

Answer Key

Course Name: Basic of Ethics

Explain the following in 100 words each: (2x2=4)

a. Descriptive Vs Normative

1. Descriptions are related to facts; what is the case.
2. Normativity deals with the ought; how we ought to act.

b. Hedonism Vs Altruism

Hedonism: Pleasure is the ultimate good.

Altruism: Caring about others is the ultimate good.

(Maximum marks can be given if a student has written lucidly with suitable examples and quotes from the text which shows that s/he has engaged with the text; otherwise, maximum 1.5 should be given in each question).

Answer the following in 200 to 250 words each: (3x2=6)

1. What is Psychological Egoism? Critically analyse the following in the light of Elliott Sober's article *psychological egoism*:

a: Paradox of Hedonism

b: Experience Machine

Psychological egoism: It's a descriptive theory which tells that human beings pursue pleasure and avoid pain. It is the egoistic desire to maximize the pleasure which leads to the altruistic goals (1)

Paradox of Hedonism: The paradox of hedonism is the idea that directly pursuing pleasure as the ultimate goal can be self-defeating and lead to less happiness or pleasure. It suggests that constantly and consciously seeking pleasure can interfere with actually experiencing it. For e.g, if I am watching a football match and only worried about the pleasure I am getting from it then I won't be able to enjoy it.

Sober response: Hedonism says that the pleasure is the ultimate goal and not the only goal. Hence, one can dodge the criticism offered by the paradox (1)

Experience Machine: If there is a machine which can guarantee any pleasure but after plugging into that machine, we will forget our connection with the reality.

The experiment is given by Nagel.

It criticises the thesis of Hedonism that pleasure is the only good.

Response: People are afraid of hedonists seem compelled to argue that people reject the option of plugging in because the amount of pain they would experience by the scenario of losing in touch with their loved ones and stop leading a real life is huge (1)

Max; 2.5 can be given

2. Critically analyse Nagel's distinction between subjective and objective reasoning with the help of suitable examples from the text, and examine whether an egoist can refrain from humiliating an innocent person while still remaining consistent with egoistic principles.

Subjective reasoning: The reasoning based on the subjective interests: I am helping others because I feel good or my parents told me to do that. It is an emotive reasoning (0.5)

Objective reasoning: The reasoning based on the objective reasoning; There is objective validity in the argument, and the rational component motivates me to act. For e.g, I should not unnecessarily

harm others as I don't like to be harmed by someone unnecessarily (0.5).

Objective reasoning is impersonal: T.N (Thomas Nagel) should do what will keep him alive. If I believe that I should get out of a burning building, then it is irrelevant whether I am TN or not(Example from the text; since it is slightly complicated argument then we should not insist on it; any simple example to explain the subjective and objective reasoning should suffice).

NO

Why?

An egoist cannot be motivated to abstain from the act as he is deriving pleasure from it.

We can appeal to his reason.

Reasoning requires an impersonal point of view.

Treating oneself just like the other persons.

Hence, humiliating an innocent person cannot be justified because no one likes to be treated in the similar way.

This disproves the egoist argument that we are only motivated by the pleasure; rather we are also motivated by the reason when we can take an objective point of view (2)

Maximum 2.5 can be given.