The question of the practical application of the theory cannot prevent us from deliberating on the truth of a theory.

The second issue has to do with the rational grounds for limiting the adoption of the amoralist's stance to the self-interested agent alone. In what way can the individual egoist restrict the policy of exclusive self-interest to his own person, barring all others from its adoption? Are there any rational grounds for the amoralist to believe that he alone is entitled to his self-interested dictum? What grounds would these be?

In the debate between Baier and Nielsen arising from the consideration of Prisoner's Dilemma and alluded to earlier, we have been presented with three options: (A) the situation where everyone acts on the Principle of Self-Anchored egoism, (B) the situation in which everyone acts on Self-Anchored reasons, opting for moral reasons in situations when those reasons conflict, and, (C) the situation in which everyone but the egoist acts on moral reasons which override the Self-Anchored reasons whenever those conflict.[115]

Nielsen agrees with Baier that if the only options available to the egoist are (A) and (B) then the egoist will do best by subscribing to the latter option. Baier insists that "external enforcement mechanisms, " like the Hobbesian Sovereign, would be unreliable in getting the egoist to opt for B. A person ought to be socialized in order to internalize the moral principles, thus rendering those not only overriding, but also, adhered to voluntarily.

Nielsen's disagreement with Baier stems from his demand for a reason for ruling out the option (C). Nielsen agrees with Baier that the egoist would not wish the socialization to be withheld from him for fear of giving away his position. However, he argues that the egoist may consistently wish for the process not to succeed in his case. Nielsen insists that

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[115]R. Lippke (1987), pp. 516-7.

the egoist is by no means irrational in his commitment to the viability of the option (C). After all, if the individual egoist could be assured that all agents will act morally, his overall utility gain in acting self-interestedly will be maximized.[116]

The essential question underlying this debate may be reduced to the query of whether there are any reasons for the amoralist to claim that he alone is entitled to adopt the self-interested stance? What grounds are there for arguing that while the individual egoist is justified in subscribing to reasons of self-interest, other agents ought to either remain committed to morality, or be unable to adopt the self-interested position? What reasons are there for limiting the adoption of the amoralist's stance to one, single individual?

An egoistic agent is alleged to be a rational person. As such, in Carlson's account of rationality, he must stipulate some difference on the basis of which he would prefer his own perspective to that of everyone else. The individual egoist, in order to prevent others from following in his footsteps, must provide a reason for delimiting his standpoint to his own case alone. As Nielsen describes him, he is committed to acting on reasons. Therefore, the request for a reason in limiting his stance to himself, if the amoralist is to remain a rational person, ought to be answered by him.

R.L. Lippke suggests the following scheme for the formulation of the egoist claim which distinguishes between himself and others:

"E's preference that p and that not q is rational only if E has a justified belief that p and q significantly differ."[117]

What this principle asserts is that a person's preference for one thing over another is rational only to the extent to which a person has a justified belief that the two significantly differ. We ought to leave the question of "justified belief" unanalyzed. In the context of our inquiry then, "...p is 'that E take up the perspective of E's interests,' and q is 'that E take the perspective of F's or G's or H's,' where F,G and H, are other persons."[118] The individual egoist, in this context, must have some reason for giving his own viewpoint preference over the other viewpoints.

In the context of the Prisoner's Dilemma, in which the difficulties of the individual egoist's rationality originate, Baier points to the apparent lack of difference among the

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[116]The outline of the debate between Baier and Nielsen is based on its treatment in R. Lippke (1987), pp. 516-18.

[117]R. Lippke (1987), p. 519.

[118]R. Lippke (1987), p. 519.

agents. This is certainly not to say that there exist no distinctions between individuals. There are many ways in which the amoralist will differ from the other agents. Yet, those do not seem to affect a person's status as interdependent on what others may do in the Prisoner's Dilemma situations.

However, there are a number of features of persons which are quite general. One of the most preeminent features characterizing all persons is their vulnerability. No agent can claim to be exempt from dependency on what others choose to do. No person possesses a Gyge's ring by means of which he could escape the consequences of the actions of others. The presence of other distinguishing features or characteristics, as Baier contends, will have little, if any, bearing on the dynamics of the Prisoner's Dilemma kind of situations. The vulnerability of people to those around them, assuming all follow a self-interested policy for living, will inevitably lead to disastrous consequences for all.

If Baier is correct, and we can argue that the egoist does not significantly differs from others in the respects relevant to the dilemma, how can we insist that he ought to adhere to his own perspective while preventing others from doing likewise? The lack of difference between the agents rests on an empirical claim noting the absence of such a difference. There may be many idiosyncratic features which point to the differences between various individuals. However, those remain insignificant given Baier's logic. Since there are no appreciable differences between the egoist and other persons, a thoroughly rational person, which the egoist claims to be, is not rationally justified in preferring his own point of view to that of the other agents.[119]

Baier's claim is echoed by Carlson who insists that:

> Since the specificity of reference is not generated by any relevant descriptive difference, however, there is ex hypothesi no ground or reason or rationale provided to legitimate the restriction of generality. There is rather blatant egoistic motive for the restriction (no one is contesting that); it is not the sort of motive, however, that can rationally justify the claim of special rights, because it is logically prevented from functioning as a reason. What prevents it from so functioning is the total reliance on the motives relation to one specific agent, independently of any descriptive feature in it which could bear a (logical) relevance to the

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[119]R. Lippke (1987), pp. 520-1.

> claim of special rights...it follows that the motive in question is not a rational one.[120]

We ought to point out that Carlson's "rights" may not be what the amoralist claims for himself. An amoralist, being who he is, would most probably be sceptical about the talk of "special rights", or "rights" at all. Nonetheless, the emphasis of Carlson's talk of "rights" could be shifted toward the meaning of "a privileged position", a special status which while available to the amoralist, may not be accessible to others.

But is the refutation of the exclusivity of the amoralist's stance so conclusive after all? Are there no grounds on which the above claims can be disputed?

An individual egoist may reply to both Baier and Carlson that he rejects the above view of practical rationality. He is committed to the dictum of utility maximization. What follows from this principle for him is that he ought to continue to pursue his own well-being exclusively. After all, he is committed to maximizing his own utility and his desire to remain unmoved by the claims of others springs directly from this commitment. An individual egoist does not have to accept the above view of rationality.[121]

However, there are other objections which could be brought against the contentions propounded by Carlson and Baier. First, it could be argued that the difference between the perspective of the individual egoist and that of another agent consists in it being just that, <u>the perspective of that specific, individual agent.</u> According to this claim, Tom's perspective is Tom's and in this way it cannot be Mike's perspective. It is precisely because these two agents are two distinct people that their claims are justified in their exclusivity. However, we ought to note that this contention does not extend far beyond simply <u>naming</u>[122] the perspectives. While the perspectives are identifiable by their being attributed to the particular persons, we are told nothing of the bases for such a differentiation.

Second, it could be objected that "...it is "only natural" for persons to prefer to take up the perspective of their own interest."[123]This argument echoes a previously outlined contention connecting the agent's preferences with what is rational for him to pursue. In this case again, the connection between this claim and rationality is severed by

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[120]G. Carlson (1973), p. 30.

[121]I am indebted for this point to Dr. W. Cooper.

[122]R. Lippke (1987), p. 522.

[123]ibid., p. 523.

the ambiguity of the meaning of "natural". In this context, "natural" "...cannot mean something like "morally right" or even "justified." The latter begs the question, and the former is anathema to the egoist."[124] However, "only natural", in this context, could echo an individual egoist's previous claim which refuses to provide any further justification for his choice of position. He may retort that his stance is in need of no further justification.[125]

Even if the agent can successfully claim to have a superior knowledge of what satisfies him or pleases him most, that in itself does not lead to the conclusion of a significant difference between his perspective and those of others. It is Baier's contention that a person making the preceding claim would, if he ever adopted other people's perspectives, find them strikingly similar to his own. Thus, no appreciable difference exists between the perspective of the egoist and those of others.[126]

Third, the egoist, instead of defending his position, may go on the offensive and argue that the onus of proof, or the burden of conviction, is on the person who rejects the egoist stance. Nielsen, for instance, declares that the individual egoist is in exactly this position. He acknowledges the strength of the moral demands, or the correctness of the agent-neutral point of view. What he wants to know is what reason does he have to abandon his agent-relative perspective? After all, he is self-interested and looks at things from the agent-relative viewpoint. Why should he commit himself to abandoning it in favour of the agent-neutral perspective? If the above arguments indeed vindicate the claim that all perspectives are similar in regard to their rationality, why should the individual egoist abandon his position in favour of any other? As the argument continues "...I cannot offer the egoist a rational reason to abandon the perspective of his own interest."[127]

In the end, it appears dubious whether the amoralist would accept Lippke's suggestion of "significant difference principle." There is nothing in the nature of practical rationality which the amoralist subscribes to which would force him to follow Lippke's principle. In this way, the amoralist does not need to worry about the justification of his exclusive stance. Lippke's principle appears to have judicial overtones, much in the same way in which the dictum

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[124]ibid., p. 522.

[125]This possibility was suggested by Dr. W. Cooper.

[126]R. Lippke (1987), p. 523. A similar point is made by J. Brunton (1956), p. 292.

[127]R. Lippke (1987), p. 522.

"treat like cases alike" stands at the core of judicial procedure. However, whether a rational individual has to qualify as a judge of this kind must be argued for rather than assumed.

Are there any other objections which could save the day for the individual egoist's claim? We ought to keep in mind that our considerations stem from the troublesome implications of the Prisoner's Dilemma. The intent of our argument in disposing of these difficulties was to limit the amoralist's stance to a single individual, while preserving others' commitment to morality. If there are no appreciable differences between the agents in our picture, the goal of our intent is frustrated. In the same way in which our egoist claims to look at life from his own, individual agent-relative point of view, other agents are uninhibited to follow a similar policy. Each agent is free to adopt the self-interested course of action. However, as long as the individual egoist is not the only one to follow the policy of the exclusive advancement of his personal ends, within his community of interaction, his overall utility will be diminished. In this sense, unless he can preserve his solitude in egoism, he will not be rational in subscribing to self-interest.

The egoist may admit that there are no relevant descriptive or empirical differences between himself and others. However, since his success in developing a policy for life hinges on having "...the field to himself", he may, in spite of the failure of the preceding arguments, insist that there is something that sets him apart from all other agents. Following J.A. Brunton's contention, the egoist may opt for a defence of the peculiar claim that "I am I". Brunton argues that the Identity of Indescernibles does not apply to self-consciousness. He suggests that even if all of a person's attributes were to be substituted by some others, my "being myself" would survive such a replacement.

In his defence of this view, Brunton resorts to an analogy of pain. Whenever a person is hurt, independent of the attitude which he may take toward his pain, the instantiation of the pain is of some importance. It matters whether the pain is mine or someone else's. This, in itself, however, does not qualify one for a special treatment among other agents. What is important in the analogy is that there is a special relationship between A and his pain and B and his pain. The distinction between the two pains is not merely a matter of a spacial position. For sentient beings, the relation between their pains and themselves is unique. Thus, the tautology "I am I", points us in the direction of a distinct relation between oneself and others. "'I' and 'Thou'

cannot be elucidated entirely in terms of describable differences between individuals."[128]

It is this "otherness" of the individual egoist that entitles him, according to Brunton, to claim a special status for his claims. Since no person can choose principles for others any more than he can feel their pains, the individual egoist is justified in his agent-relative stance. Thus, "...while it is true that the egoist cannot universalize his axiom, there is nothing in the logic of the situation which compels him to do so."[129]

The analogy of pain and its special relation to the individual experiencing it, reflects Brunton's conviction that a similar relation may be established between the individual egoist and his interests. "...I ought to do X, because I am I, and it is in my interest to do X." The correspondence which Brunton seeks to establish is between the logic of interests and the logic of feeling states.[130] The question before us is whether this analogy will do its work for Brunton? Will this analogy vindicate Brunton, and indirectly Nielsen's, individualistic axiom of the amoralist's stance?

There are three considerations which Carlson brings against Brunton's analogy. These considerations point toward dissimilarities between interests as "private" or indicative of "mere otherness" and the feeling states.[131]

First, interests in contrast to feeling states can be shared. It is correct to argue that my pain is mine and no other person can experience it. I can communicate the extent of my toothache to someone else, I can describe it, moan or cry. And while he sympathizes with me, he cannot hold my pain in common with me. Interests, on the other hand, can be shared among individuals. There can be any number of people holding some mutual interest. 'The locution "a community of interest" is well-formed; the locution "a community of pains," malformed.'

That is not to say that people cannot have the same "kind" of pain. Whenever we have a toothache, our pain is not much different in type from the pain of another person suffering from a toothache. In this sense, we have our pains "in common" with others. However, it still remains true that while we can have similar pains, interests and sharing interests differs significantly from pains and sharing pains.

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[128]J. Brunton (1956), p. 296.

[129]G. Carlson (1973), p. 31.

[130]ibid., p. 31.

[131]ibid., p. 31.

The reason for this springs from the fact that interests have an object, while pains lack it entirely.[132]

Second, interests of various individuals can and do conflict. This follows from the fact that interests have an object at which they aim. An attempt by two or more agents to obtain a single object will lead to a conflict in interests. Furthermore, a person may have conflicting interests. He may desire two goods which cannot be obtained simultaneously or without forfeiting one of them. The same cannot be said about pains. People's pains cannot be said to conflict. Neither can they have conflicting pains.[133]

The third difference has to do with the matter of the assessment of one's interests and pains.[134] Interests can be assessed quite well from our own point of view. However, often we will discover that another person, somewhat removed from our point of reference, can be a better judge of our interests. A parent is better equipped to judge the interests of a child, even though the child may insist that he knows better. This is quite unlike the casein the context of pains. Any individual is as good a judge of his own pains as any other person would be. To be sure, it could be stipulated that each person is a much better judge of his own pains than an outsider. In conclusion then, Carlson urges that:

> ...the disparities between interests and feeling states or "personal experiences" make appeal to the latter irrelevant with respect to any attempt...to vindicate rationally the individualistic axiom by reference to the so-called "mere otherness" of each agent.[135]

The contention then is that the chasm between interest states and feeling states is not sufficiently broad to defeat the claim of the egoist who restricts his individualistic axiom to his own person. It could still be aruged that the "mere otherness" fails to provide ground for such a restriction. However, to this we could retort that every person is "merely other." ""Mere otherness" tendered as an excepting condition is therefore reiterable with respect to all agents... which is to say that it is no excepting condition at all."[136] Thus, by pointing to the feature of

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[132]ibid., p. 31.

[133]ibid., p. 32.

[134]ibid., p. 32.

[135]ibid., p. 32.

[136]ibid., p. 32.

everyone's being different from anyone else, we are pointing toward a similarity which can be appealed to by all agents. That again, is not to say that all agents have to act morally, but rather that all can adopt any standpoint they wish, depending on their individual preferences.

Our individual egoist, of course, may freely acknowledge the fact that everyone is "in the same boat". Yet, he will not want others to capitalize on this fact in the same way as he does. He will wish for them to commit themselves to morality. At the same time, under the pretension of 'being like they are', he can try to live out his self-interested policy. The practical application of his commitments will be dependent on whether the others will be able to discover his true intentions.

What implications will this discussion have for Nielsen's conviction about the rationality of the individual egoist? Does Carlson's insistence on the lack of agent-neutral reasons for the amoralist to prefer his stance over the moral one render his position irrational?

It seems that the preceding considerations pose some serious questions for the claims of amoralist rationality. If the individual egoist cannot defend his individualistic axiom by limiting the adoption of his stance to himself only, the rationality of his position will depend directly on what the other agents decide to do. However, in this scheme of things, Nielsen will be incorrect to argue that the individual egoist is rational in his self-interested stance. He may happen to be rational, providing the others subscribe to a position other than that of self-interest. Since there is nothing in Nielsen's theory to prevent all rational agents from adopting the amoralist stance, the rationality of a self-interested agent will hinge on the commitments made by the others.

CONCLUSION

The main intent of this paper was to question Nielsen's insistence on the rationality of the individual egoist. My inquiry into the rationality of an individual egoist began with a discussion of the rationality of the initial choice of a position. I agreed with Nielsen that the initial choice of either moral or amoral stance is not based on reasons. Instead, a person commits himself to a particular stance, either moral or self-interested, on the basis of his inclinations and preferences. However, if that is so, the initial choice cannot qualify as either rational or irrational. It is arational. What follows from it is that an individual egoist's rationality cannot be established on this foundation.

I then proceeded to indicate the difficulties with Nielsen's assumption rendering the justification of practical claims in terms of their relation to the agent's conations. I argued that the rationality of an amoralist position cannot be established by an appeal to the correspondence of attitudes and practical claims. This way of conceiving rationality renders it normatively empty.

Finally, when rationality was conceived in terms of maximizing the agent's utility, I have employed the Prisoner's Dilemma to demonstrate the troublesome nature of the paradox which such a conception of rationality generates for the amoralist. The attempt to prevent the dilemma from arising by either urging the individual egoist to act on the principle of suboptimal rather than maximal utility, or, by limiting the application of the egoistic principle to one individual proved fruitless. The amoralist, as portrayed by Nielsen, cannot prevent the Prisoner's Dilemma from arising. As a result, he will not be rational simply by following his self-interested course of action.

The rationality of an individual egoist will depend not only on his own commitments but also on the commitments of others. Therefore, if Nielsen's account is to provide a defensible account of the rationality of an individual egoist, it must satisfy the queries surfacing in the context of the discussion of the Prisoner's Dilemma.

The question underlying the discussion of this paper, namely: 'Whether an amoralist can be given a reason to abandon his self-interest?' must be answered by following the directions taken by the "convergence" and "divergence" notions of moral rationality. The "convergence" theorists can argue along the lines recommended by Nozick. They may try to dissuade the individual egoist from his "narrow" view of self-interest in favour of the "expanded" view. In the latter view, the agent will have a recourse to a symbolic meaning of the moral acts which in turn will have a bearing on the overall utility of his actions. The recognition of the symbolic meaning of our actions may significantly affect our calculations of utility and thus point us in the direction of morality rather than "narrow" self-interest.

However, there are two areas of difficulty with the "convergence" approach following Nozick's recommendation. First, the amoralist may reject Nozick's persuasive argument for a "broader" view of self-interest much in the way in which a psychopath will declare a complete lack of interest in expanding his personal view of self-interest. A psychopath will have no interest in anything beyond his "narrow" notion of interest. Secondly, the entire notion of "symbolic meaning", its connection to the overall notion of utility in its causal construal needs further clarification and study before it can be successfully employed against the amoralist's stance.

The "divergence" moral rationalists, on the other hand, may opt to pursue Lippke's principle of "significant difference". In following this type of inquiry, the moral rationalists, may attempt to demonstrate to the amoralist the rational bases for rejecting his exclusive self-interested stance in favour of morality. While this route remains a vital option, it also needs further clarification. As it stands, the "significant difference" principle remains inconclusive and needs further study to determine whether it can be successfully attached as a condition of rationality without begging the question against the amoralist by relying on moral or legal considerations.

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