

Final review

Here are some questions, ideas, and issues to be aware of. Note that questions/ideas/issues that I put under one heading are potentially relevant to other topics (e.g. if you are writing on maximizing profits, there may be things you should consider that are under the heading of wasting time).

Evading / cooperating with the law

- Note that many of the same issues arise here and in discussions of not maximizing profits. This is because cooperation usually doesn't maximize profits, and sometimes complying doesn't either.
- If there is a duty to cooperate, is this only when it is not too demanding?
 - If so, what counts as too demanding? Is this sensitive to how good the outcome of cooperating could be (e.g. when more good can be done, the company can be obligated to make greater sacrifices)?
- Of course you have to talk about Ostas.
 - Note that Ostas and Thoreau seem to agree to some extent – we have a *prima facie* duty to evade unjust laws.
- Friedman seems to think that companies should always comply with the law, but never cooperate when it is not in their interests.
 - There's some overlap with Hosein here: both seem to think that we have a *prima facie* duty to respect democratic decisions and democratic decision-making processes.
- Collective action:
 - Cooperating with (or complying with) the law can be a way of participating in a collective action (aimed at, perhaps, having a well-functioning society).
 - But complying with the law can also make us complicit in injustices (when the law or society is unjust).
 - Failure to cooperate can make one complicit in harms.
 - E.g. climate change may be due to lots of companies only reducing their emission to the level dictated by the law, which is not enough to mitigate climate change.
 - Discrimination may be another example: some social injustices might be due to lots of companies complying with anti-discrimination laws, but not cooperating.

Maximizing company profits

- Again, a lot of the issues that arise for cooperating/complying with the law are relevant here.
- There seems to be a *prima facie* duty to do what owners want (which is not always maximizing profits).
 - Which owners? In class, we saw that there are arguments for prioritizing just the company's own interests, the goals/interests of current owners, and the goals/interests of future owners.
 - For other organizations (nations, families), there seem to be good reasons to factor in the goals/interests of likely future members when making a decision.

- What reasons override the duty to pursue owners' goals/interests?
 - Social good?
 - Justice? (As we discussed in class, there seem to be cases where what is most just is not what does the most social good)
 - Participating/opting out? As we saw in class, a lot of people think that it was wrong for drug companies to be part of the opioid crisis, even when a single company would not make a difference, and when the companies benefitted quite a bit.
 - How strong are each of these duties relative to one another (e.g. if you have to choose between them, is justice more important than social good)?
- Think about discrimination: many companies claim that discrimination furthers their profits, but in many cases your classmates still thought discrimination would be morally wrong.
- Think about unjust power structures:
 - As we saw in class, these can benefit companies. But many of your classmates thought that they were only permissible either if the company couldn't survive without them or if the company was serving some very important social need.
- Think about marketing:
 - Subliminal messaging or manipulative marketing (especially to vulnerable groups) can increase profits. There seem to be good arguments that it is often morally wrong.

Wasting time

- Connection to Friedman:
 - Many of you thought that it would be wrong for drug companies to sell opioids to addicts, even though, if they didn't, someone else would.
 - This suggests that it is wrong to be part of an injustice or to be complicit in harm, even when one doesn't make a difference.
 - This is part of Thoreau's argument for not contributing to unjust governments (and thus part of an argument for wasting time on the job).
- Connection to collective action:
 - Loafing might be an attempt to opt out of collective harm.
- Connection to company ownership:
 - There seems to be a *prima facie* duty to do your job, because of a contract between you and the company. But who is the contract with? The owners? Most of them are likely to be gone in 6 months...
- Morally relevant consent:
 - Does the wrongness of loafing depend on whether one gave MRC to one's contract? How easy/hard is that?
- If there are duties to one's co-workers, or to the public, which require one to not loaf, these are *prima facie*; you'll have to compare how strong these duties are to the strength of the duty to loaf.