

Reading Response VIII (word count: 336)

“Suffering-Focused Ethics: Defence and Implications” - Magnus Vinding

Argument Reconstruction (word count: 94)

- I. (Definition) Suffering and happiness are an overall state of feeling in a given moment.
- II. The problem of suffering is the greatest problem of all.
- III. The power and potential of suffering is much greater than that of happiness. In general, there is a lot more to lose than to gain.
- IV. A small percentage of suffering leads to a large number of people suffering in the future when the population gets increasingly large.
- V. The state of non-existence is unproblematic and “perfect”.
- VI. Therefore, we should prioritize the reduction and prevention of suffering over the creation of happiness.

Observations (word count: 242)

The author repeatedly makes the point in this book that “either we are a hundred dollars richer at the price of allowing more extreme suffering in the world, or we are a hundred dollars poorer for the gain of creating a world with less extreme suffering”, implying it is the same thing to give up gaining \$100 compared to giving away \$100 for some greater good. I disagree with this statement, as I believe it is certainly different being given the opportunity to gain \$100 compared to giving up \$100, as one is an opportunity to gain money or improve the world, the other is an opportunity to lose money and improve the world or nothing happens at all. Furthermore, if this argument is then extrapolated to some value, let’s say \$1 million, to help the world (as it is not certain that \$100 can even have an impact in every scenario), then the flaws in this statement are even more clear. Giving away \$1 million is not nearly the same as not receiving an extra \$1 million - almost everyone on this planet cannot afford the first option, but they can afford the second option.

This flawed argument is what leads the author to the idea that we should treat giving up goods for good the same as not receiving goods to prevent suffering from happening, as a solution for the conclusion reached (premise VI), which I believe is an incorrect solution.