

Consent and pricing life

- 1 Does rationing *via* prior consent mean pricing life?

1.1 Distinction

Setting a monetary value on life vs. setting a monetary value on risk/safety.

1.2 Question

Does that answer Broome's objection, that the correct time to measure how much a person values life is when it is directly threatened (p. 46)? Perhaps we should look at page 11 too.

1.3 Answer?

1. Rationing care is desirable from the individual's point of view.
2. If we valued receiving care at the time when our need for it is greatest, we would not ration care.
3. Therefore, we should not decide how much receiving care is worth to us by measuring how much it is worth to us at the time when our need for it is greatest.

Compare:

1. Stopping smoking is desirable from the individual's point of view.
2. If we valued the benefits of smoking at the time when our cravings for nicotine are strongest, we would not stop smoking.
3. Therefore, we should not decide how much stopping smoking is worth to us by measuring how much it is worth to us when our cravings for nicotine are strongest.

2 Is “consent” rational?

2.1 The problem

People won’t trade high risks to their lives for any amount of money. That seems to mean:

1. They wouldn’t trade low risks for small amounts of money either since both trades are mathematically equivalent.
2. Therefore, presumed consent can’t be used to ration care.

2.2 Menzel’s answer

Distinguish three components of decision making under uncertainty: (1) knowledge, (2) imagination, (3) attitude towards risk.

Argument for excluding observed preferences that reflect ignorance or lack of imagination/attention but for allowing apparently irrational choices based on attitudes towards risk to stand (pp. 50–1).

2.3 Empirical data

How empirical data on the implicit price people put on risk is misleading.

1. Seat belts: one time vs. lifetime risks
2. Jobs: hard to generalize. What’s typical: construction, tending bar, mining, roofing? Dangerous jobs pay low; does that mean people accept lower wages in order to put their lives at risk?