

PHI 202 | Precept on lectures 3 and 4

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READINGS:

Nozick, R. (1974). The Experience Machine.

Parfit, D. (1984). Appendix G: What Makes Someone's Life Go Best.

Stocker, M. (1976). The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories.

Many of you submitted very interesting questions about the experience machine! I highly encourage everyone to read and think about them. However, since we talked about the experience machine so much during the town hall, we will focus on other issues today.

THE SCOPE OF MORAL THEORY

(1) Amanda: “Stocker seems to make some good points about allowing ourselves to care for the sake of the other person, but I was wondering how relevant it is. Should one ethical theory necessarily capture both how you should treat someone you like, and whether you should steal or murder? It made me think about what the aim of moral theories are.”

(Answer)

WELL-BEING

(2) Liam: Can it be better for someone to die or commit suicide than to continue to live? What do the three theories of well-being we discussed tell us about this? What makes our life go badly?

(Breakout rooms)

THE STRUCTURE OF CONSEQUENTIALISM

(3) What is the difference between classical utilitarianism, utilitarianism, and consequentialism?

(Whole group)

(4) The structure of consequentialism and departures from classical utilitarianism.

(Explain)

MORAL SCHIZOPHRENIA

(5) What is Stocker's dilemma for consequentialism? How is it supposed to undermine this view?

(Breakout rooms)

(6) Sean: “I found Michael Stocker's piece on moral schizophrenia to be particularly interesting. One thing that I guess I find myself confused about is the separation between motives and moral obligation within his argument. I tried to think of an example that could help me understand this difference, and ended up using utilitarian theory as the basis. In utilitarianism, an action is morally right if it maximizes positive outcomes and minimizes negative ones. If we apply this theory to say, drinking alcohol while underage, there are more negative outcomes (i.e. growth issues, legal issues) than there are positive, so it should be morally wrong to do such a thing. However, the motives of underage kids (i.e. to get drunk and have a good time) seem to undermine what is morally acceptable. Would this be an accurate example of moral schizophrenia as it applies to modern ethical theories?”

(Whole group)

(7) Railton argues that Stocker's objection misses the mark: it applies to *naïve* consequentialism but not to *sophisticated* consequentialism. What is the difference between these two views?

(Whole group)