

Indiana Philosophical Association
Spring Meeting Saturday,
April 16, 2005

University of Indianapolis Schwitzer Student
Center, lower level Indianapolis, IN

Program Announcement

- 9:30** Coffee
- 10:00** "Thomas Hobbes as a Virtue Ethicist: Critique of Boonin-Vail's Interpretation of
Hobbes' Moral Theory," Gregory Sadler, Ball State University at ISP
Commentator: Rebecca Rozelle-Stone, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
- 11:00** "Marginal Cases Redux,"
Franklin Mason
Commentator: Shin Kim, Indiana State University
- 12:00** Lunch
- 1:30** Business Meeting
- 2:00** "Schmidtz on Desert as a Forward-looking Concept,"
Peter Celello, Bowling Green State University
Commentator: Tully Borland, Purdue University
- 3:00** "Reasoning Adaptively Instead of Logically?"
Thomas Foster, Ball State University, and Mike Slosarz
Commentator: Russell DiSilvestro, Bowling Green State University

Abstracts

Thomas Hobbes as a Virtue Ethicist: Critique of Boonin-Vail's Interpretation of Hobbes'

Moral Theory

David Boonin-Vail argues that Hobbes is best viewed as a virtue ethicist, an interpretation that provides additional insight into Hobbes' moral philosophy than that provided by other commentators. I argue that, despite appealing features of Boonin-Vail's interpretation, it has two weaknesses. First, his appeal to habituation and revealed disposition is not sufficient to make Hobbes a virtue ethicist, since ultimately, for Hobbes, virtues are conceived of as rule-governed. Second, Hobbes' view on the relationship between individuals and the state leaves little space for any development of virtue not defined by and subordinated to the state. So, Boonin-Vail's virtue ethics interpretation makes Hobbes only marginally a virtue ethicist, not one in a fuller and more typical sense of the term.

Marginal Cases Redux

The Argument from Marginal Cases is the cornerstone of the animal liberationists' theoretical edifice. If cogent, it requires that we radically alter our treatment of many species of nonhuman animal. Its power and its allure derive from its claim that mere consistency requires that we extend to those nonhuman animals that same respect we afford to human beings. It does not ask us to simply grant a certain moral status to nonhuman animals based upon the possession of this or that trait. Rather it asks us first to reflect upon those traits of human beings that make us matter as we do and then claims to find them among certain nonhuman animals. It concludes, as it must, that those nonhuman animals in possession of this trait (and this includes most animals whose meat we eat and upon whose bodies we experiment) matter no less than do human beings. First I reconstruct the argument. Next I assess it. I conclude that it fails in its stated purpose; it does not prove that some nonhuman animals matter as much as do we. Last I consider what consequences its failure has upon the call of those who endorse it to radically change the way we conceive of our obligations to nonhuman animals.

Schmidtz on Desert as a Forward-looking Concept

In 'How to Deserve', David Schmidtz seeks to establish a promissory, or forward-looking, notion of desert to go alongside the conventional compensatory, or backward-looking, notion. Using an oft-discussed passage from Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* as a jumping-off point, Schmidtz makes the claim that one can come to deserve X based on what one does after receiving X. In my essay, I contend that, depending on how this and related claims that Schmidtz makes are understood, he either offers the reader nothing more than what has been argued before by desert believers, or his account simply fails to capture desert in the way he thinks it does. Regardless, Schmidtz's account fails to address adequately all of the claims made by Rawls in the passage.

Reasoning Adaptively Instead of Logically?

Some have held that one of the main items of 'reason' — our understanding of 'if..then...' sentences — comes from an evolutionary instinct which, when carefully examined, will be other than what is understood in 'Formal Logic.' It will not always 'fit' with the order in which we often take matters to hold. Whether this evolutionary instinct and the standard 'order' around a conditional are truly in conflict is what this paper is about.