

Basics of Ethics-1

Quiz-1

27th August, 2024

Total Marks: 10

Time: 45 minutes

NOTE: Section A is compulsory. Answer any 2 out of 3 from Section B.

Keep your answers precise and to the point.

Evaluation will be based on how well you address the question asked; NOT in terms of the number of words written.

Section A; compulsory question:

2 x 2 = 4 marks

1. Bring out the distinction between the two:

(a) 'Ought implies can' and 'can implies ought'

(b) Egoism and Relativism

(a) 'Ought implies can' and 'can implies ought'

Ought implies can (1 mark; any one point)

- this refers to the notion that for someone to have an ought (or a moral obligation for someone to do something), they must have a capacity to do that.
- The necessary condition to have a moral obligation is to have the capability to carry out that obligation.

Can implies ought (1 mark)

- this refers to the notion that if one can do something, then they have a moral obligation to do that thing.
- Being able to do something is sufficient to have a moral obligation to do that thing. Or might makes right, in other words.

(b) Egoism and Relativism (2 marks, 1 mark for each point; look for any 2)

- Egoism claims that we have no moral obligation to others (that our only moral duty is to ourselves), whereas relativism claims that morality is relative to the culture in which one is placed.
- Egoism requires one to do only what is in their own self-interest, whereas relativism requires one to do what is right according to one's culture/tradition/community.

Section B; Answer any 2:

2 x 3 = 6 marks

2. Bring out the distinction between moral realism and moral skepticism. Describe any two ways of attaining moral knowledge according to moral realism?

Moral realism vs. moral skepticism (1 mark)

- moral realism is the theory that there are objective moral truths, whereas moral skepticism argues that there are no objective moral truths.

Two ways of attaining moral knowledge according to moral realism (2 marks; 1 mark for each; look for any two)

- from our intuition (a priori);
 - from our experience (a posteriori);
 - from the command of god or divine authority or scriptures (divine command theory)
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3. Distinguish between hedonism and desire satisfaction theory. What are any two limitations of hedonism as an ethical theory?

Hedonism vs. desire satisfaction theory (1 mark)

- Hedonism as an ethical theory says that an ethical act is one that brings pleasure/happiness. According to desire satisfaction theory, on the other hand, an ethical act is one that consists in fulfilling one's desires.
 - **Or**
- According to hedonism, pleasure is intrinsically good and any act that brings pleasure is an ethical act. According to desire satisfaction theory, desire satisfaction is the intrinsic good and any act that fulfills one's desires is an ethical act.

Any 2 limitations of hedonism as an ethical theory (1 mark each; 2 marks)

Look for any 2 of the below:

- **Argument from evil pleasures**
 - there may be acts that bring pleasure from evil deeds. Hedonism does not account for the distinction between happiness/pleasure that comes from evil deeds vs. that which comes from good acts.
 - **Argument from false happiness**
 - hedonism does not account for the distinction between happiness that comes from true beliefs from the happiness that comes from false beliefs
 - **Argument from Nozick's 'experience machine'**
 - we want to do certain things, rather than just having the experience of doing them
 - we want to be a certain way—a certain sort of person
 - more than pleasurable experiences, it is being in contact with reality that is intrinsically valuable.
 - **Argument from autonomy**
 - hedonism does not account for autonomy. We want to make our own choices about life, even if it brings about pain and challenges.
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4. Outline the standard argument for ethical relativism by describing the premises which fall under each of these characterizations:

- (a) descriptive relativism
- (b) ethical/metaethical relativism
- (c) prescriptive relativism

Bring out at least one flaw in this argument.

(a) descriptive relativism: (0.5 marks)

Different cultures differ in their fundamental ethical beliefs.

or

an action wrong in one cultural context may be right in another.

(b) Ethical relativism (0.5 marks)

all ethical values are culturally relative

or

There are no universal moral truths

(c) prescriptive relativism (0.5 marks)

it is wrong to condemn or pass judgment on those with different ethical values

Bring out at least one flaw in this argument (1.5 marks)

Look for any one of the below

- the move from descriptive to ethical relativism would work only when one can show for certain that there are NO values that hold across all cultures.
 - The move from descriptive to ethical relativism is fallacious since it involves a move from moral belief (what different cultures believe to be moral) to moral truth (what is objectively right or wrong)
 - the move from descriptive to prescriptive relativism is fallacious since it involves an unjustified jump from facts (what is the case) to values (what ought to be the case).
 - Prescriptive relativism does not follow from ethical relativism, since some cultures may hold it to be morally right to condemn or pass judgment on other cultures.
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