

PHI 202 | Precept on lectures 19 and 20

Michal Masny | 12 Nov 2020

READINGS:

Frick, J. (2015). Contractualism and Social Risk. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*.

Velleman, D. (1999). A Right to Self-Termination? *Ethics*.

RISK IN ETHICS

(1) What would you do in the following cases? Why?

Footbridge: Ann and Bob are on the railway track, in the path of an out-of-control trolley. Cat is on the footbridge above the track. You can push Cat in front of the trolley to stop it.

Opaque footbridge: Ann, Bob, and Cat are trapped in three suitcases. Two of these suitcases are on the railway track, in the path of an out-of-control trolley. The other is on the footbridge above the track. You can push the suitcase in front of the trolley to stop it.

(Poll)

CONTRACTUALISM AND SOCIAL RISK

(2) What does (i) ex ante contractualism, (ii) ex post contractualism, (iii) Frick's pluralist view say about the following cases? Is this the intuitively right verdict?

Villain 1: A villain has captured 2 children, Ann and Bob. She will either (1) cut off Ann's hand, or (2) run a lottery that gives Bob a one in a billion chance of dying. You must choose.

Villain 2: A villain has captured Ann and 10 billion other people. She will either (1) cut off Ann's hand, or (2) randomly select and kill 10 other people.

(Breakout rooms)

(3) What does Frick's view say about the following case due to Joe Horton (2017)?

Villain 3: A villain has kidnapped Ann and 10 billion other people. She will either (1) break three of Ann's fingers, or (2) randomly select another person and break four of his fingers.

VELLEMAN ON SUICIDE

(4) *Griffen*: "I understand that Velleman believes suicide may be permissible in circumstances where a person's dignity is being destroyed. However, I am still a little bit confused what a case like this would be."

(5) *Liam*: "Imagine the following scenario: I am out hiking when I fall from a cliff and find my arm trapped under a boulder. I effectively have two options - I can either saw my arm off with a pen knife and save my life (a long, painful, and laborious process), or give up and die (credit to 127 hours for the inspiration). It seems like Velleman's argument would imply that to preserve my dignity it is my duty to attempt to save myself However, surely it is against our intuitions."

(6) Suppose we grant, as Thomson does, that the fetus is a person from conception.

(i) What would a Velleman-style objection to abortion look like?

(ii) What about cases in which the mother's life or health are at stake?