Researchers Examine the True Meaning of Addiction

The true cause of addiction can spur many discussions. In the most recent edition of the journal *Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology*, a series of articles attempts to look beyond the most common definitions of addiction.

The feature article “A Liberal Account of Addiction” by Bennett Foddy and Julian Savulescu presents a new method of viewing addiction by contemplating the term beyond its negative connotations. This study serves as the start for an interdisciplinary discussion in the journal, which is published by the Johns Hopkins University Press. Foddy is the Senior Research Fellow and Deputy Director for the Programme on Ethics of the New Biosciences in the James Martin 21st Century School at Oxford University while Savulescu is the Uehiro Professor of Practical Ethics at the University of Oxford, and director of the Uehiro Center for Practical Ethics.

International researchers Eric Matthews, Lennart Nordenfelt and Malcom Horne contributed responses to the original article, and Foddy and Savulescu answered issues brought up in the rebuttals in the article “Relating Addiction to Disease, Disability, Autonomy, and the Good Life.”

“Addictions can be disabilities, they can reduce well-being and they can compromise one’s autonomy. But they do not necessarily do so,” Foddy and Savulescu write in their second article.

The authors classify addictions as “strong appetites” and say the determining factor is how the addiction impacts someone’s life, not the simple fact of whether they have an addiction. Both articles encourage this point of view as a means to better understand and treat addiction.

“Little useful work is done by labeling someone as an addict,” they write. “A Liberal Account of addiction places appetitive desires within a whole life, acknowledging their significance, and recognizing they can be good or bad, depending on the circumstance.”

*Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology* is the official journal of the Association for the Advancement of Philosophy and Psychiatry (AAPP).

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