COUNTING THE NUMBERS FAIRLY: THE EQUAL PROPORTIONAL SATISFACTION OF INCOMMENSURABLE VALUES

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In this paper I provide an interpretation of John Taurek's number insensitivity that also accounts, perhaps, for his reluctance to embrace the more ambitious and general method of pairwise comparison. (John Taurek (1977) "Should the Numbers Count?" 6 *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 293-316). I suggest that Taurek might have been worried about some of the implications of pairwise comparison for other attractive conditions for social choice like anonymity and transitivity. However, my argument shows that if Taurek is committed to anonymity and transitivity, and also (as he is reported to be) the Pareto principle and what he finds "natural" in the commensurable cardinality of utility, then he will have committed himself to following the recommendations of the very same classical utilitarianism that he finds so nonsensical.

I propose that Taurek should consider relaxing *commensurable* cardinality of utility to the sort of *incommensurable* cardinality that we observe in proportionality comparisons. This would allow him to give sense to the cardinal impact of different social decisions on individuals without committing to any impersonal cardinal significance in those decisions. I identify John Nash's famous product rule as one social decision rule that has the required informational base in incommensurable cardinality, or proportionality, although I suggest that Taurek might worry about the moral significance of a multiplicative product of utilities as much as he does about an additive summation of them. In response to that concern I suggest two other proportionality maximands, one of which, the maximax proportional satisfaction rule, seems inadequately aggregative, and another of which, the maximization of equal proportional satisfaction, seems to attend to the public significance of utility satisfaction in a more *inter*personal and less *im*personal way. I suggest that Taurek should be able to endorse the latter.

Finally I adapt the equal proportional satisfaction rule to the idea of a weighted lottery and show how the probabilities of saving the differently sized groups in a Taurek choice problem would vary under the equal proportional satisfaction lottery from those proposed under a more conventional (number sensitive) proportional chances lottery. Generally, the probabilities of saving the smaller number are more generous under the equal proportional satisfaction lottery, and less sensitive to variations in the numbers in the differently sized groups. As a consequence I suggest that even though the equal proportional satisfaction lottery does introduce a systematic concern for the good of saving the greater number, as well as fairness, it does so in a way that is more Taurek-friendly than other weighted lottery proposals.