

On a pursuit of power for its own sake

Utilitarianism obligates maximization of welfare. Since welfare is increased if world famine solved, everyone is obligated to have it solved. Some with more means is more liable for the suffering because of their higher power in making a difference; there are acts they could have performed but we could not have, and thus it is their choice not to assist. Increasing our power would have put ourselves in the position to assist, and thus utilitarianism obligates a corresponding power increase. One way is through knowledge increase; with technological advancement empowered by better research outputting more relevant knowledge, we could have performed more action in assistance. However, this instrumentalizes knowledge and power; if famine is solved by the wealthiest donating half of his money, then our corresponding reason to do research would not have been real. Consider the following illustration of the intrinsicity of power. An established businessman chooses to lead a life of asceticism as a Buddhist monk, and decides to donate all his money to charity. Consider another person who are born poor, having no choice but to live in monastery because the alternative is simply wandering on the street in starvation. Although both could have perfected Buddhism to a same level, the businessman's achievement is more praiseworthy. If power is measured with what an agent could have done, and, given an actual action, what actions he could have performed otherwise, then I understand the larger value of the businessman's achievement with the intrinsicity of power. Personal contribution is thus not only measured with its absolute impact, but also relative to the individual's power; a university student donating half of his pocket money, with however less impact in comparison with a millionaire's one percent contribution, is nevertheless a more charitable act. An exercise of one's total power in assistance of others constitutes a complete altruism. This enriches effective altruism.¹ (1692 characters)

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¹ Peter Singer. 2015. *The Most Good You Can Do: How Effective Altruism Is Changing Ideas About Living Ethically*. New Haven: Yale University Press. See also Peter Singer. 1972. Famine, Affluence, and Morality. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. 1(3):229-243.