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24.06J / STS.006J Bioethics
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Recitation 04: Neonatal Dilemmas and Personal Identity

1. Presentation: Kent Huynh on Neonatal Dilemmas

2. The Singer/Kuhse argument

P1. A human life is more valuable than the life of a cabbage.

P2. A human life is more valuable than the life of a cabbage only if there is some feature of the human life such that possessing that feature makes a thing more valuable than a thing lacking it.

C1 There is some such feature.

P4. The relevant features are “consciousness, rationality, autonomy, and self-awareness.”

P3. Some human lives lack “consciousness, rationality, autonomy, and self-awareness.”

C2. Some human lives are more valuable than other human lives—*i.e.*, not all human life is of equal worth.

The argument is valid. If you want to deny the conclusion, then you must reject a premise.

3. The psychological approach to personal identity: thought experiments

- appendectomy
- brain download/upload
- brain download/upload with body switch

In each case, do you exit the lab? If yes, then you accept *the psychological approach*.

4. The animalist approach to personal identity: an argument

P1. You are a thinking thing.

P2. There is an organism in your vicinity.

P3. The organism is a thinking thing.

P4. There are no other thinking things in your vicinity.

C. You are an organism.

The argument is valid. If you want to deny the conclusion, then you must reject a premise. To accept the conclusion is to accept *the animalist approach*.

If you accept the animalist approach, you must reject the psychological approach.

If you accept the psychological approach, you must reject the animalist approach.