

Publication

Modulated Feelings: The Pleasurable-Ends-Model of Manipulation

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Manipulation is a significant feature in human interaction and its study is of growing importance in areas such as marketing, politics, and policy. Questions concerning the nature of manipulation have become important in recent debates in ethics and political philosophy, referred to in terms such as "nudging" and "choice architecture". But what precisely is manipulation? How does it operate? Without conceptual analysis, ethics cannot perform any critical evaluation of manipulation. We discuss and reject some recent definitions of manipulation before proposing a new analysis and suggesting a more precise use of the term "manipulation". Manipulation should be seen as a form of power where the manipulator makes it more likely that the manipulated chooses some end (action, belief etc.) but where the manipulated remains ultimately free to choose or not to choose this end. Manipulation works by actively changing the emotional attraction of certain ends or their realisation. This transformation of emotional bonds makes some options more appealing (or unappealing) to the manipulated, and thus more or less likely to be chosen. We call this the "Pleasurable-Ends-Model". We argue for the suggested model against the background of Aristotelian action theory. This theory states that human beings act either for some end which they consider good, or useful, or pleasurable. Consequently, agents can be made to act by influencing them in three fundamentally different ways: giving reasons may affect actions done for the good, economic bargaining influences actions done for utility, and manipulation affects the pleasurable ends. From this starting point, we further develop the Pleasurable-Ends-Model and elucidate its power.

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