

Reading Questions for February 27

These questions cover part of a chapter by Fred Feldman called “Utilitarianism, Victimism, and the Morality of Killing” from a book called *Confrontations with the Reaper*. The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

*Background:*

This week, we’re looking at the question of when killing is wrong. We’ll take a somewhat indirect approach to this question, focusing on why killing is wrong, with the idea being that once we figure out why it’s wrong, we’ll be able to know when it’s wrong. To help us answer this question, we’ll work through a couple of book chapters by Feldman. An advantage of doing things this way is that Feldman is a very good writer, and so looking at how he writes should be helpful for you as you start to think about how you’ll write your final paper for this class.

*Questions:*

1. On page 157, in the first two paragraphs, Feldman does a number of things that it’s good to do at the start of a piece of philosophical writing. What are some of the nice things that he does?
2. On pages 157-63, Feldman offers some distinctions that help clarify his question. What are the distinctions he discusses? Any other examples of good writing you noticed in this portion?
3. In the section titled “Hedonic Act Utilitarianism and the Morality of Killing”, which runs from 163 to 166, Feldman introduces Hedonic Act Utilitarianism and discusses a case. What is Hedonic Act Utilitarianism? What is the case he discusses and why does he discuss it?
4. In the next section (166-7), Feldman criticizes HAU’s explanation of the wrongness of killing. What’s his criticism? Is it a good one?