

ASSIGNMENT THREE

Write 5-6 pages on *one* of the following topics. Again you might want to discuss a draft of your paper with Melissa Schumacher, the writing tutor. Papers are due on session 23. Again: be clear, explicit, careful (it is hard to be too explicit in a philosophy paper); and if you can, thoughtful and original. Let depth take care of itself.

1. Is there anything special about higher order desires? Does the notion help capture the intuitive idea of the desires that we identify with? How is this relevant to the idea of freedom. And, in turn how does this relate to the idea of moral responsibility? Are we, for instance, specially responsible for acting on the desires with which we identify?
2. Is there anything new in recent empirical work that challenges the idea that we are free? (I.e. anything that would not have been familiar to Hobbes?) Explain what exactly what the challenge is, and make explicit exactly what is being attributed to our conception of free will for this to provide a challenge. Say what you think the best response is. If you think that it doesn't work, explain how much our ordinary idea of freedom would need to be revised to survive the challenge. Would we be left with something that does the work we expect it to do?
3. Is it true that libertarian ideas must make what we end up doing a matter of chance? (We talked about this briefly in class.) But if so, does this show that they cannot provide a sound basis for moral responsibility? Doesn't luck play an important role in our moral responsibility? For instance, isn't running over a child worse than hitting a lamppost, even if both drivers are equally drunk? (You might look at Nagel's paper here, in *RR*). Is it plausible to say that luck only affects how we end up acting, whereas it is our deep capacities that really matter?
4. Is there any way of definitively showing whether psychological egoism is true or false? What consequences does it have for ethical egoism? Is ethical egoism an interesting doctrine if psychological egoism is true? Is there any way of convincing an ethical egoist that they ought to care for other people? In seeing egoism as a truly ethical issue are they already conceding something that can be used to persuade them?

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