

Addiction, Drugs, and the Good Life

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Is Addiction a Disease?

Are addicts suffering from a disease? There are three subquestions that we should ask ourselves in order to get a better handle on how to answer this question:

1. What is it to be *addicted* to something?
2. What is it for something to be a *disease*?
3. Why is this question, if it is, an important one?

Use the space below to brainstorm some possible answers, or relevant considerations, to these three questions.

Reasons one might think addiction is not a disease: (1) Addiction is not contagious, (2) Addiction is not biological, (3) Addiction is a matter of choice and personal responsibility, (4) Insofar as it has "symptoms," it's a matter of choice, ... etc. Are these good reasons?

You are addicted to ϕ ing if and only if ... (1) you cannot stop ϕ ing, (2) if you stop, you will suffer withdrawal symptoms, (3) you have no control over whether or not you ϕ , (4) you ϕ even when you no longer want to, (4) ϕ ing is harmful to your physical or psychological health, (5) your desire to ϕ outweighs all your other desires, (6) the project of ϕ ing interferes with your daily life, ... etc. Are these good characterizations of addiction?

Drug Use and the Good Life

What makes a life go best? What kind of things enhance one's overall well-being, and which things detract from it?

Views on Well-Being:

1. *Hedonism*. Pleasant experiences are the only things that have intrinsic value.
2. *Desire Satisfaction*. Satisfying your desires is the only thing that enhances your well-being.
3. *Ideally Rational Satisfaction*. Satisfying the desire that you would have were you ideally rational is the only thing that enhances your well-being.
4. *Objective List*. Some things are just intrinsically good — Love, Friendship, Knowledge, etc. — and your well-being is enhanced by having these things.

Suppose you could take an awesome drug, which has no adverse side-effects, no long-term health consequences, etc., that would make you unimaginably euphoric. Is there any reason to oppose the manufacture and distribution of such a drug?

Nozick's Experience Machine and the Good Life. Suppose that there is a machine that you can hook yourself up to which can simulate any experience. In fact, it can simulate the experience a living an entire life. Let L_1 be your actual life as lived *outside of the machine*. And let L_2 be the Experience Machine's simulation of your actual life. (Note that "from the inside," L_1 and L_2 are entirely indistinguishable.)

- P1** In terms of subjective experience, L_1 and L_2 are identical.
- P2** If Hedonism is true (that is, if the only thing that has intrinsic value is *pleasurable experience*), then if two life-histories are identical in terms of their subjective experiences, both lives are equally valuable for you.
- P3** Life L_1 is more valuable for you than life L_2 .
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- C** Hedonism isn't true.

Could a similar argument be used against the use of this awesome drug? Could a similar argument also be used to show that the *Desire Satisfaction* account of Well-Being is also wrong?