

Sam Fox Krauss

Sam is a graduate student in the philosophy department at the University of Texas at Austin.

THE MORAL MARKET:

Indifference, allocative inefficiency, and the missed opportunity for moral progress

Sam Fox Krauss

--

People have legal entitlements to act in some ways that you regard as morally impermissible. And, people exercise these entitlements, nevertheless. When they do, you have at least a defeasible reason to stop them. The circumstances will dictate whether you should, and, if so, the best method: you might convince them that what they are doing is immoral; you might explain that people will dislike them if they persist; you could ask them nicely, or threaten them. Or, you could pay them.

I argue that we ought to pay people to cease behavior we believe is immoral but toward which they are morally indifferent. I argue for the creation of the *moral market*, on which people buy and sell the cessation of such behavior. Properly regulated, the market would have two significant upsides and few downsides. First, it would allow people to trade in a way that would make them better off. Second, it would bring about a moral improvement.

Of course, this is a highly speculative, academic proposal. Before designing a new market, there ought to be various tests and analyses, and experts outside of philosophy ought to weigh in.¹ I aim merely draw attention to the inefficient allocation of certain entitlements, and to offer a framework to address this problem.

The article proceeds as follows: first, I use the case of the ethical vegetarian to motivate the proposal, and articulate the positive argument for the creation of the moral market; second, I refine the proposal and set limits to the

market; third, I consider several objections, and respond; fourth, I offer two additional proposals, in the same spirit, which I hope will be more palatable for those unconvinced of the desirability of the moral market.