

Business ethics

Mid-term review

- If anything you say disagrees with any of the following views, that is an obvious objection you must address.
- The *status quo* view: most normal business practices in the U.S. are permissible and just.
 - A great many people in the U.S. (especially those who are doing well) accept the *status quo*. If your view says that, e.g., most normal marketing practices, or most normal business practices, are immoral, or that very few people consent to their jobs, you are making a surprising claim and have to defend your view.
 - What are Anderson and Stoljar, for example, going to say about why people accept the *status quo*?
- Paine: Marketing to people who are not competent to make good consumer decisions is morally wrong.
 - And marketing is also wrong when it frustrates consumer satisfaction.
 - Paine also thinks that children lack relevant information: they have little sense of who they will be in the future.
 - Think about how this might apply to autonomy more generally. Does a lack of knowledge of possible alternatives make a choice non-consensual? E.g. if an oppressed person adapts their preferences, but doesn't realize that non-oppressive systems could exist, are their choices consensual?
- Crisp: Persuasive marketing is wrong.
 - Crisp thinks that persuasive marketing is wrong because it makes consumers less autonomous.
 - It creates conflicts between first and second order desires, creates desires in A for reasons that A would reject, and subconsciously manipulates A's desires.
 - Crisp and Paine diverge: Crisp is interested in how the marketing reduces the autonomy of the consumer, whereas Paine is focused on marketing to people who already lack autonomy.
 - In some ways they agree, though, since marketing that is contrary to one's second order desires in some ways frustrates consumer satisfaction
- Stoljar: Taking advantage of defective desires is wrong; systems built on defective desires are unjust.
 - Stoljar and Crisp agree that subconsciously manipulated desires are not autonomous.
 - But Crisp thinks that, if one's first and second order desires agree, and one would accept the reasons for which one has one's desires, then this is a sign of autonomy.
 - Stoljar would disagree: if a person is manipulated unconsciously, they can come to endorse and desire this manipulation, but they are still not acting autonomously.
 - Crisp is worried about the manipulation of the desires, but Stoljar is also interested in the wrongness of taking advantage of these defective desires. E.g.

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- an abusive husband might wrongfully take advantage of their wife's socialization, even if they do not themselves cause that socialization.
- On Stoljar's view, acting on adaptive preferences is not always autonomous, even though it can be best for one.
- Anderson: Power structures that are too non-democratic are unjust.
 - She draws analogies to clearly unjust political structures (dictatorships) and argues that power structures in businesses can be very similar.
 - The class gave a number of examples of unjust power structures (I put these on the adaptive preferences handout) that fit Anderson's view.
 - She seems ok with some sort of hierarchy (she doesn't seem to advocate giving up entirely on corporations or firms).
 - Much of the class thought that seemingly unjust hierarchies might sometimes be justified if they are necessary for vital social functions.
 - Note that Anderson is not addressing the competence or informedness of people within these power structures.
 - She thinks that choices between bad options are not necessarily consensual or free.
 - Think about the Rumpelstiltskin case we discussed in class; most of the class agreed that there was a lack of morally relevant consent.
 - This might be a form of coercion.
 - She thinks that the ability to leave a bad situation does not necessarily make one's choice to stay free.