

Patrick Wright

EQ Abstract

Throughout the course of the semester we have examined many different works in different mediums. While the specific application of each lesson has varied according to each lesson, there have been a few undeniable themes which have reoccurred throughout. Each reading, film, or song challenged us to think outside of ourselves, both figuratively and very literally. Some questions seemed very strange, yet upon further analysis were revealed to be surprisingly relevant. Many lessons could be drawn from the works presented in the course, but perhaps the most relevant and intriguing debate is that concerning personhood.

Personhood is a nearly indefinable term, yet we all seem to define it in our own way. In *In Defense of Dolphins* arguments were made for the personhood of Dolphins. This text forces the reader not only to determine whether or not Dolphins qualify as non-human persons, but to first establish a criterion by which personhood can be defined. This distinction proved difficult, and was not limited to the example of Dolphins. In the film *Blade Runner* artificially intelligent “replicants” were outlawed and hunted down. Through their many human-like actions and thoughts, the viewer was forced to ask if they too were not persons.

Beyond the simple question of personhood comes the question as to what exactly personhood warrants. What kind of treatment is reserved for persons and why? Many agree that anything qualifying as a person deserves to be treated better than something that is not considered a person. This concept invokes many more ethical questions. In works like Watchmen and The Power and the Glory many characters make sacrifices for what they believe

to be a greater good. Veidt's actions at the end of Watchmen are particularly puzzling as they are so drastic and costly yet also yield a seemingly positive outcome for many.

Almost everyone could agree that killing is wrong. It is engrained in us through biology, spirit, or both. Clearly this idea can be complicated through many circumstances, such as self defense. The Watchmen example would seem to argue strongly for killing as a conditional necessity, while *City of God* seems to portray the absurdity and inherent evil of killing.

In a world of conflict, compromise, friendship, and opposition, it is not unreasonable to say that killing can become necessary in certain situations. Few people can see war as a positive thing, but many great things have been achieved, and terrible things prevented, through war. Almost any man would kill in order to protect his family from danger.

Countless examples could argue the necessity of killing, yet all of these scenarios include an aggressor, one who must be killed so that they will not harm or kill another. Following the principle of nonaction found in The Daodejing of Laozi we can eliminate the aggressor as a factor.

This principle is difficult, as it requires nonaction from every member of a society. A single aggressor destroys the efficacy of the system, yet this principle provides perhaps the only way a society without violence could exist. If every person shared the same ethical code, no one would be forced to compromise that code, and thus no one would suffer violent death.