

“Morality itself does not seem to be a suitable object of passion.”

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By Caroline and Michael

Introduction (What Is It)

This meeting critically examines an essay by American moral philosopher Susan Wolf discussing the problems that arise from the implications of a life of moral sainthood — a life completely “committed to the improving the welfare of others or of society” (Wolf, 420) — being neither attainable nor universally desirable. We retrace Wolf’s argument based on the dual moral frameworks of classical utilitarianism and the Kantian imperative while evaluating her process of reasoning. Attempting to offer our own distinctive insights into the praxis of moral sainthood, we affirm Wolf’s conclusion and produce the consensus that the ideal of moral sainthood, like all other ideals, is best pursued when its pragmatic infeasibility is fully acknowledged.

Transcript

[VIEW RECORDING - 54 mins \(No highlights\)](#)

Kolb

We read something by Susan Wolf in SHI, I don't think it was Moral Saints.

Caroline

I think it was something on the meaning of life. Yeah, something like that. Wait, so just to recap. She's saying - moral saints are kind of like people who try to be as moral as they can; They try to make their every action and every kind of behavior as moral as possible. And then generally, they are according to Susan Wolf, like, not good people to be - not morally good but it's not good for your well being and you wouldn't want to be around this kind of person she's saying in this essay.

So are you guys convinced by her conclusion? I have my reservations honestly after reading it.

Kolb

I have two people I know in real life that I would after reading the definition consider moral saints - to some extent. I've always kind of felt intuitively like what some people were doing was wrong by being perfectly moral but I would also feel really bad if I ever pointed it out to them or anyone else, right? Because they are just good people.

Caroline

Wait so how do you tell? That they're like what Wolf describes?

Kolb

Regardless of the situation, they're just always trying to do the morally correct thing, they're trying to be unconditionally nice. They have zero sense of self-preservation. Right? So, yeah, I think I had some sort of intrinsic bias against moral saints coming and reading this. And I'm quite convinced by Susan Wolf. but I think it's just kind of an argument where it's just: an excess of anything is bad.

Caroline

I don't think I have ever encountered moral saints in my life. And the thing is even if I did encounter someone who's a moral saint, I feel like maybe the world has trained me in a way to think that maybe some people are just actors, just like what we read in Nietzsche: they project an outward personality which makes everything they do seem deliberate and purposeful. I would think that a lot of people who outwardly portray themselves as moral saints aren't actual moral saints, but I don't know. I still have this positive idea of a moral saint, although I feel like Susan Wolf does not.

Michael

Really the people we see around us, their lives aren't as well documented or observed by us to really say they are moral saints. And by that, I mean, well we don't know if they're putting on a facade or say if they're just doing it for college, if it's a person our age, or if it's all the person, well, what is their history?

Were they always like this? So in short, if we were to talk about, well, is this person a moral saint or not, it might make more sense to talk about historical personages or people who have Wikipedia articles about them, rather than people in our lives.

Just exactly because of the point that Kolb and Caroline raised.

Caroline

That's true. Oh, I mean, sorry.

Junyi Liu

Sorry. Wolf did say that there're two kinds of moral saints here. One kind is like, you actually do it because of love for the people and the other kind is just, you know, you do it because you kind of feel like you have to do it.

It's, well, Wolf doesn't really limit it to just people who have love in their hearts; you can put on a facade, but you can still be a moral saint, it's just, that's not the most optimal, as she said.

Michael

Well, but she also says something at the most fundamental level. So if you're motivated by duty, but if you kind of completely adhere to this motivation, then superficially, there's

no distinction between being completely motivated by this obligation to moral deeds or being motivated by this love for moral deeds.

And she also makes two kinds of distinctions as well. So two categories. One is between love and duty and a second is between just Kantian or Categorical imperative-wise, motivated moral saints, and utilitarian moral saints, right, and yeah, so do we all read Kant?

Cassandra L

Yeah, that's a good point, though, at that distinction. I think the best example I can think of is between that distinction that Wolf makes, which she talks a lot about religion, not specifically a lot in this essay, but a lot in her work, and you know, a good distinction is you know, in Jesus a prophet who is, you know, basically distinguished to be the most - the essence - an emblem of the categorical imperative, right?

We have this moral obligation because we're human, and he gave ultimate love to everybody, and, you know, is said to have, you know, turned the other cheek.

And there's that whole aphorism, if someone, you know, I think strikes you first, you give them the other cheek, you know, just really pushing it down, you know, and then you have followers of his religion. So followers of his religion, right? And they don't necessarily show, you know, the same degree of just absolute kindness and love that he showed, but they practice it because they're told to, right? And that could be an example of that other, that other kind of moral saint, which has a degree of superficiality and just does good things out of, you know, this compulsion and this burden.

Michael

So I guess, really, what you're describing here is intuition. Yeah, I guess that makes sense.

Kolb

So do we think our arguments make sense because she does refute all these different types separately.

Michael

What is her conclusion to begin with?

Kolb

I thought it's actually really clear. There's something at the end right here.

Caroline

So I really like how she writes.

Cassandra L

Oh, yeah, she's such a good writer. My god, first of all she's easy to understand. If you're reading Kant, there's no way you're gonna understand it through one read. All of Kant's stuff, especially his earlier stuff about, you know, the categorical comparative then all his axioms and stuff, it's so complicated, but she writes about morality in such a clear way. She kind of reminds me of Peter Singer if you guys have read that any of Peter Singer's stuff. Yeah, he's very clear yeah.

Caroline

I like how she says over again 'that is.' She uses it a lot. It's like she's guiding the reader through. It's so satisfying to read her prose.

Michael

I think her style is okay.

Caroline

Okay, Michael, the critic.

Cassandra L

But what do you, do you like Kant, Michael?

Michael

I like Kant, yeah.

Cassandra L

Do you like Kant more?

Michael

You can't really, are you asking me to rank which philosophers I'm into?

Cassandra L

Maybe.

Michael

I can give you like a nonsense list.

Kolb

Go ahead, Michael, I mean, I agree with you right now.

Caroline

Oh my God.

Michael

No, I wasn't, ranting against. Okay, let's stop digressing.

Michael

Um, we were asking what conclusion was because. Honestly, I still don't understand, what - really, yes, so she writes all of this to answer the question of how maybe it's not ideal to be a moral saint, but is there any greater nuance to it?

Kolb

I mean, I think the main argument is, okay, I didn't find exactly on which page, but I thought this was also really clear: it just straight up says it specifically, they call into question the assumption that it is always better to be morally better. And so being good and being morally good are two different things, which is, I guess, I suppose it's controversial because we usually just, when we say things the good, we refer to things that are more classically maybe virtues, but now it can just be whatever is moral.

And I think this argument kind of says we can't assume either.

Caroline

That kind of the way you phrased it kind of makes it sound, you know, skeptic, but I feel her general intent is to make us question, like you said Kolb, to question our assumptions and to... It kind of goes meta. She goes deep into examining the different theories, different philosophies, and kind of the way that society generally thinks. And she's trying to get behind that, in order to get us to challenge our assumptions about moral saints. I think my assumptions are not fully challenged though.

Kolb

I wouldn't say you're wrong though: she's a bit skeptic here, because I think that she also concludes that you can't really find a moral framework, or any framework, I wouldn't use the word moral, but any framework to define being good.

Michael

So skepticism.

Kolb

Yeah, kind of, I think. I mean, it's not so much that, mean, that assumption is valid, of course. That's, I guess, more of a...

Michael

I don't think that's the exact conclusion she's arguing towards. I think she does recognize two generally universal frameworks of what the good is, but she's pointing out that they're in conflict with, well, so rather moral good - the two frameworks that form the moral good that she gives are in conflict with all other spheres of life.

And really... Okay. I think my assumptions also haven't been challenged enough, Caroline, in this regard. Because I feel like I went into this with a certain level of moral skepticism already and I left this with the same amount of moral skepticism so I don't really, I feel like I just examined something that I already kind of grasped. I don't know if you guys feel the same.

Cassandra L

So maybe that means you're ahead of the game. Yeah, we do agree.

Caroline

So you previously agreed with, you pre-agreed with Susan Wolf?

Michael

Or, Susan Wolf affirmed what seemed to me to be apparent. Would any of you agree with this statement?

Cassandra L

I agree with you. I mean I do think maybe I'm not as ahead as you, I didn't make a lot of assumptions she initially presents. Or, a lot of her path of reasoning is not something I would have thought of otherwise but that's the point of philosophy. But I did think there were a lot of - especially its social relevance, you know she asked a lot about understanding, first of all the way you present yourself in society with regard to the way you act and then also the way that you see other people in their morality and their goodness. And Kolb said it did make me think a lot about there are people that I know whom I think would probably fit exactly into this kind of emblem that she's kind of codified as like ultimately these two types moral saints, which is very interesting, because otherwise I probably wouldn't have made that distinction.

Michael

Yeah, that's also true

Kolb

Caroline, I'm assuming you said you weren't you weren't really convinced for a different reason as in you actually disagree that being morally good is necessarily good.

Caroline

I mean, I guess I don't entirely disagree with her argument.

but maybe it's this naive thought that maybe it's just the way that society is perceived, or the way that our culture is constructed and the way that humans innately... I guess it's that, like Susan Wolf said, we have limitations to our morality. Or just how much we think is enough, because I feel everyone is imperfect and coming from this imperfect kind of perspective and seeing, or trying to become such an ideal would be - I would say contradictory.

Kolb

Moral sanctity, it's very difficult.

Michael

Oh, those are two questions that I wanted to discuss as well.

Michael

So yeah, just something that occurred to me listening to you guys: well, don't you think that making two distinctions for moral sanctity is kind of arbitrary?

Cassandra L

Well, I don't know if I agree with that. Because there's a reason why she makes the distinction between two kinds of moral saints, and that's because one of them is an example of self-directed morality: 'I think that I'm going to do good things because I have a lot of love for other people and I believe that my ultimate purpose is to be as good as possible to others,' and the other one is the more superficial moral saint, who is just doing things because that brings them this feeling of - basically ego - and it helps enrich their good feelings about themselves and it's not necessarily that they're acting on they're not being good just so they can get being good right they're benefiting from it ultimately.

Michael

But ultimately really any form of real life practical moral saying to it would be you kind of inevitably makes these two, right?

Cassandra L

That's a good point.

Yeah, I do have to go guys. Oh, my god, actually you guys are brilliant... I'm gonna come to another meeting.

I do have to go now. Wait, are you guys meeting in February?

Caroline

Oh, I know I think it's just March.

Cassandra L

Okay, we're doing a February meeting, so I'll send that out, bye!

Michael

Okay, but I guess the real novelty to, or one novelty of her arguments - because we were saying we weren't convinced by it and we weren't really changed by it - was that I guess she she points out this distinction and she gives a good line of reasoning as to why you distinguished between That don't her her two categories

So You guys are talking about really how Essentially There's Really moral goodness is just the subset of the good General right that there's really so much more areas of goodness that you can invest your time into That was what you guys were talking about and I just think it touches on the general Problem of idealism that really I need to find is the moral get the same as the good So if you define good as well what it happens did they give they gave or rather Wolf keep on

Um, I loved Wolf's examples dancing, so many examples, or becoming mother Teresa or What the Teresa is interesting because some people hate her.

they think she's a villain. never mind, I wanted to ask, is a dancing moral though.

Kolb

I think she's that dancing Isn't moral, but it's not a bad thing.

Caroline

Hence why it's unreasonable for morality to stop people dancing Wait, she distinguishes there's moral, immoral and unmoral, right?

Kolb

And they're all No, yeah I mean, I don't know she I don't remember reading it, but I I get that there should be a distinction between that And I think the important thing is that for example, that one of the examples she's just for me cooking that's not that's not that's not that's

Caroline

that's uh that's well no sorry it's not moral but you it doesn't mean we shouldn't do it yeah why are we just people i don't know wait you guys remember miles were supposed to come and then elive he was he literally we do you guys remember elita oh oh what's the reading i'm gonna come and yeah elita elita told me in London that he was gonna show up for the for the December one i don't know did you show up last time i i have not seen been online since shy yeah and i had a few friends he said they're all screaming but i think it's a little bit too early sorry i really said that we're gonna come yeah i mean maybe today i'm gonna go better moving forward

Yeah, maybe I'll lead a thought this time a bit, but we'll leave them the benefit of the doubt, maybe we'll pop in.

Um, but anyways, I was thinking that , you know, moral saints, right, they, they kind of seek to change the world, in a sense generally but they, they try to change the world for the better.

Um, and Susan Wolf is saying that hey, these moral saints they're not going to be personally improving themselves, because they're all so focused on improving other people, and helping the general welfare of sight, which made me think of Thomas Jefferson.

Yeah, it's now , liberty, we should all feel for the common good stuff that.

Um, but I feel I feel there's , this, flaw to that argument. I feel , in

but not improving yourself, you kind of can't improve other people, I think, generally. If you want to make change, there's this concept, I guess, well, I think I made it up, but it's the privilege of being able to make and create change.

, if you think of history, I guess individual they're tectonic forces in life, right? , there's, there's a feedback loop of influences where there are social compulsive forces that work on you, but at the same time, you kind of influence these social compulsive forces.

So it's just that, that feedback loop. But when you, when you try to work against these social compulsive forces

you kind of it's hard for you as an individual by yourself to make big scale change the people who we think about in history who make the change are the people who have the money or the power the position or just the privilege of taking that risk taking that time to kind of create change, to change to become a new tectonic force if that makes sense. And this is also a generalization; individuals can also come together to influence world change, if that makes sense, but but I feel without being able without being at some position where you can enact change and and kind of create good for this world, you yourself

Have to be an improved person or at least just you have to also be improving yourself. And to be caring for your own Welfare in order to to improve the welfare and others and that's what I think I What?

financially Not just financially. That's part of it.

Kolb

Yeah, financially, mentally physicall , I get your point.

Michael

So it's and it's crucial to see the distinction between I want to help people I'm gonna spend my entire life volunteering and doing community service I think

Um, is it just us three?

Kolb

No wait, virtual man was actually a person too they said something. I'm so good. Who was that?

Michael

There've been bots joining us in the past meetings that went and left about saying anything.

Kolb

It's a bit fascinating, isn't it? I know, I know what the cogito circle does, they tend to do less strictly philosophical topics.

Michael

So they just talk about whatever.

Kolb

Well, no, no, no, no. They talk about discussable topics. then they apply a philosophical stance to it. Because obviously, they're all philosophically trained.

But, that way, it's also easier for other people to participate.

Michael Ai

Like, current events, current society?

Kolb

Uh, really, yeah, just general historical things. I do have something to talk about, like, the privilege point though, and I think this is kind of a part of where you have to differentiate why people say philosophy isn't applicable in real life because, I mean, it sounds really, obviously in real life, it's, you have to say, yeah, I need the privilege to help others, but it's like, even though it's going to sound really sad, that privilege is still ultimately benefiting more directly and probably more than any amount of benefit to others it's able to provide.

It's, I mean, the comparison I want to make is - when energy is transferred, you're always going to lose energy, right?

So when you get that, I guess the benefit is to give you that privilege and you try to challenge other people, like, you're still the one who ultimately got the most benefit out of that transaction? I don't know if that's a fair thing to say.

Michael

Okay, so what if you make 100k and you get 100k away to starving people in Africa?

Kolb

But you still had that outlet. So the privilege there is you had the outlet to make the 100k, right? So presumably if you gave 100k, if you have the privilege to give 100k to starving people in Africa, then that's to some extent disposable for you and you're able to still live a quality of life without that 100k.

Michael

Okay, I think that point really complicates the question Junyi posted about is. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, it's a moral sanctity achievable in real life.

Kolb

Sorry, what moral sanctity here? Am I missing something?

Michael

Sanctity? I think he uses it incorrectly, it's a malapropism. It's supposed to be sainthood, sanctity is something else.

Kolb

I think on the two types between the utilitarian type and the and the county and I think not really the utility I was gonna say maybe the rational, the duty type

Caroline

but when you were talking you made me think about part of the gospel of wealth or the social

i'm just in in the history lenses right now but I because maybe this is maybe they they are kind of the the rational type they feel it's the duty and Cassandra said the ego is driving them they feel they have to be doing good or just benefit

in society or benefiting people and maybe it isn't just fully moral actions but it is it's it also is this portrayal of privilege if that well it's the assumption is that okay you have wealth though you should do good with it and on what you said cool about some energy being lost I think generally at the end if you if you say that there is zero good in the world and you try to and you have the stance that can make the zero turn into a positive so you have the net positive I think it's still it's still a net positive it's still something beneficial for the world.

and you yourself by giving away something or trying to make this improvement to society, I think you can, I guess, reserve some benefit for yourself, but I feel the net positive goes to society, you guys imagine a scale, I think, yeah.

Kolb

I think if you're the type of moral state that is self-driven, I do agree that that would, I think that would be the only type of moral state that could exist because even if you were being inadvertently benefited in the process that's not something you're concerned about and you wouldn't recognize that either and you you're only being defined as a moral state because if you're in a motivation to do moral things, then that's, that would definitely still be,

Caroline

That's that task, I think.

Michael

Should I give my two cents on this?

Caroline

Yeah, go ahead.

Michael

So what we were talking about this time about privilege.

Well, she addressed that briefly when she's talking about utilitarianism and how utilitarian models would work. And she says something, well, obviously, along the lines of what Caroline said about how it's desirable for everyone to just become a person of privilege to begin with or to kind of adopt this utilitarian lens of wanting to do as much good as possible.

And she discusses that in kind of, you know, because that would imply that more is in a universally desirable ideal, it's only a kind of selectively desirable ideal, but it's a point nevertheless that I think is so what we're just talking about.

And another thing really, yeah, I think the engine or the machine that this output analogy and kind of this reference to the neck, but I think these are really good analogies of know what it's to talk to kind of measure utilitarian moral sainthood, right?

And I think you could also just use it to show that, well, in response to what Juni said, that moral sainthood is not achievable, because yes Caroline, you mentioned as long as you're making a net positive in the world, you're.

You're being a moral saint, but if you just live your life without any one being too bad, then you're still not really kind of decreasing in that good impact.

If you just live a completely mediocre life in the workforce as a blue-colored worker, and you just don't have anything bad in general, then you're contributing to the economy, you're contributing to you're a moral saint.

I mean, tell me if I'm wrong

Caroline

Wait, would that count as a moral saint?

Michael

No, so, it's, and I'm just using that to prove a point, and the point is that Wolf postulated at the beginning that I'm all a saint has to be saying, you know, maximizes his or her efficiency in kind of being an engine for producing moral good.

as much as possible, and with your reference to just thermodynamic entropy, I think really that just goes to show how really, but you could show it regardless, but it's just an

infinitely complex calculus of what decision should I take next to maximize my either my privilege or, you know, my output, my contributions to society, and it's game theoretically impossible, and just to demonstrate what I mean by that.

So if you're just born into this world, you want to become a moral thing. So as early as possible, you want to, well, you can need to just join a non-profit, you can spend your entire childhood, at community organizations, or you can, well, become a philanthropist and start non-profits, so you can do business entries, but then there's moral luck involved, because you don't know if your business ventures

succeed. And if they succeed, if you become a billionaire, then you don't know it at all. If say you were a multimillionaire and you can donate at all and you can still vote hunger, I don't know.

But if you just, if you don't do it, then well, you just, you can't have that much of an impact on both in society.

So, but then again, if you do business ventures and you don't make any money, which a lot of people do, which happens to a lot of people, you don't end up having any kind of tangible impact on the world.

So, there's also moral work involved. And what's more, if we just consider historical saints, St. Peter's St. Paul's and Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, they were all sinners before they, before they had a religious conversion, right?

And they started doing good. before, thank you. eight or nine years, three times, Paul prosecuted Christians, et cetera, et cetera.

At what point do you have to start becoming a moral saint so that you can qualify as a moral saint?

Caroline

I think it doesn't say that it's okay if you start late. I recall her saying that you can become a moral saint later on in your life too.

Michael

I'm talking about how late.

Kolb

I think we're going by that, I don't believe that moral luck can affect your moral saint or not because what I'm getting at with this is this is a purely ideological thing and I'm honestly you are a moral saint as long as you want to be a moral saint because if you're doing all this philanthropy and all these charity programs in mind that you actually want to do good for the world, then I think it's more important that in terms being the person who's intrinsically motivated to be moral, it's more important that we want to be moral, than how much more impact you've actually made on the world, and moral luck doesn't change that motivation for you.

And so, when Susan Wolf also says that you don't have to find if you were a sinner before yes, the fact that you might have been a sinner before might have unsettled that balance to the point where your life might have not been net positive on this world.

However, you are still in a moral state because your ideology changed the way where you have that intrinsic motivation to be moral.

Michael

Do you want to dismantle this? I'm not saying it's invalid, I'm just asking, do you want to go there?

Kolb

Yeah, sure.

Michael

mean, okay, so you're causing a deontological view that as long as you have the intention, then, sure. Okay, so I decide on the spur of the moment right now.

I'm gonna become a moral saint and then the next second a plane crashes in my apartment. And my role saying But my conviction is steadfast just decided it so at this moment, I really want to become a real well You're dead.

Kolb

You can't be anything if you're dead Okay. I mean, I don't know where I'm a serious. I'm a character.

Wait, can I have a rebuttal or I? Mean no, I really I feel this is the case where it's It's a case I would say sure Because I'm basically this off of our conclusion early that it's impossible to guarantee that you're a moral saying so That you're utilitarian moral age in real life But it is possible to guarantee that you are a content one and so

Oh, if we're talking about whether moral sanctity is attainable, it's only attainable. If we're talking about the Kantian kind, and if you attain it in that way, then it's not impacted by moral luck.

Caroline

I mean, I agree.

Michael

It's pretty easy not to violate the categorical imperative. You can become a vegetable from your entire life. It can be born as a good comatose infant, and you can be kept on life support.

But that would violate the categorical imperative, because if everyone were kept on life support, then it would be an evil to the universe.

did you make the decision to be kept? That's the problem. That's the main critique with the categorical imperative that...

So, really, you can not violate it, you can follow it. but you can just not be moral at the same time.

And sometimes you can break it to do a moral deed that by common sense counts as moral, but you're still breaking it.

And this would count as moral by common sense in the trolley problem. I'm sorry, it's all by common sense, but it's also not moral.

Kolb

I'm good.

Michael

So, really, if it took the trolley problem, pick any option, take any variation. If you do anything, then it kind of does violate the categorical imperative, because if you choose to run over one person, then if everyone in the world run over one person, then that would kind of logical contradictions and you're violating it.

But if you choose not to do anything and you're violating it still. So, or I'm pretty sure that's how it works.

You can another problem with it is that you're susceptible to kind of discover logical qualities of kind of nitpick steps in the derivation at any point of derivation.

So that's just a general utilitarian deontology debate, right?

Kolb

You can't really, there's not really an answer to that yet. Yeah, I guess so. Hmm.

Michael

But what were we talking about originally?

Caroline

Really, but you guys think that it'll be good for the welfare of society if everybody was more or less.

I know utilitarianism would think that it wouldn't be a happy society, but would it be a better society in person to what we have today?

Well first all, what is morality?

Kolb

what? I'm not sure where all it is going by because what I would usually go by is whatever is most contributing to society, right?

I mean, just what is it all?

Caroline

What is it? So just he taught her and good.

Kolb

Just , yeah, yeah, I think that's basically, so, whatever is the best recipe, but then that just sounds a really, really strict dystopia Where everyone does the bare minimum they need to basically cancel out their existence in the world.

at least to be considered not a criminal just don't just at least break even in terms of your presence.

Michael

I mean, but really. Here's the thing.

Kolb

No, no, no, I think that is a good thing though. Right, because I think it's one of those things.

It's . it's basically just communism, right? Yes, somebody would definitely violate that if we put it into practice, but if we're assuming that everyone is a moral saint, it is better for everyone to be a moral saint.

Just, in theory, it is better for everyone to be a moral saint. It's not enforceable.

Michael

Exactly, it's not.

Kolb

But in theory, it's better.

Caroline

But yeah, in theory, a world with everyone as moral saints would be better — it doesn't matter what type — life if everyone were moral saints. In theory.

Michael

But so, what do you put it in practice? you just end up with more?

Kolb

Definitely not.

Michael

Yeah, it's just communism.

Caroline

Literally is. It's fun to consider.

Kolb

Because that is everyone doing what's best for society without any sense of self-reservation. Yeah.

Michael

Really, I think it's also in what Wolf was doing that really, I mean her conclusion itself is just an unattainable ideal, right?

Kolb

I think another part of her conclusion is - Oh, look who showed up. Alida.

Caroline

We have three minutes on this.

Kolb

Okay, I was gonna say it's at the right end she says because what we would typically measure good, moral good over the good for this, a selfish good, right?

But neither gives the whole picture. And so there needs to be a third kind of good to be put into consideration.

don't the a third kind of judgment. I don't really get what the third judgment is. And I think a part of the argument is kind of it's a bit difficult to find a third judgment that works together with the other two to encompass everything.

Caroline

Yeah, wait, reading this. I kind of thought it's me. you know yeah and I was also thinking of when she goes meta I was thinking of what Nagel said about an objective versus subjective and kind of the different perceptions you know that famous essay what it's to be of that you know that it's weird it's where she's challenging just how how we usually think or maybe just the way that I think of it. I do think it's different that she's not invalidating morality itself yeah what someone saying what's it to be a bat would be that's in that same way.

Morality yes it might not be real but at least in morality the way we understand it it's beneficial to us and I think that comparing Nagel to Wolf would take another 20 minutes at the right.

Conclusion

In our meeting, we attempted to conceive of a society with moral saints in various lenses. We analyzed the different types of moral saints she presents — the Loving, the Rational, the Utilitarian, and the Kantian. We delved into the economics and histories in parallel to Susan Wolf's philosophical theories, theorizing how attainable and how beneficial moral sainthood would be. We concluded that the ideal that Wolf presents may merely be an ideal, agreeing that human limitations and imperfections are major obstructions. In reference to our past discussion on Thomas Nagel, we also considered how moral luck factored in the becoming of a moral saint.

Our discourse also centered on a moral saint's contributions to the general good of society. While Wolf argued that moral saints would sacrifice too much of their own well-being and forego improving themselves, we thought that self-improvement would be necessary for moral saints to be as morally good as possible. Considering the role of privilege for an individual to enact large-scale change and weighing personal versus societal impacts, we concluded that the pathway for a moral saint was more complex than thought to be. And though a world full of solely moral saints would be less happy in the view of a utilitarian, the welfare of the world would generally be better.

Though some of us were not fully convinced by Wolf's argument, we all appreciated Susan Wolf's perspective and ability to challenge and induce reflection of our assumptions about morality. We acknowledged that our perceptions — either in awe, repulsion, disdain, or reverence — of moral saints are socially-constructed, founded on our perceptions of human character and the values we have accepted internally.

Attendees

Alida

Ben

Caroline

Cassandra

Junyi

Kolb

Michael

Sophia