

Phil. 1100

Notes #1: Introduction

Note: Read everything on the syllabus that was passed out on the first day of class.

I. Basic Concepts

- Two kinds of judgements/propositions:
 - *Evaluative*: Makes a positive or negative evaluation of something; says something is good, bad, right, or wrong.
 - *Descriptive*: Non-evaluative.
- *Ethics*: The branch of philosophy that studies value, or: good & bad, right & wrong. 3 sub-branches of ethics:
 1. *Ethical Theory*: Deals with general theories about what is right/wrong and good/bad. Ethical theories try to state the *general conditions* for an action to be right, for a state of affairs to be good, etc.
 2. *Applied Ethics*: Deals with more concrete issues. Ex.: Abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia.
 3. *Meta-ethics*: Deals with the nature of evaluative judgements/statements. Addresses *non-evaluative* questions *about values*.

II. Some Questions of Meta-ethics

- What does “good” mean? Can it be defined?
- Is value objective? Are there ‘moral facts’?
- How do we know what is right and wrong?
- Why do people hold the values they hold?
- What motivates people to act morally (or not)?

III. The Question of ‘Objectivity’

- **Objectivity**:
 - *Objective property*: A property which a thing has independent of observers; a property that is “in the object”, or solely dependent on the nature of the object.
 - *Subjective property*: A property which a thing has or doesn’t have, depending on the attitudes or perceptions of observers; a property that is “in the subject” (“in the eye of the beholder”).
 - *Objective truth*: A proposition that is true, and whose truth does not depend upon (beliefs, desires, or other attitudes of) observers.
 - *Subjective truth*: A proposition that is true, but whose truth depends upon (beliefs, desires, or other attitudes of) observers.
- **Moral realism** (a.k.a. “objectivism”): The view that some moral propositions are objectively true. Or: Some things have objective moral properties. Opposed to: *Anti-realism*.

IV. The Five Theories in Meta-ethics

Two forms of realism:

1. *Ethical naturalism* : Holds that (i) moral properties are 'reducible' to objective, natural properties. "Good" and other moral terms can be defined/explained in non-moral terms. (ii) Moral knowledge derives from observation.
2. *Ethical intuitionism* : Holds (i) that moral properties (at least one of them) are irreducible, (ii) that moral knowledge derives from 'moral intuition.'

Three forms of anti-realism:

3. *Moral relativism / subjectivism* : Moral statements are true or false depending upon attitudes of observers. They report people's attitudes or practices. Hence, their truth is relative to a person or group. Two common versions:
 - 3a) Individual subjectivism: Moral truths are relative to an individual.
 - 3b) Cultural relativism: Moral truths are relative to a culture.
4. *Moral skepticism / nihilism* : Moral propositions are false (or contain false presuppositions). Nothing is really right or wrong.
5. *Non-cognitive ethics* : Moral statements are neither true nor false; they do not assert genuine propositions. Instead they express feelings, or issue imperatives, or something else like that.

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Notes #2: Moral Relativism/Subjectivism

I. Basic Concepts

- Moral relativists & subjectivists hold that moral statements are statements about the attitudes of observers towards the objects of evaluation. Two common forms:
 - *Cultural Relativism*: Usually, the view that “morally good” (or “right”, or related terms) means “approved by society,” or something similar. Implies: Moral goodness is *relative to* a society.
 - *Individual Subjectivism*: The view that “morally good” (or “right”, etc.) means “approved by me (the speaker),” or something similar. Implies: Moral goodness is *relative to* an individual.
- Hence, moral facts are ‘subjective’.

II. Ruth Benedict, “Anthropology and the Abnormal”

1. ‘Normality’ is ‘culturally defined.’ What is considered normal is different in different societies. Examples:
 - The culture of paranoids in Melanesia (the Dobuans)
 - The megalomaniac culture of the Kwakiutl
2. “Morally good” just means “normal”:
“The concept of the normal is properly a variant of the concept of the good. It is that which society has approved.” (87)
3. Therefore, morality is culturally defined. However, at the end, she leaves open that there might be some minimal set of rules common to all cultures.

III. Philosophical issues raised by Benedict’s article

- a. Are there any moral beliefs that are common to all societies? Possible examples:
 - The incest taboo.
 - People (esp. parents) should care for children.
 - People should not randomly attack each other.
 - People should generally tell the truth.
 - People should generally keep promises.
- b. What is the argument for premise (2) above?
- c. Is there a reason why we should respect other cultures? Does this argument support that conclusion?

IV. Standard Objections to Subjectivism

A. The Problem of Horrible Attitudes

1. In Nazi Germany, the Nazis acted wrongly, and people like Oskar Schindler acted morally.
2. But according to cultural relativists, whatever society approves of is moral, and whatever society disapproves of is immoral.
3. In Nazi Germany, society approved of sending Jews to concentration camps, and disapproved of resisting the Nazis.
4. Therefore, according to relativists, the Nazis were being moral, and Oscar Schindler was being immoral. (From 2, 3.)

5. Relativism is false. (From 1, 4.)

B. The Problem of Fallibility

1. It is possible for me to be wrong about a moral question.
2. If individual subjectivism is true, then that's conceptually impossible.
3. Therefore, individual subjectivism is false.

Or:

1. It is possible for society to be wrong about a moral question.
2. If cultural relativism is true, then that's conceptually impossible.
3. Therefore, cultural relativism is false.

C. The Problem of Disagreement

1. If subjectivism is true, then two individuals cannot disagree about a moral question.
2. Two individuals *can* disagree about a moral question.
3. So subjectivism is false.

Or:

1. If cultural relativism is true, then people from different societies cannot disagree about a moral question.
2. People from different societies *can* disagree about a moral question.
3. So relativism is false.

D. The Problem of Arbitrariness

1. Subjectivism implies that (e.g.) wrong actions are wrong because someone disapproves of them.
2. Either this person/group has *no reason* for disapproving of those actions, or they disapprove of those actions *because they are wrong*, or they disapprove of those actions for some other reason.
3. If they have *no reason* for disapproving of an action, then their disapproval is *arbitrary*.
4. If they disapprove of an action *because it is wrong*, then it must be wrong independently of their disapproval.
5. If they disapprove of an action for some reason other than its wrongness, then their disapproval is unjustified. (They don't have a sufficient reason for disapproving.)
6. If either (a) one's disapproval of *x* is arbitrary, or (b) it is unjustified, or (c) *x* is wrong independently of one's disapproval, then it is false that *x* is wrong because one disapproves of it.
7. So subjectivism is false. (From 1-6.)

V. The Subjectivist Fallacy:

Confusing beliefs, perceptions, or other representations with reality. Example:

1. Beliefs vary from one person (culture) to another.
2. Therefore, truth is relative to a person (culture).

Suppressed premise:

- 1a. Belief = truth.

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Notes #3: Non-Cognitive Ethics

I. Non-cognitivism

- Holds that moral statements (a) lack *cognitive meaning*, and therefore (b) are neither true nor false.
- Moral statements serve some other function, such as (a) expressing emotions, or (b) giving commands.
- *Cognitive meaning* : The kind of ‘meaning’ a sentence has when the sentence says that the world is a certain way; i.e., the sentence asserts a proposition. Distinguished from:
- *Emotive meaning*: the kind of meaning a sentence has when it expresses emotions.

II. Ayer’s Argument

- A. J. Ayer is a *logical positivist*, which leads him to the argument below. Logical positivists endorse the *verification criterion of meaning*, below.
 1. *The verification criterion of meaning*: The (cognitive) meaning of a sentence is determined by the conditions under which the sentence is verified or refuted.
Corollary: A sentence that cannot be verified or refuted has no meaning.
 2. Ethical statements cannot be verified or refuted.
 3. Therefore, ethical statements are cognitively meaningless.
- What does moral discourse do, then? Answer: It has *emotive meaning*. Expresses feelings/ influences audience’s feelings. Examples/analogy:
Boo! Hurray! Yecch! Ow!
- Ayer takes a similar view about religion.

III. Consequences of Non-cognitivism

1. It does not make sense to call a moral statement ‘true’ or ‘false.’
2. It is not possible to have a moral disagreement.
3. No moral statement can have logical relations to other statements. (Corollary: There can be no arguments from or to moral statements.)
4. There are no moral *beliefs* or *judgements* (only moral *feelings*).
5. No one ever disapproves of (has a negative feeling about) something *because* it is wrong.

IV. Objection: The Frege-Geach Problem

- This objection derives from an article by Peter Geach (1965), which discusses example (6) below. Q: How to complete the following table:

<u>Normal English sentence</u>	<u>Non-cognitivist interpretation</u>
1 Abortion is wrong.	Boo on abortion! / Don't have an abortion!
2 It is false that abortion is wrong.	?? (It is false that boo on abortion?)
3 It is possible that abortion is wrong.	?? (It is possible that don't have an abortion?)
4 Sally believes that abortion is wrong.	?? (Sally believes boo on abortion?)
5 I wonder whether abortion is wrong.	?? (I wonder whether boo on abortion?)
6 If doing something is wrong, then getting your little brother to do it is also wrong.	??
7 Some actions are more wrong than others.	??
8 I hope I did the right thing.	??

- *Problem:* Non-cognitivist can't explain any of the sentences after the 1st one.
 1. If non-cognitivism were true, none of the sentences after the first one would make sense.
 2. All of those sentences do make sense.
 3. So non-cognitivism is false.

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Notes #4: Nihilism

Nihilism: A metaethical theory that holds that (positive, first-order) moral statements are generally false. Nothing is good, bad, right, or wrong.

I. Mackie's main argument:

1. Moral realism is built into the meaning of ethical discourse.
2. Moral realism is false.
3. Therefore, moral discourse, in general, is false.

Arguments for (1):

Essentially, the arguments against subjectivism and non-cognitivism.

Arguments for (2):

A. *The argument from 'queerness':* Moral properties would be utterly unlike anything else we know of in the world. E.g.:

- They are non-physical, & we can't explain them scientifically.
- They do not interact with the physical world.
- They cannot be observed or otherwise detected.

B. *The argument from relativity:*

- People disagree, esp. between cultures, on the moral 'facts.'
- Therefore, if there is a faculty of moral perception, it must be extremely unreliable.
- Therefore, if there were moral properties, we could not know of them.
- Therefore, there is no reason to believe in moral properties.

II. Why do we have moral discourse?

- *The projection theory:* we 'objectify' our own feelings & project them onto external objects.
- Moral qualities are thought of as the inevitable *causes* of and justifications for our feelings of approval/disapproval. Compare: 'disgustingness'.
- The social function of this: This enables people to (be convinced to) place moral concerns before their selfish interests. Also encourages/justifies uniformity in a society, w/ respect to the laws people follow.
- To think about (not in Mackie): How might moral thinking/discourse have evolved, biologically?
A hypothesis:
 - a) Humans have a natural tendency to believe & imitate other humans.
 - b) Moral discourse can be used for manipulating the behavior of other people.
 - c) This explains why people commonly fail to practice their own moral principles (hypocrisy).

III. An Objection to Nihilism

1. A life of joy and satisfaction is better than one of constant, excruciating agony.
2. A nuclear war would be bad.
3. You shouldn't light babies on fire just for the fun of it.
4. Therefore, at least one moral statement is true. (From 1, 2, 3.)

Assessment: The case for nihilism vs. the case against nihilism

Expanding Mackie's arguments from above:

Mackie's 1st Argument:

- 1 Moral statements imply the existence of moral properties. (Premise)
- 2 Moral properties are weird. (Premise)
- 3 If something is weird, it doesn't exist. (Premise)
- 4 Therefore, moral properties don't exist. (From 2, 3)
- 5 Therefore, moral statements are false. (From 1, 4)

Mackie's 2nd Argument:

- 1 Moral statements imply the existence of moral facts. (Premise)
- 2 People disagree a lot about the moral facts. (Premise)
- 3 If people disagree a lot about some type of thing, it doesn't exist. (Premise)
- 4 Therefore, moral facts don't exist. (From 2, 3)
- 5 Therefore, moral statements are false. (From 1, 4)

- Which premises are more plausible:

Realist Premise

You shouldn't light babies on fire just for the fun of it.

A life of joy and satisfaction is better than one of excruciating agony.

etc.

Mackie Premise

If something is weird, it doesn't exist.

If people disagree a lot about some type of thing, it doesn't exist.

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Notes #5: Ethical Naturalism & 'Objectivism'

Ethical naturalism: Any theory that claims that evaluative properties ('good', 'right', etc.) can be defined/explained in terms of objective, non-evaluative (or 'natural') properties.

- Rand & Smith put forward one form of ethical naturalism.

I. Rand & Smith's Form of Ethical Naturalism

Central thesis: x is good (for me) = x furthers my life. (The rest explains and/or defends this idea.)

Basic concepts:

- *Morality:* A code of values to guide one's choices.
- *Value:* Something one acts to gain or keep. (Distinguish: "benefit" vs. "value".)

Source of 'value':

- Value can only exist *for* a living thing.
- Living things strive to continue living. Life "is a process of self-sustaining and self-generated actions."
- Life depends upon the actions of the living things themselves. Failure to act leads to death.
- Life is the central value for any living thing; things are good or bad for the organism depending on whether they promote the organism's life.
- Therefore, an immortal being could have no values.
 - It wouldn't matter what you did, because no opportunity costs. In real life, we have to choose carefully because we have limited time & opportunities.
 - Immortal beings could not be sick or healthy.
 - Immortal beings could not experience pleasure or pain. Pleasure/pain are just mechanisms for detecting things that further or inhibit our lives.

The need for morality:

- Some of our needs require *conscious* action to satisfy.
- Needs are objective.
- Hence, we need to identify the correct values. This is the function of morality.

Randian virtues:

- Explain why courage, honesty, and justice are virtues.
(Important supporting idea: the harmony of interests.)
- The most important virtue: rationality. Reason is our basic tool of survival.

II. Questions about this theory

1. Does "value" mean "something one acts to gain and/or keep," or "something one *ought to act to gain and/or keep*"?
2. What shows that life itself is valuable? And what shows that nothing else is valuable?
3. Notice that this theory is *egoistic*: Everyone should do what promotes his own life. (Does this mean "maximize life expectancy"?) Does this mean it would be morally correct to murder 4 million people, if doing so increased your life expectancy by 5 minutes?

III. Objection: The Open Question Argument

- *Open Question*: A question that can coherently be given either answer; a question that is not settled by merely understanding the words in the question.
 1. The following is an open question: “Is life good?”
 2. The following is *not* an open question: “Does life promote life?”
 3. Therefore, “Is life good?” does not mean “Does life promote life?”
 4. Therefore, “good” does not mean “promotes life”.
- According to G.E. Moore, a similar argument can be given against any ethical naturalist theory.
- The naturalist’s mistake: confuses two things:
 - A *standard* of value—tells us what things are good.
 - A *definition* of value—tells us what “good” means.

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Notes #6: Ethical intuitionism

I. Central Theses

- There are objective moral facts.
- They're not reducible to natural (non-moral) facts.
- Moral knowledge derives from 'ethical intuition.'
- Moral knowledge gives us reasons for action independent of our desires.

II. The Concept of Intuition

Initial intellectual appearances:

- *Appearance*: the mental state you are in when you say, "it seems to me that P" (where P is some proposition).
- *Intellectual* appearances: appearances that depend on just thinking & understanding (as opposed to sense perception, memory, or introspection).
- *Initial* appearances: the way things appear prior to reasoning.

Examples:

- The shortest path between two points is a straight line.
- No object can be red and blue at the same time.

Examples from ethics:

- Suffering is bad.
- Other things being equal, one should bring about good things, rather than bad things.
- "Better than" is transitive.

III. Phenomenal Conservatism

- If it seems to S that P, then S thereby has at least prima facie justification for believing that P.
- The self-defeat argument for PC:
 1. (Almost) all beliefs are based on appearances. (Exceptions: faith, self-deception.)
 2. So if PC is false, then all beliefs are unjustified.
 3. So one cannot be justified in believing an alternative view to PC.

IV. Important Points about Intuition

- Intuitions are not merely beliefs. Examples:

Organ Harvesting: A doctor in a hospital has five patients who need organ transplants; otherwise, they will die. They all need different organs. He also has one healthy patient, in for a routine checkup, who happens to be compatible with the five. Should the doctor kill the healthy patient in order to distribute his organs to the five others?

Trolley Car Problem: A runaway trolley is heading for a fork in the track. If it takes the left fork, it will collide with and kill five people; if it takes the right fork, it will collide with and kill one person. None of the people can be moved out of the way in time. There is a switch that determines which fork the trolley takes. It is presently set to send the trolley to the left. You can flip the switch, sending the trolley to the right instead. Should you flip the switch?

- Some intuitions are universal. Example:

Easy Trolley Car Problem: As in Trolley Car Problem, except that there is no one on the right fork; if the trolley goes down the right fork, it will run into a pile of sand which will safely stop it. Should you flip the switch?

- Not all intuitions need be true. But intuitions are *presumed* true until proven false.
- Not all moral judgements are “intuitions.”

V. Common Objections

A. *We need arguments for believing intuition to be reliable.*

Response:

- This is a **global skeptical argument**: It entails that no one can know *anything* whatsoever.
- Global skepticism not relevant here. Besides its being absurd, we’re interested in what might make ethics different from other fields, like science.

B. *Intuitionists cannot explain disagreement:*

1. Moral disagreements are common.
2. Intuitionism can’t explain why moral disagreements occur.
3. Anti-realism can.
4. So anti-realism is better than intuitionism.

Responses:

- a. The prevalence of non-moral disagreements. Examples:
 - Who shot JFK?
 - The Mead/Freeman controversy
 - Sports controversies
 - Einstein/Bohr debate

No one thinks that any of these things are “subjective.”

- b. The fallibility of human beings. Humans have numerous sources of error: Confusion, ignorance, oversight, misunderstanding/incomplete understanding, bias, miscalculation, etc.
- c. Disagreements are especially common in 4 kinds of cases:
 - i) When people have strong personal biases, esp. self-interest.
 - ii) When people defer to their culture.
 - iii) When people defer to religion.
 - iv) All philosophical issues.

C. Intuitionists cannot resolve disagreement:

1. If two people have differing intuitions, the intuitionist can give no way to resolve the disagreement.
2. If a meta-ethical theory provides no way of resolving (some?) disagreements, then the theory is false.
3. So intuitionism is false.

Responses:

- a. Some ethical disagreements can be resolved by appeal to ethical arguments.
- b. What's the justification for (2)?
- c. No other theory provides a way of resolving all ethical disagreements.

D. Intuitionism is weird:

1. Intuition is weird.
2. Objective moral values are weird.
3. If something is weird, it doesn't exist. (?)
4. So, intuition and objective moral values don't exist.

Responses:

Is there objective weirdness?

- a. If there is no objective weirdness, then "weirdness" isn't evidence of non-existence.
- b. If there is objective weirdness, what is it?
 - i) "Weird" = "very different from most other things"?
 - Why think that weird things in this sense don't exist?
 - ii) "Weird" = "counter-intuitive"?
 - Intuition is not counter-intuitive. Nor are moral properties.
 - iii) "Weird" = "poorly understood"?
 - Why think weird things in this sense don't exist?

VI. Moral Reasons

Two views of reasons for action:

- *Humean View*: Reasons for action must come from desires.
- *Rationalist View*: Two sources of reasons for action:
 - i) Desires
 - ii) Evaluative beliefs

Problems with Humean View:

- Can't explain rationality of prudence: Why is the partying student irrational to frustrate her future desire, but Odysseus is rational to frustrate his future desire?
- Can't explain weakness of will, or free will. Actions should always be determined by stronger desire.
- Can't explain why morality is important.
- Can't explain why coherent moral beliefs are good.
- Rationalist view explains all these things.

Phil. 1100 Review of Unit 1

Things to know:

These concepts & distinctions:

Evaluative vs. descriptive claims

Branches of ethics:

Meta-ethics, ethical theory, applied ethics

Objective vs. subjective

Moral realism vs. anti-realism

Global skepticism

These philosophical theories & how they differ:

Ethical naturalism

Ethical intuitionism

Subjectivism

Non-cognitivism

Nihilism

These philosophers & their ideas:

Ruth Benedict

The meaning of 'normal'

Implications of relativism: Why we can't evaluate other cultures, &c., why one can't criticize a culture.

Objections, esp.: Nazis, disagreement, arbitrariness

A.J. Ayer

Why ethical statements are 'non-cognitive'

Verification criterion of meaning

How his view differs from relativism & nihilism

Objections, esp.: Frege-Geach problem

J.L. Mackie

Argument from relativity

Argument from queerness

Why we have moral discourse: the theory of 'objectification'

Central objection to nihilism.

Tara Smith

Definition of "value"

The nature of 'life'

What is 'good' (& how it relates to life)

What is a morality, & why we need one

Ethical egoism

Objection: Open question argument.

Huemer

4 basic tenets of intuitionism

What is 'intuition'

Phenomenal conservatism & "prima facie justification"

Explanation of disagreement.

The reliability objection & response.

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Notes #7: Utilitarianism (Smart)

Three important questions in ethical theory:

1. What is good?
2. What should one do?
3. Whose good should one pursue?

Utilitarianism's answers to these questions:

1. *Hedonism*: Enjoyment (pleasure/happiness) is the sole intrinsic good.
Note: Some utilitarians substitute preference-satisfaction for enjoyment.
 2. *Consequentialism*: One should always perform the action that produces the greatest (expected) overall quantity of good.
 3. *Altruism*: Weigh every person's good (incl. both self & others) equally. (Note: This is different from Smart's usage of the word.)
- In sum: *Perform that action which produces the greatest total expected enjoyment in the world.*
 - Important distinction:
 - Intrinsic good*: a thing that is good for its own sake; an end in itself.
 - Instrumental good*: a thing that is good for the sake of something else; desirable as a means.

In defense of altruism:

- The egoist-altruist spectrum:
 - *Egoism*: counts only self-interest. Values others only as a means to self-benefit.
 - *Altruism* (as defined above) is the most extreme position in the other direction that anyone holds. Altruism does not say that your interests don't count.
 - Most people hold a position in between these extremes.
- Question for the egoist: What is so special about you?
- Implied argument:
 1. Each person is equally important; there is no special property of you that makes you better than (or more important than) others.
 2. Things that are equally important should be given equal weight.
 3. Therefore, you should weigh others' interests equally with your own.

In defense of consequentialism:

- You have a choice between two possible worlds, world A and world B. Assume A is better than B. Which one should you pick?
- Consequentialists see every choice as a choice among possible worlds (the total states of affairs that would result from each of the available actions).

In defense of hedonism:

- Note that 'pleasure' or 'enjoyment' may be either emotional or sensory.
- Try to think of anything else that is good. You will probably find that it is only instrumentally good. You think other things are good because they give you pleasure.

Miscellaneous points about utilitarian doctrine:

- No moral distinction between acts & omissions (or positive & negative actions). You are not only obliged to refrain from causing harm; you are, equally, positively obligated to produce good.
- A utilitarian must consider the *long-term* future.
- To deal with uncertain outcomes: The utilitarian multiplies the probability of each possible outcome by the amount of pleasure that results if the outcome happens, and sums the results for every possible outcome. This gives the *expected* amount of pleasure for a given action.
- The *distribution* (whether equal, unequal, etc.) of happiness doesn't matter, only the *total sum*.
- Average versus total happiness: should we aim to
 - a. Increase the *average* level of happiness in the world?
(*Problem*: Painlessly killing each person of below-average happiness will increase the average.)
 - b. Increase the *total* amount of happiness in the world?
(*Consequence*: You have a positive obligation to produce more children, if they will be happy.)
 - c. A third possibility is to aim at increasing the happiness (only) of *actually present* people.
(*Consequence*: This means that we lack obligations to future generations.)

Objections:

In some cases, utilitarianism requires acting *unjustly*.

The Trial Example:

You are the judge in a trial for a crime that has caused great public outrage (say, a black man being beaten by Los Angeles police officers). You believe that, unless the defendant is convicted, there will be riots in which several innocent people will be killed, seriously injured, and/or robbed. However, you also believe that the defendant is in fact innocent. Assume that you are responsible for rendering a verdict of guilt or innocence. Should you convict the defendant?

- Utilitarian answer: Yes.
- Common sense answer: No.

The Organ Harvesting Example:

You are a surgeon in a hospital, where five patients need transplants for five different organs. Without them, they will die. You have one healthy patient who happens to be compatible with the five. Should you kill the healthy patient to distribute his organs to the other five?

- Utilitarian answer: Yes.
- Common sense answer: Are you insane?

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Notes #8: Hedonism (Nozick, Plato)

I. What is good?

- *Ethical Hedonism*: The view that pleasure is the sole intrinsic value. The readings contain two criticisms of this view.
- Not to be confused with *psychological hedonism*: The view that people are motivated only by pleasure.

II. The “experience machine” (Nozick):

- A machine that can produce any series of experiences you want, by direct brain stimulation. Can be programmed with a variety of happy experiences. Can also erase your memory of life before the machine.
- Should you plug in?
 - Most people say ‘no.’
 - But hedonism implies ‘yes.’ Hedonism implies this would be the best possible life.
 - This seems to show that hedonism is false; something matters in life other than pleasure, and other than one’s subjective experiences. What? Nozick says: “perhaps what we desire is to live ... ourselves, in contact with reality.”
- Notice how this argument works:
 - Thesis to be criticized: “pleasure is the only intrinsic good.”
 - Strategy (sometimes called “*the method of isolation*”): to ‘isolate pleasure’ (imagine a life with pleasure & nothing else commonly considered valuable). Ask whether it would be good. If not, then pleasure isn’t the sole intrinsic good. (The method of isolation can be applied to anything else that is claimed to be the sole intrinsic good.)

III. Plato’s argument:

- Plato applies the same strategy:
 - Imagine a life in which you have only pleasure, but zero intelligence, knowledge, memory, &c. Would this be good? Would it be the ideal life?
 - Hedonism implies ‘yes.’
 - But most people say ‘no.’ This also seems to show that hedonism is false.

Both arguments work like this:

1. If pleasure is the sole intrinsic value, then a life containing a lot of pleasure, without any of the other things in a normal life, would be a great life.
2. But (intuitively) such a life would not be great.
3. So pleasure is not the sole intrinsic value.

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Notes #9: Absolute Deontology

I. Three positions in ethical theory

1. *Consequentialism*: The right action is the action that maximizes the (expected) good. (“The ends justify the means.”)
2. *Absolute deontology*: Holds that there are some *absolute constraints* on how one may pursue one’s ends; that some kinds of actions are *always* wrong, regardless of the consequences. (“The ends do not justify the means.”)
3. *Moderate deontology*: Holds that there are some constraints on how one may pursue one’s ends that apply in normal circumstances; however, there may be some exceptions, or cases in which these constraints are overridden.

II. Kant’s moral theory

- General background: Immanuel Kant, very influential 18th-century German philosopher. Most famous form of absolute deontological ethics in the field. Important ideas:
- *The Categorical Imperative*: “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, never merely as a means, but always also as an end.”
 - *Treating a person merely as a means*: Using a person without their consent—“... to involve them in a scheme of action to which they could not consent.” [Note: This appears to be a misstatement: should say “... to which they do not consent.”] Two main forms of this:
 1. Using deception to get something from others. (a.k.a. fraud)
 2. Coercion.
 - *Treating a person as an end*: Fostering some of their (otherwise morally acceptable) plans. *Ex.*: Donating to charity to help those in need.
 - Why are human beings ends in themselves? Human beings have a ‘rational life’ and free will.
- Another “form” of the Categorical Imperative: Act so that you could will that the maxim of your action should be a universal law.
 - *Maxim of an action*: The policy that the agent is acting on. Closely related to the action’s *intention*. For Kant, morality of actions is evaluated by reference to maxims.
- Compare Kantian vs. Utilitarian ethics:
 - Kantian ethic requires you to determine the ‘maxim’ of an action. Utilitarian ethic does not; utilitarians only look at probable consequences.
 - Utilitarianism is more precise *in theory*, but often much less precise in practice. Why:
 - ◊ Utilitarianism requires enormous amounts of empirical evidence to make a decision. Kant’s theory does not.

III. Individual Rights (Nozick)

- Important distinction:
 - *Moral goal*: An end that it is morally good to aim at. Or: A principle that says you ought to aim at some goal.
 - *Moral (side) constraints*: A constraint on morally permissible ways of pursuing one’s goals. Or: A principle that identifies such a constraint.
- Rights function as *side constraints*, not *goals*.
 - Implication: It is wrong to violate one person’s rights to produce a greater good.
 - It is wrong to violate a person’s rights, even to prevent a larger number of other, similar rights-

violations. (Ex.: Killing one innocent person to prevent someone else from killing two innocent people.)

- Why side constraints?
 - Nozick accepts the broadly Kantian principle: Individuals must be treated as ends in themselves, not as “mere means,” or *tools*.
 - If the use of a thing is sufficiently constrained, it ceases to be a tool. Rights are the constraints necessary for human beings not to be used as mere tools.
 - Counter-argument: People sometimes undergo some sacrifice for the sake of a larger benefit. *Similarly*, why might not *society* sacrifice some of its members for a greater ‘social benefit’?
 - ★ *Answer*: ‘Society’ isn’t a person. It doesn’t have any interests of its own; only individuals do. Nor can ‘society’ make choices; only individual people can. The analogy is specious.
- What sort of rights/constraints does Nozick believe in?
 - a. People may not initiate coercion against others.
 - b. People may not engage in fraud.
 - c. Private property rights: people may not use or interfere with each other’s property w/o the owner’s consent.

IV. Objections to Absolute Deontology

The Nuclear War example:

Suppose that, in order to prevent a nuclear war, we must convict and punish one innocent person. If we do so, one innocent man will spend six months in jail unjustly. If we don’t, the human race will be extinguished. What should we do?

The Problem of Risk:

Is it permissible to impose a *ris~~k~~* of harm on others? How great a risk?

- Absolutist answer appears to be: No risk is acceptable.
- Problem: This makes life impossible.

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Notes #10: Moderate Deontology (Ross)

I. Ross' Prima Facie Duties

- *Prima facie duty*: Something that is normally a duty, other things being equal, or: assuming it does not conflict with another prima facie duty.
 - *Duty*: What one ought to do, all things considered. A prima facie duty may not be a duty, because it may be overridden by another prima facie duty that is more important in the circumstances.
- Should one break a promise in order to help someone in distress?
 - Absolute deontological answer (Kant): No, not ever.
 - Consequentialist answer (Smart & others): Yes, if and only if better overall consequences are produced.
 - Moderate deontological answer (Ross): There are two prima facie duties, (i) the duty to keep a promise, (ii) the duty to alleviate suffering. Sometimes the first is the 'greater duty' and sometimes the second is. If the suffering is comparatively minor, then you should keep the promise. If the suffering is great, then you should alleviate the suffering.
- List of prima facie duties:
 1. Duty to keep a promise.
 2. Duties of reparation.
 3. Duties of gratitude.
 4. Duties of justice.
 5. Duties of beneficence.
 6. Duties of self-improvement.
 7. The duty of not harming others ('non-maleficence').
- Objections:
 - The list of duties is unsystematic & follows no clear overall principle.
 - When prima facie duties conflict, how can we decide between them?

II. How We Know about Moral Duties

- Prima facie duties are "not self-evident from the beginning of our lives", but *become* self-evident after some experience and reflection.
- They are similar to mathematical principles, e.g., "2+2=4."
- Why believe the moderate deontological answer? Because it "corresponds better with what we really think" (p. 19): i.e. it fits better with our moral intuitions. Note: Ross is an ethical intuitionist.
Examples:
 1. Suppose I have promised to do something for A, which will produce 1000 units of good for A. Suppose I can, instead, do something which will produce 1001 units of good for B (to whom I have made no promise), but 0 for A. Should I do the latter?
 - Consequentialist answer: Yes.
 - Common sense (intuitive) answer: No.
 2. Suppose that A is a morally virtuous person, while B is an axe-murderer. Suppose I can produce 1000 units of good for A, or 1001 units for B. Which should I do?
 - Consequentialist answer: The second.
 - Common sense (intuitive) answer: The first. Why: the prima facie duty of justice (bringing about a proportion between virtue and rewards).

III. Objections to Moderate Deontology

The arbitrariness objection:

- When is it permissible to violate a deontological duty (e.g., violate someone's rights), to produce a greater good (or avoid a greater evil)?
- Consequentialist answer: Whenever a greater good is produced.
- Absolutist answer: Never.
- Moderate deontological answer: Only when *a much* greater good is produced, so that there is a "greater" prima facie duty to produce the good.
 - How much greater?
 - The answer to this appears to be *arbitrary*, i.e., nothing makes one answer to this question any more natural than another.

The Additivity Problem:

Assume there are two actions, A1 and A2, and two people, P1 and P2, such that:

- A1 harms P1 while producing a slightly greater benefit for P2.
- A2 harms P2 while producing a slightly greater benefit for P1.
- Each of A1, A2, by itself, would be considered wrong by the moderate deontologist.
- However, (A1+A2) benefits both P1 and P2, so it seems to be right.

<u>Action</u>	<u>Effect on P1</u>	<u>Effect on P2</u>
A1	-1	+2
A2	+2	-1
(A1+A2)	+1	+1

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Notes #11: Rand on Rights

I. Rand's View of Ethics

- Ethical naturalism + egoism. The good is that which furthers one's own life. (See Smith.)
 - But not just any kind of life; the kind of life "proper to a human being." (E.g., not "living" as a vegetable in a hospital.)
- Nature of life:
 - A process of self-generated, self-sustaining action.
 - Humans have free will; must exercise judgement to choose actions that are life-sustaining.

II. What Are Rights?

- "A 'right' is a moral principle defining and sanctioning a man's freedom of action in a social context." (93)

III. What Rights Do We Have, & Why?

1. The good is that which furthers/sustains one's own life, as the kind of life proper to a human being.
- [2. One has a right to do what is good.] ←Implicit premise
3. So humans have a right to life. (From 1, 2.)

"There is only one fundamental right [...]: a man's right to his own life." (93)
4. Life for human beings requires acting according to one's own judgement to sustain one's life.
5. So we have the right to act according to our judgement to sustain our lives. (From 1, 2, 4.)
6. This requires the right to property, & freedom from coercion.
7. So we have the right to property & to be free from coercion. (From 5, 6.)

"Thus, for every individual, a right is the moral sanction ... of his freedom to act on his own judgement ... by his own *voluntary, uncoerced* choice." (94; emphasis Rand's)

"Without property rights, no other rights are possible. Since man has to sustain his life by his own effort, the man who has no right to the product of his effort has no means to sustain his life." (94)

IV. Important points about this conception of rights

A. *Individuals have rights to action, not to things.*

B. *Rights are negative, not positive.*

Negative rights: Rights to be free from interference/harm committed by others.

Positive rights: Rights to have other people do things for you, or give you things.

- Hence, rights are rights to take positive actions to gain/keep values, provided one does not interfere with others' doing likewise.
- The right to do A is the right to *not be prevented* from doing A.
- Not the right to have values provided by others. (See next point for why.)

C. *Rights must be compossible:*

- = it must be possible for all individuals to exercise their rights simultaneously.

"Any alleged 'right' of one man, which necessitates the violation of the rights of another, is not and

cannot be a right.” (96)

- This rules out having both positive rights and negative rights (of the kind Rand endorses) at the same time.

“Jobs, food, clothing, recreation (!), homes, medical care, education, etc., do not grow in nature. These are man-made values—goods and services produced by men. [...] If some men are entitled *by right* to the products of the work of others, it means that those others are deprived of their rights and condemned to slave labor.” (96, emphasis Rand’s)

Examples:

- Right to property
- Right to life
- Right to the pursuit of happiness
- Right to medical care?
- Right to a ‘fair’ wage?

V. Purpose of Government

- To protect individuals’ rights.
- However, governments are dangerous; they often violate people’s rights instead.
- Therefore, we need a Constitution with a bill of rights.
- This leads to the ‘libertarian’ political philosophy.

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Notes #12: A Positive Theory of Rights (Friedman)

Introduction

Q: Why do people recognize 'rights'?

- Moral concept of 'rights': "A has a right to do B" \approx "It would be wrong (or prima facie wrong) to prevent A from doing B."
- Legal concept of 'rights': "A has a right to do B" \approx "There's no law against A's doing B."
- These don't explain rights-respecting behavior:
 - Both fail to explain Britain's 'right' to control Hong Kong or 'ownership' of the Falkland Islands.
 - For the moral concept: some aspects of accepted property rights seem arbitrary.
 - For the legal concept: there is some circularity, since the behavior of government people is partly explained by the rights that they have. (Better argument: legal rights depend upon the laws themselves having been made 'legitimately', i.e., by people who had the right to make those laws; and how is that to be understood?)
- Alternative: a *positive* account of rights: A theory of why people would engage in rights-recognizing behavior, independent of moral beliefs or laws. "Rights ... are a consequence of strategic behavior and may exist with no moral or legal support." (p. 2)

I. Schelling Points, Self-enforcing Contracts, and the Paradox of Order

Q: What is the difference between civil society and the 'Hobbesian state of nature'?

- [*Note:* the 'Hobbesian state of nature' (named after Thomas Hobbes) is a state of social chaos; no rule of law.]
- Not because of the physical objects present. (Courtrooms, law books, etc.)
- Not because of the people present. (Police officers, politicians, etc.) For what makes those people act in the socially orderly way?
- Because people in a civil society face a different strategic situation than people in a state of nature. (They have different incentive structures.)

A. Schelling points

- A type of problem: When there is an advantage in coordinating, but people can't communicate, how can they coordinate?
- A Schelling point is a solution that people will tend to converge on in the absence of communication, because it seems natural or 'special' to them.
 - Ex.: You and a friend have to try to pick the same number from the following sequence:
2, 5, 9, 25, 69, 73, 82, 96, 100, 126, 150
Which number do you pick?
- The game of bilateral monopoly:
Two people are in a room with \$100. They may keep the money if they can both agree on how to divide it between them. If they can't agree, then neither gets anything.
 - In terms of pure game theory, *any* division (other than 0-100) benefits both parties, so both parties should be willing to accept it. Should you insist on 99-1 in your favor?
 - Note how this is similar to the above game. What division should you propose/accept?
- Schelling points also provide alternatives to continued bargaining.

B. Up from Hobbes

- Imagine 2 people in a state of nature.
 - Both want to avoid conflict. (Similar to above “bilateral monopoly” game.)
 - Best way is to agree on a system of rights, esp. property rights.
- The Schelling point:
 - May use some natural boundary to divide the land. Neither party pays tribute to the other.
 - Any previous agreement is thereafter itself a Schelling point.
- The establishment of the agreement does not alter our physical situation or physical power. But it alters the strategic situation. Neither party violates the agreement, because that would return them to the ‘Hobbesian jungle.’ If one party violates the agreement, the other party fights, because allowing the violation “implies unlimited demands.” If A allows B to steal from him, A loses not only that property, but also the advantage of *having agreed-upon property rights*.
- Important:
 - The contract enforces itself, *without moral beliefs or legal sanctions*.
 - The system does *not* require people to have equal power. The system only requires:
 - Agreement has greater value than the value of violating other’s property.
 - I.e., each party has the power to create a conflict costing (both) more than the benefit attained by imposing an “unfair” distribution. (Apply this to the examples above.)

II. Two Routes from Hobbes to Here

- Main idea:
 - There is a process of evolution of norms, whereby more efficient rules win out.
 - It produces *locally efficient* but not necessarily *globally efficient* norms. I.e., a norm will not be adopted if its benefits depend upon almost everyone adopting it. It will be adopted if it benefits small groups who adopt it.

III. Law, Justice, and Efficiency

- The 3-way coincidence: the following tend to be about the same:
 1. The (intuitively) morally correct rules
 2. The economically efficient rules
 3. The rules that are actually in effect

Why this coincidence?

- (II) above explains why 2 & 3 tend to coincide.
- Good question: why does (1) correspond with (2) and (3)? What, if anything, does this show about the nature of morality? Think about this.

Phil. 1100 Review of Unit 2

Know what these things are:

Instrumental/intrinsic values
Utilitarianism
Consequentialism
Hedonism
Altruism
Egoism
Moderate deontology
Absolute deontology
Kant's "categorical imperative", incl.
 How to treat people "merely as means"
Rights, including:
 positive rights vs. negative rights
 What rights we have according to Rand
 & according to Nozick
Side constraints
Compossible rights
Method of isolation
Schelling points
Local efficiency, global efficiency

Be able to apply these theories to particular cases:

Utilitarianism
Moderate deontology
Absolute deontology

Understand these arguments/explanations:

Argument for altruism
Arguments against hedonism
 Experience machine example
Nozick's explanation for rights
Nozick on: why society can't trade harm to
 one of its members for greater social
 benefit
Arguments against consequentialism
 The trolley example
 Organ harvesting
 Ross' promise-keeping example
 Ross' example of helping the evil person
Argument against absolutism
 Nuclear war example
 Risk problem
Argument against moderate deontology
 Arbitrariness objection
Friedman's explanation for why we respect
 rights
Rand's argument against positive rights

Know these authors' basic positions:

J. J. C. Smart
Plato
Robert Nozick
Immanuel Kant
W. D. Ross
David Friedman
Ayn Rand

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Notes #13: Equality for Animals? (Singer)

Speciesism: The attitude or practice of discounting the interests of other beings *merely* because they belong to a different species from oneself, and not because of any morally significant difference. (Similar to racism, sexism.)

I. Background Facts

- Human beings routinely ignore or severely discount the interests of animals. Examples: animal experiments, factory farming, fur/leather.
 - Costs for animals: Enormous suffering and death. *PETA* estimates 8 billion animals in the U.S. are slaughtered for food every year (www.goveg.com/).
 - Benefits for humans: Small amounts of money, temporary pleasure/entertainment. Not necessary to sustain human life or health.
 - Most human beings say they are against animal cruelty, but continue to enjoy animal products.

II. Singer's View

- *The Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests*: Holds that all interests should be counted, regardless of whose interests they are, for moral decision-making; no one's interests should be ignored or discounted [unless there is a reason for doing so]. (See "important point" below.)
 - *Note*: Does *not* mean that any interest is of equal weight to every other interest; some interests are greater than others (e.g., my interest in living > your interest in having a donut).
- This implies that our treatment of animals (see above) is morally wrong. We should:
 - (a) Adopt a mostly vegetarian diet (possibly excepting 'free range' animals).
 - (b) No experimenting for cosmetics, shampoos, food colors, & other frivolous purposes.
- Cruelty to animals is caused by *speciesism*.
- *Important point*: The proponent of animal cruelty must find a *morally relevant difference* between humans and animals, that justifies treating them cruelly. I.e., Why should one discount the interests of animals?

III. Objections

(*Note*: With each of these, ask how they might apply to slavery or cannibalism, and then ask whether these arguments are motivated by speciesism.)

1. "How do we know that animals can feel pain?"
2. "Animals eat each other, so it's ok for us to eat them."
3. "Humans are superior to other animals, so it's ok to torture them."
 - A) "Humans have souls."
 - B) "Humans have free will."
 - C) "Humans are smarter." Replies:
 - i) Does greater intelligence give one greater rights? Does Einstein have the right to torture you for amusement?
 - ii) Some animals are more intelligent than some humans. Would it be ok to use retarded humans in painful experiments to test new cosmetics? How about infants?

- iii) Even if greater intelligence gives one more rights, it would be surprising that
 - a) The greater intelligence of humans over animals means we may torture & kill thousands of animals in our lifetimes for minor increments of pleasure, but yet
 - b) The greater intelligence of geniuses over retarded people does not mean they have any greater rights *at all*.
- 4. “I’m not inflicting the pain on the animals directly, so I’m not responsible for it.”
- 5. “The animals would not exist in the first place if there weren’t a market for their meat. So it’s good for them that people eat them.”
- 6. Slippery slope argument: “If we accept this argument, then next we’ll have plant rights!”

IV. Why do people discount the interests of animals? Possible explanations:

- Speciesism (as Singer says). Possibly inborn.
- Social conventions. Other people ignore animal interests; I can too.
- Self-interest. It is not in my interest to recognize Singer’s argument; I don’t want it to be true.

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Notes #14: Against Animal Rights (Machan)

I. Why We May Use Animals

Central claim: Humans are more important/valuable than (non-human) animals.

- Even animal rights advocates recognize: There is a hierarchy of value in nature.
 - None advocate rock rights.
- There are 3 kinds of things:
 1. Inanimate objects: Subject to no (intrinsic) evaluation.
 2. Living things: Subject to evaluation but not moral responsibility.
 - ⇒ There are “good” and “bad” trees, animals.
 - ⇒ But they are not subject to moral praise/blame.
 3. Moral agents (human beings): Subject to evaluation, including moral responsibility.
 - ⇒ Even animal rights advocates recognize this.
- Moral agency makes beings more *important* or valuable. Why? M doesn't explain this, but may have in mind:
 - Moral agency makes possible development of *virtue*, which is valuable.
 - ☞ Question: what about human beings who *don't* exercise virtue? Are they open to being experimented on or eaten?
 - Exercise of free will is intrinsically valuable.
 - Human beings have more sophisticated emotions and experiences, some of which are valuable. (Ex.: Appreciating the beauty of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.)
- ☞ Q: If all this is true, does it justify using animals?

II. Why Individual Human Rights?

- Main aim of human life: Acting morally. “we have as our central task in life to act morally.” (169)
- This requires freedom of action. “we require a reasonably clear sphere of personal jurisdiction.” (169)
- This freedom of action is provided by “rights”.
- Animals have no need for such rights, since they lack moral agency.

III. Where Is There Room for Animal Rights?

- Some say that animals do exhibit moral behavior. (Dog stories)
Reply: But this is just anecdotal.
- Evolution is compatible with (“superficial” [?]) differences in kind between species.

IV. Closing Remarks

- This doesn't mean animal cruelty is ok.
 - Animals experience pain/pleasure.
 - Cruelty is morally bad.
- Killing is the way of nature, so don't sweat it. (Hospers quote)
 - It's unavoidable.
 - It's natural.
 - But don't kill people, because people are special.

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Notes #15: Feed the Poor (Singer)

Basic Issue

Many people are suffering/dying of starvation, disease, and other hardships in the Third World. We have many luxuries. We could assist them by giving up these luxuries, but we choose not to. Q: what is the correct moral assessment of our decision?

Singer's Position

- We (each, individually) have a *positive obligation* to give money to help people in the Third World.
- There is no morally significant difference between killing and allowing to die one whom one could easily save.
- How much money should one give away? How much would be required to save everyone one can? (Lots.)
- Singer thinks that *any* reasonable moral theory will have to agree with this.

Argument for the Obligation to Assist

1. If we can prevent something very bad without sacrificing anything of comparable significance, we ought to do so.
2. Absolute poverty is very bad.
3. We can prevent some absolute poverty without sacrificing anything of comparable significance.
4. Therefore, we ought to do so.

The Shallow Pond example: (supports (1))

You are walking to class, when you notice a small child drowning in a shallow pond. You could wade in and save the child, but if you did so, you would waste some of your time and get your clothes muddy. What should you do?

Singer thinks this is comparable to the people in the Third World whom you could save from malnutrition & disease.

Possible differences between Shallow Pond & Third World poor:

1. It is uncertain that my money will really save the people in the 3rd world.
 2. There are so many starving people in the 3rd world, and it's impossible to save all of them.
 3. There are many other people who could help.
 4. People in the 3rd world have such bad lives that it's hardly worth preserving them.
 5. Sending food will just cause them to increase the population, until the same level of starvation is restored. (Hardin)
- None of these replies seem good.

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Notes #16: Please Don't Feed the Poor (Hardin)

The Lifeboat Analogy

- The lifeboat has room for 60 people. There are 50 people in it. There are 100 people in the water. Should we let more people on?
- The Christian / Marxist ethics lead to “complete justice, complete catastrophe”: i.e., everyone is equal, and everyone drowns. This is worse than letting 100 people drown.
 - ☞ Does he really mean “complete justice”?

Multiplying the Rich and the Poor

- People in the poor countries reproduce much faster than people in rich countries.
- Therefore, if we agree to assist the poor, we will find ourselves supporting more and more of them (exponentially) as time goes on.
 - ☞ [Note: Hardin does not ask *why* these countries are poor, or what could be done to make them not-poor. Singer doesn't consider this either.]

The Tragedy of the Commons

- When grazing land is owned privately, each farmer cares for his own land.
Why: He receives both the costs and the benefits of his actions.
- When land is held in common, everyone overgrazes and destroys the land.
Why:
 - Each receives the benefit of his own grazing, but only a fraction of the costs.
 - A system of voluntary restraint requires unanimous compliance.
- Important concepts from economics:
 - **Positive externalities**: Benefits of an action that the agent does not receive; benefits he confers on others that he can't/doesn't charge them for.
 - **Negative externalities**: Harms of an action that the agent doesn't bear; harms he inflicts on others that he doesn't have to pay for.
 - The problem with externalities: Actions with positive externalities that 'should' be performed often aren't. Actions with negative externalities that 'should not' be performed often are.

The World Food Bank

- This was a proposal for countries around the world to share food. Countries with surpluses contribute; countries with famines withdraw.
- Problem: this is a *tragedy-of-the-commons* situation.
 - Countries will have no incentive to plan ahead to avert or be able to deal with emergencies on their own.
 - These countries will continue to expand their populations, creating ever greater strain on the contributing countries.
 - This will continue til everyone is poor.
 - Also, the increased population will destroy the natural environment.

Against Immigration

- Immigration increases our population. This will “speed up the destruction of the environment of the rich countries.”
- Also, we'll run out of land/resources.

Conclusion

- Sharing your own resources is fine. Sharing our descendants' resources is not.
 - Conclusion: Let the poor die.
- About Hardin's moral perspective:
 - He grants the *altruistic* ethic.
 - But he argues that the best way to help humanity is *not* to give to the poor.

Why Garrett Hardin Is Completely Wrong

- Is he right about the moral philosophy?
 - Apply the argument to the Shallow Pond.
- Hardin *is* right about the economics:
 - Commons don't work.
- Hardin is wrong about the population facts:
 - Hardin echoes (partly) a theory of *Thomas Malthus*' (1798):
 - * Population naturally increases exponentially.
 - * Food supplies can only increase arithmetically.
 - * Hence, population will increase to maximum capacity of the environment.
 - * Result: population will be controlled by death (starvation).
 - Reality:
 - * Development aid *decreases* fertility rates, not increases. This is true at all income levels.
 - ☞ Wealthier countries have *lower* fertility rates than poor countries. (Hardin recognizes this)
 - Why?*
 - ☞ Infant mortality → higher fertility
 - ☞ Economic insecurity → higher fertility
 - ☞ Education (esp. female) → lower fertility
 - * People do *not* reproduce to the maximum capacity of their environment.
 - * Contemporary starvation has *nothing* to do with limitations on the earth's capacity to provide food.

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Notes #17: Feeding the Poor Is Optional (Narveson)

Three Views on Feeding the Hungry

1. Singer:
 - Feeding the hungry is morally required.
 - The poor have a *positive right* to receive food. (?)
2. Hardin:
 - Feeding the hungry is *bad*.
3. Narveson:
 - Feeding the hungry “is a nice thing to do, and is morally recommended.”
 - But it is not morally required.
 - There are no positive rights.
 - People should not be forced to give to charity.

Some Distinctions

Justice vs. Charity

Justice: things that we can (rightly) be forced to do.

Charity: things that it is just nice to do.

Positive rights vs. negative rights

Narveson’s Arguments:

I. Is failing to save the poor equivalent to killing them? No, because:

1. When you fail to save someone, they would have died even if you didn’t exist.
2. Therefore, you do not cause their death. (From 1)
3. Killing someone is causing their death.
4. Therefore, failing to save someone is different from killing them.

Objection: Sometimes, you can “cause” x by inaction. Example: you cause the geraniums to die by not watering them.

Reply: This requires assuming that you were *supposed* to water them. But we haven’t so far established that you are “supposed to” feed the hungry.

II. There are other legitimate concerns. For example, giving to the opera.

- Different values may be “incommensurable.” (143)
- We can’t say which concerns are the most important.
- Therefore, the best approach is to let everyone decide for himself. (I.e., how to distribute his own resources.)

III. Slavery

- Singer's view makes us "the slaves of the less well off."
- Slavery is bad.
- So we should reject Singer's view.

Objection: It is the poor who are the slaves to the rich! (Marx)

Reply: "This is a first-rank conceptual error," because

- The rich do not use force to make people interact with them. People voluntarily buy products and enter into contracts with each other.
- People benefit by their transactions with the rich.
- Neither of these things is true of slaves and their masters.

IV. The Causes of Starvation

1. Most starvation is caused by *politics*, not resource shortages, overpopulation, or natural disasters.
 - Governments impose low food prices, inefficient agricultural systems, etc.
 - *Example:* After WWII, Korea split into a communist half (North Korea) and a democratic capitalist half (South Korea). Per capita income today:
 - North Korea: \$1,700 (2005 est.)
 - South Korea: \$20,400 (2005 est.)
 - In 2002, 13 million people in North Korea—over half the population—were reportedly suffering from malnutrition. <web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA240022003?open&of=ENG-PRK>
2. We cannot change these political problems.
3. We are obligated to fight hunger only if we can do something effective about it.
4. Therefore, we aren't obligated to fight most hunger.

V. What should we do?

- We should (to be virtuous, nice, etc.) give to help others, provided
 - It is a temporary emergency, and
 - The aid does not cost us too much.
- Otherwise, it would be unreasonable to expect us to give.
- Charity agencies are good at dealing with emergencies.
- There's little we can do about government oppression.

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Notes #18: Obligations to Future People (Parfit)

The Non-Identity Problem

- 3 kinds of choices:
 1. *Same-person choices*: in which the same people will exist regardless of how one acts. Most moral theory has discussed these.
 2. *Different-people choices*: in which different people will exist depending on one's action(s). Two varieties:
 - a. *Same number choices*: where you have different people but the same number of people
 - b. *Different number choices*: where you have different numbers of people.
- The Non-Identity Problem: How should we make same-number choices? In particular, does it make a moral difference that different people would exist? See examples below.

The Future Persons Paradox:

This is an argument for the paradoxical conclusion that we have no obligations to future generations. Parfit does not endorse this, but seeks to avoid it. Premises:

- “The Time-Dependence Claim”: If any particular person had not been conceived at about the time they were in fact conceived, then they would never have existed.
- An action is wrong only if it harms someone.
- Non-existent people cannot be harmed.

The 14-year-old girl:

This girl wants to have a baby. Assume that if she has a baby now, the baby will be much worse off than if she waited several years. However, the child will still have a life worth living. The girl decides to have a baby now.

Q: Is her action wrong? Why?

An Argument: (the future persons paradox)

1. An action is wrong only if it harms someone other than the agent.
2. The 14-year-old girl's action harms no one other than herself. For
 - a. It does not harm her child, since her child would not have existed otherwise. (The Time-Dependence Claim)
 - b. It does not harm the child she *would have* had, since that child doesn't exist.
3. Therefore, her action is not wrong.

Depletion:

Assume that we (society) have a choice of two policies, Depletion and Conservation. If we choose Depletion, we will have slightly better lives for the next 200 years, as a result of consuming natural resources more quickly. After that time, people will have *much* lower quality of life, due to the depletion of resources. If we choose Conservation, we will have less benefit now, but future generations (after 200 years from now) will be much better off. Suppose we choose Depletion.

Q: Is our choice wrong? Why?

An Argument: (the future persons paradox)

1. A policy is wrong only if it harms someone.
2. Our policy harms no one. For
 - a. It doesn't harm anyone existing now or in the next 200 years.

- b. It does not harm people existing after that time. (The Time-Dependence Claim)
 - c. It does not harm the people who *would have* existed if we chose Conservation.
3. Therefore, the policy is not wrong.

Response #1:

Perhaps we have an obligation to produce good. We act wrongly by not producing the better-off people.

Problem:

This means the girl acts wrongly if she merely fails to have a child.

Response #2:

Perhaps people have rights to a certain level of well-being. Perhaps we act wrongly by creating people whose rights won't be satisfied.

Problems:

1. These people might well waive their supposed right.
2. Suppose the people's well-being will be above the level that they have a right to, but still not as great as would otherwise be the case. (see Parfit's Lesser Depletion example)
3. This implies that it would have been better to produce no one at all (e.g., sterilize everyone after adopting Depletion).

Parfit's View:

If in either of two possible outcomes the same number of people would ever live, it would be worse if those who live are worse off than those who would have lived.

- He does not say, however, whether we are *obligated* to produce the better outcome. And this would be hard to defend, for:
 1. The 14-yr-old girl has 3 options:
 - a. Have a child in several years, who will have a good start in life.
 - b. Have a child now, who will have a poor start.
 - c. Have no child.
 2. (c) is permissible.
 3. (b) is better than (c).
 4. Therefore, (b) should also be permissible. At least, (b) cannot be wrong merely because it is worse than (a).

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Notes #19: How Many People Should There Be?

I. Evaluating Worlds: Population & Well-Being

- Is it good to make more people (whose lives are worth living)?
What if doing so lowers the average quality of life?
- Example: Two worlds:
 - A: A world of 1 million people, with a welfare level of 100. (Very high)
 - Z: A world of 1 billion people, with a welfare level of 1. (Barely worth living)

Which world is better?



Most people say A.

Two Principles for Assessing Goodness

The Average Utility Principle: The best world is the world in which the average level of well-being is highest.

The Total Utility Principle: The best world is the world in which the *total* utility is highest.

This principle leads to:

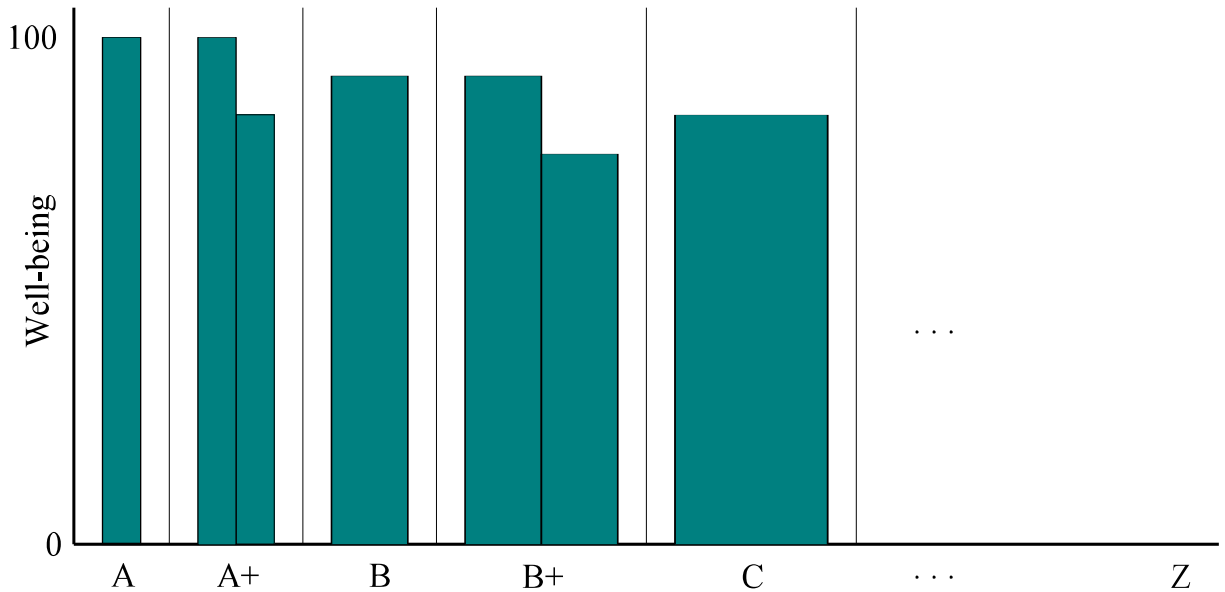
The Repugnant Conclusion

For any population of people with a very high quality of life, there is some much larger imaginable population whose existence would be better, even though its members would have lives barely worth living. (In brief: Z is better than A.)

- Parfit thinks this is “repugnant.”

II. The Mere Addition “Paradox”

1. If a person’s life is worth living (above 0), then it is good. (premise)
 2. If one adds a good thing to the world, without taking away anything else or interfering with any other value, and without adding anything bad, the world is thereby better. (premise)
 3. If two possible situations have the same total utility, and differ only in that in one situation, the utility is more equally distributed, then the situation with the more equal distribution is not worse.
 4. The “repugnant” conclusion is true. (Z is better than A)
- (4) follows from (1)-(3): Imagine the following sequence:



- World A: 1 million people at 100 utils.
- World A+: 1 million people at 100 + 1 million people at 90
- World B: 2 million people at 96 utils.
- World B+: 2 million people at 96 + 2 million people at 86.
- World C: 4 million people at 92.
- ...
- World Z: Very large number of people at 1.

- ☞ A+ is better than A. B is better than A+. B+ is better than B. Etc.
- ☞ Conclusion: Z is better than A.

III. More Support for Making People

Against the average utility principle:

- This implies that the world would have been better if all but the most ecstatically happy people didn't exist. Does this mean that it would be good if everyone else died (painlessly)?
- It implies that you can worsen the world by adding something good to it (and not changing anything else). How can this be?
- Nothing else works like this.
 - Value of an individual life is not determined by the average level of well-being over time. (It's not better to have 1 second of ecstasy and then die, than to have 100 years of mere contentment.)
 - Value of art is not determined by the average level (so that it's better to have 1 masterpiece and destroy everything lesser).

The analogy between time & space:

- We think it would be better if more people (whose lives were worth living) were added *later* in time. (Analogous to adding more time to an individual life.)
- Analogously, it would be better if more people were added elsewhere in space.

The temporal (a)symmetry:

- You think it is good that you are alive (provided your life is worth living). It would not be better if you hadn't been born.
- Therefore, before you were conceived, it would have been correct for anyone to say that it would be good to create you.
- Therefore, it is now correct for anyone to say that it would be good to create another person.

Phil. 1100 Review of Unit 3

Know these terms/concepts:

Speciesism
Positive/negative externalities
Justice vs. charity (Narveson)
The Non-Identity problem

Know the main positions of these people:

Singer
Machan
Hardin
Narveson
Parfit

These examples & what (if anything) they are supposed to show:

Eating retarded people
Singer's Shallow Pond
The 'Tragedy of the Commons'
The World Food Bank
Parfit's Depletion example
Parfit's A, A+, and B

Know these theories and principles:

Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests
Singer's view of who/what deserves moral consideration
Malthus' theory of population
The Repugnant Conclusion
The Average Utility Principle
The Total Utility Principle

Be familiar with these arguments:

Machan's argument against animal rights, incl.

- Why rights exist
- How animals differ from humans

Singer's argument for the obligation to assist
Hardin's reason for opposing food aid

- + Why he's wrong

Narveson on diff. between killing & letting die

- + his view of the main cause of world poverty
- + the "slavery" argument

The future persons paradox, esp.:

- Why we do not harm future people in Parfit's examples
- Why we do not harm anyone else
- Why we might lack obligations to future generations
- Parfit's view of this

Argument for the "repugnant conclusion"
(the "mere addition paradox")

Some objections to the Average Utility Pr.

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Notes #20: Homosexuality & Morality

I. Some Empirical Background

- Studies have estimated anywhere from 1% to 10% of the population are homosexual. The 10% number is almost certainly a large overestimate. <2% is a more typical survey result.
- Many societies have treated homosexuality as normal.
 - ☞ Plato positively praises homosexual love in the dialogue the *Symposium*.
 - ☞ In societies that accept homosexuality, homosexual activity has been commonplace. (ancient Greece, ancient Rome, Renaissance Italy, pre-modern Japan)
- Judeo-Christian tradition is extremely negative about homosexuality:
 - 1 Corinthians 6:*
⁹Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.
 - Leviticus 18:*
²²Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.
- Q: What are the reasons why homosexuality might be wrong?

II. Because God Said So?

- The Bible says (or “God says”) homosexuality is wrong.
- Q: Why did the Bible say so?
 - Presumably God doesn’t say things for no reason.
 - Why would God care who’s having sex with whom? (Is this really what the supreme being spends his time worrying about?)
- *Objection:* The Bible says a lot of things:
 - (1) *Leviticus 20:13* If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death.
 - (2) *Leviticus 20:10* If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.
 - (3) *Deuteronomy 22:20-1* If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the girl’s virginity can be found, she shall be brought to the door of her father’s house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death. She has done a disgraceful thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father’s house.
 - (4) *Leviticus 20:9* If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death.
 - (5) *Leviticus 25:44-45* Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property.

For more, see Scary Bible Quotes, <home.earthlink.net/~owl233/biblequotes.htm>.

III. Is It Unnatural?

Five senses of “natural” & “unnatural”:

1. *The Descriptive Laws of Nature*

- The descriptive laws of nature merely describe how nature behaves.
 - They do not prescribe behavior.
- It is not possible to go against them.
- These laws are not relevant to morality.

2. *Unnatural = artificial*

- Artificial things are man-made, interventions in nature.
- Many artificial things are *much better* than natural things.
- Also, unclear how homosexuality might be considered artificial.

3. *Unnatural = uncommon or abnormal*

- Uncommon things are not thereby bad.
 - Playing viola in a string quartet is uncommon.
- Leiser says that “the best statistics available reveal that about half of all American males engage in homosexual activity at some time in their lives, and that a very large percentage of American males have exclusively homosexual relations for a fairly extensive period of time...” (48)
[- More common figures are about 3-4% and 1-2% respectively.]

4. *Unnatural = use of an organ/instrument contrary to its primary function*

- This is the most common interpretation in this context.
- Assumes that organs have natural functions.
 - Possibly determined by God.
 - Or by evolution.
- In many cases, “unnatural” activities are harmful.
 - Opening beer bottles with teeth
 - Misusing drugs
- *Objections:*
 1. Not obvious that organs have natural functions.
 2. If organs have natural functions, sex organs may have more than one function:
 - a) Reproduction
 - b) Giving pleasure
 - c) Expressing love
 3. Using things for non-intended functions is not evil.
 - Cracking nuts with a hammer
 - Wiggling ears for entertainment
 - Using eyes to flirt, make money, etc.

5. *Unnatural = bad*

- “Homosexuality is bad because it’s unnatural” would be empty.
- This presumably isn’t what opponents of homosexuality mean.

IV. Gay Marriage

- It's unlikely that society would accept homosexual "marriage".
- It would be more reasonable to seek the financial (e.g., tax) advantages of marriage without the legal restrictions of marriage.
 - ☞ Leiser seems to miss the point. Gays want the *legitimization* and the recognition of their relationships as being *essentially the same* as heterosexual relationships. Conservatives don't want them to have that. Tax benefits are not the point.
- ☞ Here's a problem:
 - Government is committed to religious neutrality. This comes partly from the 1st Amendment:
"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."
 - The religions of most citizens reject gay marriage. But many people endorse gay marriage anyway.
 - If government officially *recognizes* gay marriage, then it officially rejects those religions.
 - If government *rejects* gay marriage, then it "establishes" a religious view, officially rejects the views of others.
 - How can government neither recognize nor reject gay marriage?
- ☞ A libertarian solution: government can not be in the business of certifying marriages.
 - This is the only way that government neither endorses nor rejects a religious view.
 - How is certifying marriages part of the business of government??

Phil. 1100 Notes #21: Prostitution

I. Dworkin

Bio: Andrea Dworkin, American radical feminist. Famous for attacks on pornography & prostitution.

- According to her own report, was sexually molested by an unknown man in a movie theater at the age of 9.
- Worked as a prostitute after escaping an abusive marriage in the Netherlands.
- Later in life married John Stoltenberg, although Dworkin described herself as lesbian and Stoltenberg described himself as gay.
- Controversial book *Intercourse* (1987), often represented as arguing that all heterosexual intercourse is wrong & perpetuates male domination, though she said she'd been misunderstood.
- Testified for the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (the Meese Commission) in 1986. Testimony was praised and reprinted in the Commission's report.
- Died in 2005 at the age of 58.

About feminism:

- Dworkin was very prominent and influential in the feminist movement.
- Feminism is highly influential in the academic/intellectual world.
- What is feminism?
 - Typically argue that current society is highly unequal and unjust to women.
 - Society needs to change to destroy the patriarchy.
 - Extreme feminists argue that traditional intellectual pursuits are biased towards men, e.g.
 - * Traditional ethics is biased towards male values and decision-making.
 - * Science is biased towards male ways of thinking, e.g., objectivity, rationality.
 - * Western philosophy is biased towards male concerns.

Dworkin on prostitution:

- Prostitution is caused by patriarchal society. Men hate women.

“We need to look at the role of men in creating a hatred of women, in creating prejudice against women, in using the culture to support, promote, advocate, celebrate aggression against women.”
- Prostitution is degrading to women.

“It is impossible to use a human body in the way women's bodies are used in prostitution and to have a whole human being at the end of it, or in the middle of it, or close to the beginning of it. It's impossible. And no woman gets whole again later, after. [...] The only analogy I can think of concerning prostitution is that it is more like gang rape than it is like anything else.”
- This is true of all prostitution, regardless of the circumstances.

“Of course the circumstances must matter, you say. No, they do not [...]

“I am talking to you about prostitution per se, without more violence, without extra violence, without a woman being hit, without a woman being pushed.”
- Society approves of killing prostitutes.

“[I]n most people's minds the money is worth more than the woman is. The ten dollars, the thirty dollars, the fifty dollars, is worth much more than her whole life. [...] With the money he can buy a human life [...]

“Prostituted women are women who are there, available for the gynocidal kill. [...] When a man kills a prostitute, he feels righteous. It is a righteous kill. He has just gotten rid of a piece of dirt, and the society tells him he is right.”

- Don't think too much.

“Those of us who say this are accused of being simple-minded. But prostitution is very simple. And if you are not simple-minded, you will never understand it. The more complex you manage to be, the further away from the reality you will be [...]”

“I cannot accept—because I cannot believe—the premises of the feminism that comes out of the academy: the feminism that says we will hear all these sides year after year, and then, someday, in the future, by some process that we have not yet found, we will decide what is right and what is true.”

“The minute you move away from what it really is, you move away from prostitution into the world of ideas. You will feel better; you will have a better time; it is more fun; there is plenty to discuss, but you will be discussing ideas, not prostitution.”

“[A]ll the abstract words are lies, justice, liberty, equality, they are lies. [...] You can tell the lie and in this institution [Michigan Law School] you will be taught how to tell the lie [...]”

“[Y]ou have to weaken and destroy every institution that is part of how men rule over women. And don't ask if you should. [...] Do one thing, rather than spend your lives debating if you should do this or if you should do that and do they really deserve it and is it fair?”

- Men deserve to die.

“Fair? Is it really fair? Darlings, we could get the machine guns out tonight. [...] Don't respect their laws. No. Don't respect their laws.”

II. Yamada

- Japanese immigrant, student at Trinity College (Connecticut) when she wrote this for the Trinity College Journal. Now a medical researcher at Lawrence Livermore (Berkeley).
- Prostitution in Japan:
 - Prostitution has been accepted in Japan for a long time. (Bertrand Russell remarked on it in 1929.)
 - Young women hook in order to buy nice clothes at the mall.
 - Prostitution often regarded casually, as a normal job:

“After her first experience, she called me in a state of ecstasy. ‘Let's go to the mall now. I can get that Gaultier bag I always wanted!’ was the first thing she said to me. When I asked her to stop, she defended herself with the comment, ‘You'd never understand. You're too spoiled to *work* for the things you want.’”
- Yamada thinks this is a problem but does not say why.

III. Is Prostitution Wrong?

Is it wrong because God says so?

- See earlier discussion of homosexuality.

Is it wrong because it's degrading?

- This is subjective. Not everyone finds it degrading.
- This view appears to be produced by a specific culture.
- Degrading jobs are not wrong. (garbage collection, cleaning toilets)

Prostitution is permissible

- Individuals have rights over their own bodies.
- Sex isn't wrong. Giving money isn't wrong. How is the combination (one in exchange for the other) wrong?
- If you find it degrading or otherwise undesirable, you don't have to do it.

Prostitution is good

- Pleasure is good.
- Money is good.
- Activities that benefit all involved parties are generally good, if not praiseworthy.

The association between prostitution and nastiness

- Is prostitution bad because of its association with crime & grubby, nasty circumstances? Or because it encourages spread of disease?
- *The Economist* says: The *laws against* prostitution cause these problems.
 - Laws don't eliminate demand for goods/services.
 - When large demand exists, it will be supplied.
 - If supply is illegal, it will be supplied by criminals. Consequences:
 - * Higher prices.
 - * Suppliers forced to turn to criminals for enforcement/protection services. Increased violence. Benefits criminals & crime organizations.
 - * Inability to regulate/control industry. Industry becomes less safe, less healthy, etc.
- Some examples:
 - Alcohol prohibition
 - Drug prohibition
 - Prostitution
 - Gambling
- Conclusion: It is the laws against prostitution that are wrong.

Phil. 1100

Notes #22: Sociobiology & Human Sexuality

I. About Sociobiology/Evolutionary Psychology:

- Seeks to explain human behavior and attitudes in terms of evolution by natural selection.

Important concepts:

- *Evolutionary* (reproductive/genetic) *fitness*: The ability and disposition to produce more copies of one's genes. Includes causing more copies of one's genes to exist through promoting reproduction by genetic relatives (siblings, children, etc.) (*inclusive fitness*).
- *Natural selection*: Process by which some genes are eliminated (due to lack of evolutionary fitness), while others survive.
- *Adaptation*: A trait that survived because it promotes evolutionary fitness. Contrasted with other kinds of traits:
 - * Non-genetic traits. (E.g., culture, individual choice)
 - * By-products: Traits that are caused by a gene that was selected for because it produced some *other* effect that promotes evolutionary fitness.
 - * Traits due to genetic drift: This is a process by which frequency of traits (esp. in isolated populations) changes over time due to chance.
- What does evolution select for? Three views:
 - * *Group Selectionist theory*: The view that evolution produces groups (such as species) with traits that "benefit" the group (increase the group's ability to survive & reproduce). This theory is wrong.
 - * *Individual Selectionist theory*: The view that evolution produces individuals with traits that benefit the individual. This is closer to the truth.
 - * *Gene Selectionist ("Selfish Gene") theory*: The view that evolution produces individual *genes* that cause traits that benefit *that gene*. This is correct. In most cases, matches individual selection theory. Exception: Kin selection (selection for behavior that benefits kin).

Sociobiology assumes:

- Evolution is true.
- This applies to the mind as well as the body. Many mental traits are affected by genes.
- Many mental traits are *adaptations*: traits that survived because they increased the evolutionary fitness of our genetic ancestors.

What sociobiology has to do with ethics

- Sociobiology may explain many moral attitudes.
- May explain some moral/social problems (e.g., patriarchy).
- May lead to predictions about the possibility of changing human behavior, & about effects of social policies.

II. The Differences between Males and Females

Definition of Male/Female:

Male: Smaller, more numerous gametes. (Smaller parental investment per sex cell.)

Female: Large, less numerous gametes. (Larger investment per sex cell.)

The “goal” of parents:

- To have as many surviving offspring as possible.
- To invest less, cause other partner to invest more.

Important male/female differences:

- a. Female reproductive capacity is very limited (1 child/9 months). Male capacity virtually infinite.
- b. Reproduction costly to females. Costless to males.
- c. Offspring physically in possession of female from conception to birth.
- d. Female parentage obvious. Male parentage uncertain.

Some consequences of these differences:

1. Male promiscuity, female coyness. (See (a), (b) above. See also #2 below.)
2. Male propensity to desert. (See (a), (b), (c).)
3. Concern over female infidelity. Relative unconcern over male infidelity. (See (a), (d).)
 - Males dislike promiscuous females.
4. Females in greater demand. (See (a), (b), #1.)
 - Greater male aggressiveness & investment of resources in seeking mates.
5. Greater variability of male reproduction. (See #4, (a).)
6. Greater risk-taking by males.
 - Males have much to gain.
 - Females have very little to gain, everything to lose.

III. Philosophically Interesting Conclusions

- Many beliefs/attitudes/practices explained by sociobiology.
 - Wrongness of adultery, esp. for women.
 - *The Double Standard:* Promiscuity good for men, bad for women.
 - Patriarchy, male aggressiveness. (See esp. #6 above.)
 - The badness of prostitution.
- Perhaps this shows those beliefs/attitudes/practices to be morally arbitrary, unjustified.
- Opposition to prostitution based largely on a *male-centered* value system. (See #3 above.)
 - Feminists should reject this.
- The Double Standard is made obsolete by widespread, effective birth control.

Phil. 1100
Notes #23: Defense of Abortion & Infanticide

I. Abortion & Infanticide

- *Two extreme positions:*
 1. *'Conservative' (anti-abortion) position:* Abortion is permissible only to save the life of the mother (and perhaps not even then (see fn. 3)).
 - a. A fetus is a person.
 - b. Killing a person is seriously wrong (murder).
 - c. Abortion kills a fetus.
 - d. Therefore, abortion is seriously wrong (murder).
 2. *'Liberal' (pro-abortion) position:*
 - A fetus is not a person.
 - There is nothing particularly wrong with destroying it.
- *The problem:* What constitutes a 'person'?
 - There is a continuous change from a zygote, to a baby, to an adult human being.
 - Problem: to find a *morally relevant difference* between a zygote and an adult human being.
 - * Required to justify liberal position.
 - * Some *irrelevant* cutoff points: 'quickening', viability
- People have a strong, non-rational, *emotional* reaction against infanticide.

II. Terminology

- *Person:* A thing that has a serious right to life. *Note:* "person" is a *moral* term.
 - Note: Later, the idea is changed to that of a right to continue as a subject of experiences.
- *Human being:* A member of the species *homo sapiens*. *Note:* "human" is a *non-moral* (descriptive) term.
- "person" should not be used interchangeably with "human":
 - There may be persons who are not human. (Space aliens? Chimpanzees?)
 - There may be humans who are not persons. (Fetuses? Brain-dead humans?)
- Distinguish: *moral* vs. 'factual' (*non-moral*) disputes.
 - Moral question: What properties must an entity have to be a person?
 - Factual questions: is a fetus a human being? What properties does a fetus have?

III. When Is Something a Person?

Thesis: X is a person *only if*: X has a conception of itself as a continuing subject of experiences. This requires self-consciousness.

Argument:

1. X has a right to continued existence as a subject of experiences, only if X can desire to continue, etc.
 - a. In general, you can violate someone's right to A only if they wanted A.
 - b. Therefore (?), X has a right to A if and only if: X is capable of desiring A, and if X desires A then others are *prima facie* obligated not to deprive X of A.
 - c. Therefore, if it is impossible for a given individual to desire A, then he lacks a right to A.
2. X can desire to continue, etc., only if X has a concept of itself as a continuing subject of experiences.

3. Therefore, X has a right to continued existence, etc., only if X has a concept of itself as a continuing subject of experiences.

Objections:

- A. Against 1a: Suppose a person in a temporary state of depression says (sincerely), “I wish I were dead.” Would it then be permissible to kill him?
B. Against 1a: Suppose X is asleep and so cannot desire anything. Is it permissible to kill him?

Reply:

- We must modify (1a), perhaps like this: You can violate X’s right to A only if X *would* want A if X were not asleep, unconscious, drugged, deceived, or conditioned not to want A.
- X must still have the conceptual *capacity* to desire A.

IV. Alternative Proposals

Alternative cutoff points:

a. Conception.

Problem: how is a human zygote different from a cat zygote?

b. The attainment of human form.

This is obviously morally irrelevant. (Your rights can’t be dependent on your shape or physical appearance.)

c. The ability to move about spontaneously.

Problem: Why would this be relevant? Does this mean all animals & some machines have rights?

d. Viability.

Problem: (i) Suppose a fetus learned to talk in the womb. Would it then be permissible to kill it? (ii) Is it permissible to kill Siamese twins?

e. Birth.

Problem: See (i) above.

V. Refutation of the Conservative Position

- Conservative position depends on the *potentiality principle*: If property P endows a thing with a right to life, then the *potential* to develop P also endows a thing with a right to life.
 - Hence, fetuses would have a right to life by virtue of their potential to become adult human beings.
- Objection: the potentially-intelligent kitten example
 - It is not seriously wrong to refrain from injecting the kitten and kill it instead.
 - The kitten is a potential person.
 - So potential persons lack the rights of persons.

Phil. 1100
Notes #24: Why Abortion Is Immoral

I. Initial Review of the Dispute

- Do fetuses have a right to life?
- An argument here needs a *moral* premise and a *descriptive* (non-moral) premise.

Anti-abortion

(1) Fetuses: are alive from the moment of conception, have a human genetic code, look like babies, and/or are human beings.

(2) It is wrong to: destroy human life, kill babies, and/or kill a human being.

(3) So abortion is wrong.

Problems:

- Is it wrong to destroy a human cancer-cell culture?
- Not clear that a fetus is *a human being*.

Pro-abortion

(1) Fetuses: are not persons, are not rational agents, are not members of society.

(2) A being has a right to life only if: it is a person/rational agent/member of society.

(3) So fetuses have no right to life.

Problems:

- Is it alright to kill infants? Retarded people? Mentally ill people (not rational)? Hermits (not members of society)?

II. Why Is It Wrong to Kill You?

Bad answers:

- Because it 'brutalizes' the killer.
- Because it makes your family & friends sad.

Good answer:

- Because it inflicts one of the greatest possible losses on the victim: it "deprives one of all the experiences, activities, projects, and enjoyments that would otherwise have constituted one's future."
 - This explains why we think killing is one of the worst crimes.
 - This is consistent with the fact that people who are dying prematurely regard their death as a very bad thing.
- Some implications:
 1. It would also be wrong to kill intelligent aliens (who have futures like ours).
 2. It *might* be seriously wrong to kill some nonhuman animals. Depends on how valuable their futures are.
 3. Does *not* imply that euthanasia is wrong.
 4. It is wrong to kill infants and children.
- ***Abortion is seriously wrong:***
 1. What makes murder wrong is that it deprives the victim of a future like ours (FLO).
 2. Therefore, any action that deprives a victim of a FLO is similarly prima facie wrong.
 3. Abortion deprives the fetus of a FLO.
 4. Therefore, abortion is prima facie wrong (in a way similar to murder).

- Note: This does not presuppose that a fetus is a person (in the normal sense).
- It does argue that merely potential persons have a right to life.

III. Rival Theories

- The desire account: It is wrong to kill people because people strongly desire to continue living.
 - Note: The claim must be that a strong desire to live is a *necessary* condition on the wrongness of killing a being (not merely a sufficient condition).

Problems:

1. This implies that it is ok to kill people who don't have a strong desire to live: unconscious people, people who are asleep, people who are tired of life, depressed people.
 2. The whole *reason* why people desire to continue living is *because of* the value of their future life.
- The discontinuation account: It is wrong to kill people because it discontinues (cuts off) their valuable experiences.
 - The only difference between this and the FLO account is that in the discontinuation account, the being must have had valuable experiences in the past.
 - But this addition seems arbitrary. It seems to be wrong to deprive someone of their valuable future, regardless of whether their *past* is valuable (what does that have to do with it?)

IV. Other Objections: Additional Conditions Required for a Future to Be Valuable

- In order for X to be of value to Y, Y must value X.

Reply: A person's future can be valuable (to them) even if they do not presently value it. Consider a person who attempts suicide, but is rescued and later goes on to have a productive and valuable life.
- If Y is incapable of apprehending X as a benefit, then X is not a benefit to Y.

Reply: A person might stand to benefit from a medical procedure, even if they cannot understand it and do not know it would benefit them. People who are indoctrinated, drugged, or unconscious may also fail to recognize what is in their interests.
- Only sentient beings can be 'victims.' Non-victims cannot be wronged.

Reply: "Of course embryos can be victims: when their lives are deliberately terminated, they are deprived of their futures of value, their prospects."

 - It is also wrong to kill unconscious people.

V. Is Contraception Wrong?

- No. Why: there is no subject of the would-be loss (there is no actually-existing thing which loses its FLO). Candidates:
 - 1) A sperm cell loses its FLO.
 - 2) An ovum loses its FLO.
 - 3) Each of them (individually) loses its FLO.
 - 4) The pair of them (jointly) lose their FLO.
- Note why each of these seems to be false.

Phil. 1100

Notes #25: Defense of Abortion

A Common Argument against Abortion

- The development of an entity from conception through birth to childhood is continuous. There is no natural place to draw a line.
- Therefore, we should say that a fetus is a person from the moment of conception.

Reply:

The development from an acorn into an oak tree is continuous. It does not follow that an acorn is an oak tree.

Thomson's Main Argument

- Abortion is permissible *regardless of whether a fetus is a person.*

The Violinist Example

A famous violinist has a fatal kidney disease. The only way he can be saved is if he is hooked up to your body for nine months, so that your kidneys can be used to extract poisons from his blood as well as your own. During the night, a society of music lovers has kidnapped you and hooked you up to him. If you unplug yourself, he will die. Is it permissible to disconnect yourself?

Argument:

1. You are not morally obligated to remain hooked up to the violinist.
2. A fetus in a mother's body is relevantly like the violinist.
3. Therefore, you are not obligated to remain hooked up to the fetus.

The irrelevance of personhood: The violinist is clearly a person. Still, you are not obligated to give him the use of your body. So, *even if* a fetus is a person with full rights, you still are not obligated to keep it alive.

The Extreme View

Some say that abortion is impermissible even to save the life of the mother. For:

- 1) Directly killing an innocent person is wrong. (Even to save someone else's life.)
- 2) Abortion directly kills an innocent person (the fetus).
- 3) So abortion is wrong, even to save someone's life.

Reply:

- Compare the violinist case again. "If anything in the world is true, it is that you do not commit murder, you do not do what is impermissible, if you reach around to your back and unplug yourself from that violinist to save your life."
- People have a right of self-defense. If a person is posing a grave threat to your life (even unintentionally), you may kill him to save yourself.
- "A right to life does not guarantee having either a right to be given the use of or a right to be allowed continued use of another person's body—even if one needs it for life itself." (Compare: Libertarian view of rights.)
- Do third parties have a right to intervene? Yes, on the side of the mother, because the body the fetus is occupying is *hers* (the mother's).

Objection #1

- Perhaps the mother gave the fetus a right to use her body, by getting pregnant. Analogy: what if you had *hooked yourself up* to the violinist initially? Perhaps then you granted him a right to the use of your kidneys.
- Note that this argument would not apply to rape victims.
- What about accidental pregnancies? Probably does not apply here either.

The People-Seeds Example

There are people-seeds that drift around and periodically come into someone's house through the window and take root in the carpet. They grow into people. Suppose you have taken every reasonable precaution to prevent them from coming into your house, but somehow one got in and took root in your carpet. Have you now given it the right to use your house?

Good Samaritanism

- *Good Samaritan*: Person who goes out of his way to help others, at significant cost to himself.
- *Minimally Decent Samaritan*: Person who undergoes small costs to help others—the minimum required of a decent human being.
- Suppose you only had to stay hooked up to the violinist for 1 hour to save his life. Then you should agree—any Minimally Decent Samaritan would help.
- But the 9 month commitment is too much of a sacrifice to *require* of someone. Only a very Good Samaritan would accept this.

Objection #2

- Perhaps the mother has a special obligation to the fetus because she is *its mother*. Not like the violinist.

Reply:

- “Surely we do not have any such ‘special responsibility’ for a person unless we have assumed it, explicitly or implicitly.”
- If the mother took reasonable precautions against having a child, she did not assume any such obligation.
- Compare objection #1 above. The upshot seems to be that a woman has a right to abort in cases of either rape or accidental pregnancy where she used a (normally) reliable contraceptive—but perhaps not in other cases.

Objection #3 (not in the paper)

- Perhaps the violinist analogy is not fair, since you are not the cause of the violinist's presence, but the mother is the cause of the fetus' presence in her body (excluding rape cases).

Phil. 1100 Review of Unit 4

Know these concepts:

Unnaturalness
Esp. natural function view
Sociobiology/evolutionary psychology
Fitness
Adaptations
Group selection/individual selection
Male, female, definition

Know these people's basic views:

Leiser
Dworkin & feminism
On prostitution
On patriarchy
On abstract reasoning
Yamada, & Japanese attitudes
Dawkins, incl.:
Assumptions of sociobiology
Selfish gene theory
Tooley
Marquis
Thomson

Know these arguments:

Biblical view of homosexuality
+ Objection to it
Unnaturalness of homosexuality, incl.
The "natural function" view
Leiser's 2 main objections
Libertarian view of prostitution
The individual rights/self-ownership
argument
Why prostitution might be good
Why prostitution laws are harmful
Sociobiological explanation of:
The Double Standard
Anti-prostitution attitudes
Tooley's argument against fetus right-to-life,
incl.:
General criterion of rights
Marquis' argument against abortion, incl.:
Why murder is wrong
Why contraception isn't wrong
Thomson's pro-abortion argument, incl.:
Her view of the right to life

Know these examples & what they show:

Cracking a walnut with a hammer
Potentially-intelligent kitten
Violinist
People seeds