

Practical Philosophy: Problems, Conflicts, and Solutions

2017 Dunton Tower (FASS Lounge) Carleton University

Friday, March 11 and Saturday, March 12, 2016

Keynote Address:

Waheed Hussain, University of Toronto

March 11 at 4:00pm

CONSUMER COMPLICITY, SOCIAL ROLES AND THE ILLUSIONS OF PRIVATE PROPERTY

Many people believe that if you purchase a product that is made with child labor, then you are morally complicit in the immoral treatment of the child labourers (e.g. Schwartz 2012). Complicity has become central to the way that many consumers, activists and marketers think about the obligations of consumers.

In this paper, I argue that complicity is the wrong way to think about consumer ethics. Even in cases where consumers knowingly purchase products produced with child labor, they are not complicit in the immoral treatment of the child laborers. The reason is that the global market is not an arena in which unrelated actors enter into relations for the first time. The market is an ongoing social institution that defines specific roles for consumers, producers and states. If consumers do their part in the institution by making purchases based on price-quality considerations, and some unscrupulous producers fail to do their part, violating the rights of workers, then the producers themselves are engaged in the wrongful acts all on their own.

Instead of complicity, I argue that the duties of consumers are best understood in terms of a natural duty that we all have to preserve the legitimacy of a social institution when there is significant noncompliance with the rules (Hussain 2012). If there is no referee at your pickup hockey game, then the duty of enforcing the rules devolves to all of the players collectively. In much the same way, when states are not enforcing the rules of the global market, then all market participants, including consumers, have a special obligation to punish those who break the rules.

PROGRAM

Friday March 11

- 12:45 ... Speakers asked to arrive for introductions
- 1:00 ... Holly Longair (Carleton); **“Jineterismo and the Contradictions of the Cuban Revolutionary State”**
- 1:45 ... Owen Clifton (Carleton); **“Problems with the Asymmetry Thesis: A Liberal Examination of Markets in Women’s Reproductive Labour”**
- 2:30 ... Break (15min)
- 2:45 ... Regina Taptich (McMaster); **“The Extension of a Community’s Constitutional Morality”**
- 3:30 ... Refreshments before Keynote Address
- 4:00 ... **KEYNOTE SPEAKER:** Waheed Hussain (Toronto), **“Consumer Complicity, Social Roles and the Illusions of Private Property”**

Saturday March 12

- 10:00 ... Breakfast for participants, coffee.
- 10:30 ... Ben Trainor (Carleton); **“Research Ethics Boards and Humanities Research: Gatekeepers and the Promotion of Research”**
- 11:15 ... Dennis Papadopoulos (York); **“Defending Patient Phenomenology: A Critique of Murphy’s *Psychiatry in the Scientific Image*”**
- 12:00 ... Break (15 min)
- 12:15 ... Mark S. Lee (Calgary); **“Fuelling the Fire: A Philosophical Analysis of the Health Impact Fund”**
- 1:00 ... Lunch, Snacks at 1:45 (60min)
- 2:00 ... Marian Kelly (Guelph); **“Making the Case for a Basic Income in Canada: A Right to Dignity and Security for All”**
- 2:45 ... Meghan Landriault (Nipissing); **“Transhumanism: Internet Anonymity as a Modern Day Example of the Ring of Gyges”**
- 3:30 ... Break (15min)
- 3:45 ... Bernard Nmai (Carleton); **“New Immigrant Skilled Workers and Inequality: Towards Fundamental Entitlements in Canada”**