

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind activity

Discuss the following questions (not necessarily in this order):

1. In the movie, it is revealed that Clementine, Joel, and Mary have each made the decision to erase memories of a romantic relationship. But did they make the *right* decision? How might a utilitarian respond to this question?
2. Does the movie suggest an answer to the question of whether the characters made the right decision with respect to erasing their memories? Do *you* think that they made the right decision?
3. We have many desires throughout our lives. Some of them we learn to consider worth fulfilling, others we learn to consider best avoided. Does *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* say anything about the relationship between memory and desire?
4. Is it true that what you don't know can't hurt you? Specifically, is it impossible to harm someone, whether oneself or someone else, without causing the alleged victim to consciously experience the effect of that harm? In the movie, does Joel harm himself by erasing his memory of Clementine? Does Clementine harm Joel by erasing her memory of him? Does the movie suggest answers to these questions?
5. In his paper on *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Christopher Grau asks us to consider "a drug that would revise one's memories such that all the memories of one's ex-spouse become both false and unflattering" (127). He says, "Many would rightly regard the taker of such a drug as having done something that is not only imprudent but also immoral" (127). Do you agree? What about *erasing* all memory of one's ex-spouse? Do we have obligations to *remember* those with whom we've had close relationships?
6. Toward the end of the movie, Mary mails each client of Lacuna, Inc. their files, audiotapes, etc., revealing to them that they underwent a memory erasing procedure. This will undoubtedly come as a shock to most of them and cause many of them to suffer. But does Mary do something *wrong*? What do you think?
7. Is it *essential* to each of us to have certain memories? In other words, if *all* of one's memories were to be erased, would one cease to exist? Some say that we have special reasons to care about our future selves that we do not have to care about others, whether present or future. Suppose *all* of your memories were to be erased. Would the *pre-memory removal* you have special reasons to care about the *post-memory removal* "you"?
8. Does *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* have anything to say about love or the value of romantic relationships? What about the ending of the movie?

Feel free to visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_Sunshine_of_the_Spotless_Mind for cast and character names.