**READING & STUDY GUIDES**

*This document is a compilation of reading and study guides, to help you throughout the quarter. You should read the summaries and reading questions before you do the reading. Come to class prepared with answers to all of the reading questions. Also, use this document to help you study for the final examination. In preparation for the final, you should be able to answer all of the questions in this document. If you take careful notes on each question throughout the quarter, you’ll have a very good notes for this course.*

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**Reading & Study Guide, Part 1**

**• Mark Timmons, “Moral Theory Primer”**

**• Lewis Vaughn, “How to Read an Argument”**

Mark Timmons, “Moral Theory Primer”

This aim of this chapter is provide readers with basic information about moral theories generally and about six moral theories in particular: Consequentialism, Natural Law Theory, Kantian Ethics, Rights Theories, Virtue Ethics, and the Ethics of Prima Facie Duty. It also includes an appendix devoted to Divine Command Theory and Ethical Relativism. The chapter is divided into 3 parts plus the appendix. Part 1, "What is a Moral Theory?" takes up the following three topics: (1) the main concepts of the right and the good that are central to most moral theories, (2) the main theoretical and main practical aims of a moral theory, and (3) the role of principles in a moral theory.

Part 2, "Six Essential Moral Theories," proceeds to explain the rudiments of each of the six types of moral theory mentioned above. For each type of theory, basic concepts are explained, and since the focus of the book is on questions of right and wrong, basic principles of right conduct are formulated for each type of theory. For instance, in the section on Consequentialist moral theory, after explaining what makes a theory consequentialist, the rudiments of utilitarianism (one species of consequentialism) are presented by first explaining the concepts of welfare and utility and then presenting the following utilitarian principle of right conduct:

An action is right if and only if (and because) it would (if performed) likely produce at least as high a utility (net overall balance of welfare) as would any other alternative action one might perform instead. In this same section on Consequentialism, welfarist versions of this type of theory (utilitarianism) are distinguished from perfectionist versions and act versions are distinguished from rule versions. This material is presented compactly and illustrated with examples. In addition to basic concepts and principles featured in each of the theories, there is discussion of how one is to proceed in applying the principles in question.

The section on Natural Law Theory includes a presentation of the principle (or doctrine) of double effect, which figures importantly in many discussions of applied ethical issues. The section on Kantian ethics discusses both the universal law and the humanity formulations of the categorical imperative. The section on Rights theory, in addition to explaining the concept of a right, distinguishes the idea of a right-based moral theory from approaches to ethical issues that simply feature rights—"rights-focused" approaches. The section on Virtue Ethics explains how some contemporary theorists in the virtue ethics tradition appeal to the idea of a virtuous agent in explaining right and wrong action. And finally, the section on the ethics of prima facie duty explains the fundamental ideas in the theories of W. D. Ross and (more recently) Robert Audi.

Part 3, "Coping with Many Moral Theories," addresses questions about how to evaluate a moral theory, and how moral theories can help illuminate moral issues as well as provide a foundation for helping to determine what is right and wrong with respect to practical moral problems.

The chapter is written so that each of the sections in Part 2 that describe the various types of moral theory can serve as modules that students can refer to when reading selections that appeal to one or another of the six theories. Provide students with some understanding of those moral theories that play a role in the articles featured in the anthology. This is the main goal. This main goal is addressed by (1) explaining the main aims of a moral theory, (2) explaining the basic concepts and principles of six types of moral theory, and (3) explaining how moral theories can be of use in illuminating moral problems and in attempting to reason about them. The chapter is written so that each section devoted to a particular type of moral theory can be read independently of reading the others, thus making it convenient for readers to consult one or another section when reading the articles in the collection.

Further reading online

* C. D. Broad's Five Types of Ethical Theory, <http://www.ditext.com/broad/ftet/ftet.html>
* Internet Encyclopedia of Philososphy entry, Ethics, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethics/>
* EpistemeLinks' ethics page, <http://www.epistemelinks.com/Main/Topics.aspx?TopiCode=Ethi>
* Ethics Matters links to online classic philosophy texts, <http://ethics.sandiego.edu/resources/books/books.asp>
* Prof. Robert Cavalier's "Online Guide to Ethics and Philosophy", <http://caae.phil.cmu.edu/Cavalier/80130/Syllabus.html>

Study Questions for Timmons

1. Give your own example of something that is plausibly intrinsically valuable and something that is plausibly only extrinsically valuable. Explain your reasoning.
2. What is the difference between act consequentialism and rule consequentialism?
3. What is value hedonism? Give an example of something that seems intrinsically valuable but, according to the theory, is not. Discuss whether this example proves that value hedonism is false.
4. What is the doctrine of double effect? Give your own example of an action that the doctrine would apply to, and explain what the doctrine says about the morality of that action.
5. Explain Kant’s Universal Law formulation of the categorical imperative. Explain how the formulation would apply to either (a) lying promises or (b) helping others in need.
6. What is the difference between a merely rights-focused approach and a rights-based theory? Why does Timmons make this distinction?
7. Give your own example of a case in which a virtuous person, acting in character, performs a morally right action. What virtues are exhibited in this case? Explain how the person in your case, in addition to acting rightly, also experienced the appropriate feelings.
8. What is the difference between a prima facie duty and an all-things-considered duty? Give an example of an action that someone has a prima facie, but not an all-things-considered, duty to perform.
9. Describe one of Timmons’ arguments for the claim that moral theory can help focus and sharpen our moral thinking about particular issues.
10. Describe Timmons’ argument for the claim that divine command theory does not plausibly address the theoretical aim of moral theory.

Lewis Vaughn, “How to Read an Argument”

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\*Direct quote excerpted from Vaughn, page 21

Study Questions for Vaughn

1. What is a premise?
2. What is a conclusion?
3. What kinds of statements qualify as premises and conclusions?
4. What is an argument?
5. What are four common mistakes in evaluating arguments?
6. Describe the distinction between inductive and deductive arguments. Give an example of each. How do these kinds of arguments differ? What kind of conclusion does each purport to show?
7. What does it mean for an argument to be valid?
8. What is a conditional? What is an antecedent? A consequent?
9. What is modus ponens? What is modus tollens? What is a hypothetical syllogism? Give an example of each.
10. What are denying the antecedent and affirming the consequent? Give an example of each. What is wrong with these argumentative forms?
11. How do you apply the lessons learned in this reading to the practice of reading philosophy?
12. How can you transfer the lessons learned from this reading to the main dimensions of evaluation for this course (and your final paper)? These areas include:
    1. *Interpretation and Analysis,*
    2. *Argumentation,*
    3. *Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology,*
    4. *and Communication.*

Further reading online

* Jim Pryor, Guidelines on Reading Philosophy, <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>
* Gary Hardegree, Symbolic Logic: A First Course (2nd edition) – full text online, <http://courses.umass.edu/phil110-gmh/text.htm>
* A Modern Formal Logic Primer, by Paul Teller – full text online, <http://tellerprimer.ucdavis.edu/>

**Reading & Study Guide, Part 2**

**• Mark B. Woodhouse, “How to Write Philosophy”**

**• James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”**

**• Jeremy Bentham, “The Principle of Utility”**

Mark B. Woodhouse, “How to Write Philosophy”



\*Direct quote excerpted from Woodhouse, page 92

Study Questions for Woodhouse

1. Describe the nature of a critical philosophical essay.
2. What are some philosophically illegitimate methods of supporting a position?
3. What does Woodhouse hope to show in the example passage about ethical relativism and ethical absolutism?
4. What are some strategies for *formulating the problem*?
5. What are some strategies for *deciding on a format*?
6. What are some strategies for *incorporating other philosophers’ views*?
7. What are some strategies for *presenting a good introduction*?
8. What are some strategies for *achieving coherence*?
9. What are some strategies for *achieving clarity?*
10. What are some strategies for *clearly expressing your ideas*?
11. What are some strategies for using *examples*?
12. What are some strategies for *writing well?*
13. Critically reflect on the sample essay, comments on the sample essay, and revised draft of the sample essay. What are the main takeaways about philosophical writing from Woodhouse’s discussion?
14. How can you transfer the lessons learned from this reading to the main dimensions of evaluation for this course (and your final paper)? These areas include:
    1. *Interpretation and Analysis,*
    2. *Argumentation,*
    3. *Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology,*
    4. *and Communication.*

Further reading online

* Jim Pryor, “Guidelines for Writing Philosophy”, <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
* Writing A Philosophy Paper, by Peter Horban, <http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/resources/writing.html>
* UNC Writing Center Handouts, Philosophy, <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/philosophy/>

James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”

Cultural relativism is the view that there is no objective truth in morality, and that right and wrong are simply matters of opinion that vary from culture to culture. According to cultural relativists, the "moral code" of a society determines what is right for that society, and there is no independent standard by which we can determine that one moral code is superior to another. Rachels claims that the primary argument for cultural relativism is what he calls the cultural differences argument: because different societies have different moral codes, there can therefore be no objective truth in morality. Rachels points out, however, that this argument is invalid; from the mere fact of disagreement about a topic, it does not follow that there is no objective truth about the topic.

Rachels then proceeds to point out several consequences of relativism. If relativism is true, then there is no rational basis for criticizing the moral codes of other societies, even when those moral codes promote aggressive militarism or racism. Furthermore, if cultural relativism is correct, we can know whether actions are right or wrong simply by consulting the moral code of our society. Because the moral code of our society determines what is right or wrong for our society, the idea of moral progress is called into doubt as well. This is because the notion of progress implies that a moral code has gotten better over time, but according to cultural relativism there is no objective standard by which such improvement can be judged. Because these consequences are implausible, Rachels claims, we should reject relativism.

Rachels claims that there is in fact less ethical disagreement than cultural relativists often claim. In many cases, differing cultural practices can be best explained not as the result of differing values, but as the product of different beliefs and circumstances. Furthermore, Rachels claims, there are some values that are necessarily universal, for a complex society could not survive in their absence. Rachels concludes that although there are things to be learned from cultural relativism, we should reject the theory.

Study Questions for Rachels

1. What different positions have gone under the name of “cultural relativism”? What does Rachels think is the essence of the theory? Do you find the theory plausible?
2. What does Rachels claim is the main argument used in support of cultural relativism? What problems does he raise for this argument? Do you agree with his assessment?
3. What objections does Rachels raise to the theory of cultural relativism? Do you find these objections decisive? Why or why not?
4. Critically reflect on the theory of cultural relativism. Define the theory, and briefly explain why some people have found it attractive. What do you think is the most serious problem for the theory? Do you find the theory plausible or not? Defend your answer.
5. Describe the story about the Greeks and the Callatians. Do you think this story provides evidence for the theory of cultural relativism? Why or why not?
6. Critically examine one of Rachels’s objections to cultural relativism. Describe the objection, and then say how you think a cultural relativist should respond. Do you find the objection convincing? Defend your answer.
7. How does Rachels explain the existence of widely different customs among different groups? Do you think he succeeds in explaining this kind of diversity in a way that avoids relativism?

Further reading online

*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entries on:

* Moral realism: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-realism/>
* Moral relativism: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-relativism/>
* Moral skepticism: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/skepticism-moral/>

Jeremy Bentham, “The Principle of Utility” (excerpted from An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation”)

Bentham begins by endorsing both a descriptive and a normative version of *hedonism*, the view that the human good is pleasure and absence of pain. According to the descriptive version, all human actions are performed for the sake of obtaining pleasure and avoiding pain. According to the normative version, what we ought to do is determined solely by considerations of pleasure and pain. As a development of this normative thesis, Bentham goes on to endorse the *principle of utility*, the claim that an action is right when it tends to add to the sum total of the pleasures of those affected, where this "sum" is conceived of as the total amount of pleasure minus the total amount of total pain caused.

Bentham claims that the words *right* and *wrong* can have no other meaning than that laid out by the principle of utility, and that alternative moral theories typically end up invoking utilitarian considerations in the end. Nonetheless, Bentham admits that the principle of utility cannot be directly proved, because it is the foundational principle from which ethical arguments must begin. Bentham critiques the rival "principle of sympathy and antipathy" according to which an action is right if and only if one approves of it. This principle, Bentham objects, is really no principle at all, for a principle is supposed to tell us when our attitudes are *justified*, but the principle of sympathy and antipathy merely assumes in advance that our attitudes have such justification.

Taking the principle of utility as established, Bentham concludes with a discussion of how we are to apply it. He distinguishes four sources of pleasure and pain: physical, political, moral, and religious. Then, he discusses the various ways in which pleasures and pains can be greater or less than one another. Determining our moral obligations requires weighing various pains against each other, and seeking the greatest balance between them. Bentham admits that we needn't perform such calculations every time we act, but insists that we should always keep them in the backs of our minds.

Study Questions for Bentham

1. Critically reflect on the principle of utility as the supreme principle of morality. What is the principle, and how would one go about applying it? Do you think the principle of utility is correct? Why or why not?
2. How does Bentham think that we should go about deciding how to behave in our everyday lives? Do you find this to be a plausible method of making moral decisions? Why or why not?
3. What is the principle of utility, and how does Bentham think it can be established? Does the principle of utility provide a reliable guide to our moral obligations?
4. How do we go about measuring utility, in Bentham’s view? To what extent does he think that utilitarian calculations should play a role in our everyday lives? Do you agree with his view?

Further reading online

* A general resource: <http://www.utilitarianism.com/>; <http://www.utilitarianism.com/bentham.htm>
* Peter Singer, a famous utilitarian: <http://www.princeton.edu/~psinger/>
* *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entries:
  + Consequentialism: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism>
  + The history of utilitarianism: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/utilitarianism-history/>
  + On Mill: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill-moral-political/>
  + Rule consequentialism: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism-rule/>

**Reading & Study Guide, Part 3**

**• Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine”**

**• Immanuel Kant, “The Moral Law”**

**• J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters 1-2**

Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine”

Robert Nozick presents us with an argument from one of the most famous thought experiments in ethical theory. Thought experiments “are employed … by philosophers … to examine the implications of theories and to explore the boundaries of certain concepts” (Honderich, T., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2nd eds, OUP 2005, pg. 919). Nozick’s argument is against hedonism, the view that pleasure is the one and only value. His thought experiment asks us to imagine a machine where you can plug in and have *any* experience you like. Others can plug into their own machines, so no reason to stay behind to help others. This raises the following questions. Do you plug in forever? Why or why not? What else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside? Nozick argues that there are good reasons *not* to plug into the machine, which strongly suggests, we value more than what can be captured by experience.

Study Questions for Nozick

1. Why does Nozick claim that plugging in to the machine is 'a kind of suicide'?
2. What does he think we should conclude from the experience machine thought experiment?
3. What does he think that we desire that the experience machine can't provide?
4. Critically reflect on Nozick’s argument. Which of his premises is the weakest? Can you think of a thought experiment (or a change in Nozick’s thought experiment) to undermine that premise?

Further reading online

*Ethics and value theory*

* General: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/value-theory/>
* Value pluralism: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/value-pluralism/>
* Well-being: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/well-being/>

*Hedonism*

* On hedonism: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hedonism/>
* On Epicurus: <http://www.epicurus.net/>
* On Mill: <http://www.utilitarianism.com/jsmill.htm>

*Desire Satisfaction Theory*

* On desires: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/desire/>
* Papers on the theory: <http://philpapers.org/browse/desire-satisfaction-accounts-of-well-being>

Immanuel Kant, “The Moral Law” (excerpted from Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals)

Kant argues that moral philosophy should proceed in a completely a priori fashion, without consulting experience. To develop a theory along these lines, Kant begins by examining the moral concepts at the heart of ordinary moral thought. According to Kant, the only thing that can be said to be good without qualification—that is, good in all circumstances—is the good will. To have a good will requires that one act not in conformity with one's duty, but for the sake of duty. Only when actions are performed for the sake of duty, Kant says, do they have any true moral worth.

But what is our moral duty? Kant claims that for a requirement to be genuinely moral, it must be a categorical imperative. Whereas hypothetical imperatives are simply claims about which means are suitable to satisfying our desires, Kant asserts that moral requirements apply to us independently of any end we happen to endorse. Furthermore, according to Kant, all of our moral duties derive from one single categorical imperative, which is the supreme principle of morality. Kant formulates this principle several ways. According to the formula of universal law, we must "Act only on that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." A maxim, in Kant's sense, is simply the principle on which one acts in a given circumstance. According to the formula of universal law, the test of the permissibility of our actions is simply whether we could consistently will that everyone should act on our maxim.

The second formulation of the categorical imperative that Kant provides is the formula of humanity, which states, "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in any other person, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means." This formulation illustrates Kant's view that every human being has dignity, and therefore must be treated with respect. Kant insists that both formulations of the categorical imperative are equivalent, and can be supported by arguments grounded in pure reason.

Study Questions for Kant

1. What does it mean to say that something is “good without qualification”? What is the only thing that Kant thinks is good in this way, and why? Do you agree with him about this?
2. What is a “maxim,” for Kant? What role do maxims play in Kant’s ethics? Think of an example of a maxim and explain how it would figure in the moral assessment of an action, on Kant’s view.
3. What is an imperative, in Kant’s philosophy? What is the difference between hypothetical and categorical imperatives? Into which category does he think moral demands fall, and why?
4. Applying Kant’s ethical theory to a particular case in which one is faced with a moral decision. What considerations would Kant regard as relevant in deciding what to do? Do you think Kant’s theory provides the correct verdict in this case? Why or why not?
5. Under what conditions does an act have moral worth, according to Kant? Give an example to illustrate this idea. Do you find Kant’s position plausible? What do you think is the strongest objection to it? Can this objection be overcome?
6. What does Kant believe is the supreme principle of morality? What examples does he invoke to demonstrate the application of this principle? Do you think the principle provides a reliable guide to our moral obligations? Why or why not?

Further reading online

* Resources on Kant: <http://ethics.sandiego.edu/theories/kant/>
* Kant's moral philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral>
* Kant's IEP: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/kantmeta/#H8>

J.S. Mill, On Liberty, Chapters 1-2

Mill rejects the notion of natural rights and argues that we should promote a democracy dedicated to individual liberty because that will maximize happiness. But he cautions against the “tyranny of the majority,” asserting that every educated adult must be free to do what he or she desires. “The only freedom which deserves the name,” he says, “is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs.” The only legitimate reason for a government to interfere with someone’s liberty against his or her will is to prevent harm to others.

The only reason a group or an individual is justified in curtailing another’s liberty is to prevent harm to others. It follows that all members of society enjoy absolute independence in matters concerning only themselves and are answerable to society only for conduct concerning others. Individual liberty is absolute with respect to matters of taste, association, thought, and expression. A completely free society respects all of these liberties absolutely. We can define freedom as the pursuit of one’s own good in one’s own way, provided this does not infringe on others’ efforts to do the same. The justification for freedom is that it enhances everyone’s well-being.

We can defend freedom of thought and expression, in particular, by recognizing that the government (or the majority) does not have a right to coerce the opinions of others. To suppress an opinion, whether true or false, is to deprive humankind. Human well-being requires freedom of thought and expression for the following reasons. First, no one and no age are infallible. But if an authority silences an opinion deemed false, it supposes its judgment on the matter infallible and prevents the overturning of received wisdom on the basis of new evidence. The valuable human ability to rectify mistakes of opinion requires both experience and open discussion. Second, false opinions may contain some truth, and this will come out only given debate regarding the merits of contrary opinions on the matter. Third, to hold an opinion solely on the basis of authority, as opposed to judgment regarding the evidence, both pro and con, is to have a mere prejudice. Those who hold this opinion, even if it is true, will be ignorant of the rational grounds for believing in it. To really know even the reasons in favor of one’s opinion one must know the best arguments against it. Fourth, and related, prejudices are not real convictions and do not have the same effects on one’s character and conduct. The grounds for real conviction on a matter include sets of conflicting reasons, those in favor and those against one’s opinion. To deny the right to freedom of thought and expression is to eliminate the possibility of earnest arguments on both sides of an issue and so the possibility of rational convictions and the good that comes from having them.

Study Questions on Mill

1. How would Mill’s principle of liberty apply to unpopular minorities who performed actions that the majority thought immoral (but not harmful)?
2. What would Mill’s principle of liberty imply about the treatment of homosexuals, pagans, and pornographers?
3. Do you agree with Mill that the prevention of harm to others is the only reason that the state is justified in infringing one’s freedom? Explain.
4. What does Mill think is the value of opinions contrary to one’s own? Do you agree? Explain.
5. Do you agree that we are better off allowing all opinions, even ones known to be false, to be aired than we would be if we were to silence some opinions known to be false? Explain.
6. What would Mill say about a law banning the KKK from holding a rally in front of City Hall?

**Reading & Study Guide, Part 4**

**• The Catholic Church, “Vatican Declaration on Some Questions in Sexual Ethics”**

**• John Corvino, “A Defense of Homosexuality”**

**• Thomas Mappes, “A Liberal View of Sexual Morality and the concept of Using another Person”**

This topic focuses on the morality of certain types of sexual activity, including premarital sex, masturbation, homosexuality, and adultery, as well as the issue of same-sex marriage. Consider the following guiding questions:

* For the various types of sexual behavior discussed in the chapter selections, are there any conditions under which acts of those types are morally wrong?
* For those sexual activities and practices that are morally wrong, what is the best explanation of why they are wrong?

The Catholic Church, “Vatican Declaration on Some Questions in Sexual Ethics”

This article represents the Natural Law Theory perspective of the Catholic Church on matters of premarital sex, masturbation, and homosexuality. The Church appeals to the so-called "finality" or purpose of the sex organs in arguing that these forms of sexual behavior are morally wrong under all circumstances. According to Natural Law Theory, there are objective standards of human behavior that are grounded in facts about human nature and are thus “perennial” –principles that can be known either through revelation or through the use of reason. The fundamental principles of sexual morality concern the nature of the human being and the proper function of sexual behavior. This is used as the theoretical basis for arguing that premarital sex, homosexuality, and masturbation are morally wrong.

John Corvino, “A Defense of Homosexuality”

The idea that certain forms of sexual behavior are wrong because they violate the finality or purpose of the sexual organs—often referred to as the "unnaturalness argument"—is critically discussed in the article by Corvino, who raises what are by now standard objections to the unnaturalness argument against homosexuality. He also criticizes the idea that homosexuality is harmful to individuals and to society. Among the most commonly raised moral objections to homosexual behavior are that it is unnatural and that it is harmful either to those who engage in it or to others, which Corvino finds indefensible.

Thomas Mappes, “A Liberal View of Sexual Morality and the concept of Using another Person”

Mappes makes use of central ideas in Kant's moral theory—the idea that people ought to be treated as ends in themselves and never as mere means—in developing a general sexual ethic whose implications regarding sexual behavior are comparatively liberal. He defines using someone as intentionally treating them in a way that violates the requirement that our involvement with others be based on their *voluntary* and *informed* consent. If we focus on sexual behavior, we arrive at a basic principle of sexual morality according to which A’s sexual interaction with B is morally permissible only if A does not sexually treat B in a way that intentionally interferes with B’s voluntary and informed consent. Since coercion is a main vehicle for interfering with B’s actions being voluntary, and deception is the means by which one interferers with another’s actions being informed, we can use the basic principle to arrive at moral verdicts about certain forms of sexual behavior.

Study Questions (Common)

1. Explain and evaluate the Vatican’s view about the proper function of sexual activity.
2. Explain how the Vatican’s argument makes use of Natural Law Theory.
3. What is the distinction recognized by the Vatican regarding the cause of homosexual behavior?
4. How should pastors address specific cases of individual engagement in homosexual behavior, according to the Vatican?
5. How does Corvino argue that the Roman Catholic Church has an inconsistent position on the morality of contraception?
6. What are the five ways Corvino describes how we could understand the term “unnatural”? What does he think about each possibility?
7. What does the Vatican mean when it says that the principles of morality are “perennial”? Why do they feel it is important to emphasize this claim?
8. What would Mappes say about cases of an adult having sex with a child, when that child seems to consent to the interaction?
9. How does Mappes use Kantian ethics?
10. Explain Mappes’ positive argument for the permissibility of homosexual relations. Why does he think these relations (and the sexual acts involved) are often permissible?
11. What is the difference between coercion and deception? What is the difference between occurrent and dispositional coercion? Between threats and offers? Give examples of each.

Further reading online

* Russell, Bertrand, "Our Sexual Ethics", <http://www.utilitarian.org/texts/oursexethics.html>
* Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry, "Philosophy of Sexuality", <http://www.iep.utm.edu/sexualit/>
* Pew Forum resources on gay marriage, <http://pewforum.org/gay-marriage/>
* Pickett, Brent, "Homosexuality", <http://plato.stanford.edu/entires/homosexuality/>
* Podcast on sex and perversion from "Ethics Bites", an Open University podcast series on applied ethics, <http://www.open2.net/ethicsbites/sex-perversion.html>

Slate magazine e-mail debate between Andrew Sullivan and David Frum on gay marriage, <http://www.slate.com/id/3642/entry/23841/>

**Reading & Study Guide, Part 5**

* **Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”**
* **Garrett Hardin, “Lifeboat Ethics”**

Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”

Every year, natural and human disasters leave millions of people in dire need of help. Many people regard providing assistance to the victims of these disasters as an act of charity—something that is good to do, but that it is not wrong to refrain from doing. Singer argues that this is mistaken, and that in fact nearly all of us are obligated to do far more to alleviate suffering around the globe. Singer's argument begins with two simple assumptions. The first is that suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad. The second is the moral principle that "if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it." From these two assumptions, Singer claims, it follows that nearly all of us should be giving far more of our money to famine relief, and that spending this money on morally insignificant purchases (such as new clothes) is immoral.

Singer addresses several objections to his view. One is that because the suffering caused by famine would be alleviated if all affluent people were to contribute a relatively small amount, no single person can be required to contribute more than a modest sum. Singer allows that if everyone were to contribute to famine relief, no one would be obligated to contribute large sums of money. Because this is almost certain not to happen, however, Singer insists that we ought to do what we can to prevent suffering, provided that doing so will not involve sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance. Others might object that Singer's view requires a substantial revision to our moral scheme, and requires us to make large sacrifices in our own well-being. Singer admits these consequences, but denies that they constitute legitimate objections, for it might just be the case that morality is very demanding. Further, Singer argues that his conclusion follows from the simple assumptions from which he begins; unless one has reason to doubt his assumptions or the soundness of his reasoning, one must accept his conclusion.

Study Questions for Singer

1. What two versions of his main moral principle does Singer distinguish? Which version does he think is correct? Which do you think is preferable, and why?
2. According to Singer, what factors does his principle not take into account in determining what we should do? Is this an attractive feature of his principle, or not?
3. What do you think is the strongest objection to Singer’s argument? Do you think this objection can be overcome?
4. Singer claims that affluent people are morally required to give large amounts of money to famine relief. But if everyone were to give large amounts to famine relief, this would generate far more in contributions than necessary, and the results would be worse than if all were to give less. How does Singer deal with this apparent paradox? Do you find his response to be adequate?
5. What moral principle does Singer invoke to support his argument? What grounds does he give in support of this principle? Do you find the principle to be a plausible one? Why or why not?
6. What effect does Singer think that the acceptance of his principle would have on our moral conceptual scheme? What effects does he think this would have on society? Are these effects desirable?
7. What practical problems does Singer claim his argument faces? How does he respond to these problems? Is his response adequate?

Garrett Hardin, “Lifeboat Ethics: the Case against Helping the Poor”

Hardin argues that helping poverty in today's world would not do any good and it would lead to still greater demands in the future. He justifies this view empirically, that the giving of aid would be ineffective and counterproductive for controlling population growth. We should view the world as analogous to a situation after a shipwreck in which some are in a life boat and many more are in the sea, drowning. The lifeboat could, perhaps hold a few more, but only at the risk of losing the margin of safety that those in the lifeboat have. In no case could the lifeboat hold all those in the sea. Hardin argues that those in the lifeboat should not try to save those in the sea because it jeopardizes the lives of all to do so. He concludes that adopting policies, such as helping the poor, in terms of a World Food Bank or liberal immigration policies, would lead to the destruction of the environment and a ruined world for future generations.

Study Questions for Hardin

1. Why does Hardin use the spaceship analogy?
2. Hardin considers a case where there are 50 people in a lifeboat and 100 people drowning. Why does Hardin think this supports his conclusion that adopting policies, such as helping the poor, in terms of a World Food Bank or liberal immigration policies, would lead to the destruction of the environment and a ruined world for future generations? You should be able to explain his argument.
3. What empirical support does Hardin present for his argument?
4. What does Hardin mean by “the tragedy of the commons”? What is the rationale for this tragedy?
5. How are the Prisoner’s Dilemma and Hardin’s lifeboat analogy similar? How are they dissimilar? Explain.

Further reading online

* Singer’s website: <http://www.princeton.edu/~psinger/>
* Hardin’s website: [http://www.garretthardinsociety.org](http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/)
* Henry Shue interview, "World Hunger and Human Rights,” <http://ethics.sandiego.edu/video/Interviews/Shue/index.html>
* Peter Singer's keynote lecture, "Global Ethics", <http://ethics.sandiego.edu/video/Appe/2001/Singer/index.html>
* Peter Singer's Uehiro Lectures, <http://www.practicalethics.ox.ac.uk/Events/Uehiro%20Lectures/nuehirolectures.htm>
* Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry, "The Principle of Beneficence in Applied Ethics", <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/principle-beneficence/>
* United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, <http://www.iisd.ca/cairo.html>
* Website for the feature-length documentary, *The End of Poverty*, <http://www.theendofpoverty.com/>

**Reading & Study Guide, Part 6**

* **Ronald Dworkin, “Liberty and Pornography”**
* **Judith M. Hill, “Pornography and Degradation”**
* **Catherine MacKinnon, “Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech”**

Ronald Dworkin, “Liberty and Pornography”

This article, following Isaiah Berlin, distinguishes negative from positive liberty, and uses this distinction to address certain pro-censorship arguments, including feminist arguments that appeal to the idea that certain forms of pornography contribute to the false idea that women have less worth or dignity than do men. Negative liberty involves not being hindered from engaging in certain behavior including, for example, the exercise of one’s right to free speech. Positive liberty, by contrast, involves the right to engage in certain activities that enable one to participate in public decisions and includes, for example, the right to vote. In terms of the distinction between negative and positive liberty, the pro-censorship feminist arguments in question can be understood as appealing to women’s positive liberty to participate equally with men in community. The idea, then, is that the positive liberty in question ought to limit the negative liberty of free speech and expression when it comes to pornography. Dworkin instead concludes that even if pornography interferes with women’s positive liberty to participate in political processes, this would not justify censoring pornography. He also responds to a related pro-censorship argument based on the idea that because pornography, through its portrayal of women, tends to silence them, it thus violates their negative liberty to free speech.

Judith M. Hill, “Pornography and Degradation”

Hill advances an essentially Kantian argument against what she calls “victim pornography.” She claims that degradation is a public phenomenon in which some individual or group is overtly represented as not being worthy of a certain level of respect that they are due. Victim pornography, by its very nature, degrades women by representing them as members of a class of beings not entitled to an appropriate level of respect. Thus, since on the Kantian view, failing to treat others as deserving of respect is morally objectionable, victim pornography is morally objectionable.

Catherine Mackinnon, “Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech”

For Mackinnon, what is wrong about pornography is not obscenity, but subordination. In order words, what is wrong about pornography is not that it is sexually explicit, but that it promotes immoral power dynamics by perpetuation the degradation or marginalization of women. For MacKinnon, social identity is not something that is innate, but constructed. It is defined by norms and images of who we ought to be. One way of looking at this is that there are “scripts” given to us for how to behave. These scripts tell us how to be what society says we are, for example, black, white, straight, gay, and so on. The scripts pornography in society gives are those which promote the inferiority for women, depicting them as passive, dehumanized, and desiring of pain. MacKinnon argues that pornography is “a map that pretends to be a mirror.” It tells men and women what women “really want.” Pornography is itself a harm because it tells women and men that women like being violated, are there for the use of men, and so on. MacKinnon is not concerned with consent because consent made under conditions of inequality is not valid.

Study Questions (Common)

1. What would Mill say about the distinction between positive and negative liberties?
2. Describe the argument from feminist literature that, according to Dworkin, concludes that pornography leads to women’s political subordination.
3. Describe the argument from Frank Michelman, discussed by Dworkin, for the claim that pornography should be censored because it has the effect of silencing women and thereby violates their right to free speech.
4. How does Hill define degradation? How does she use the notion of degradation to argue against the legality of pornography?
5. Describe and evaluate Hill’s argument for the claim that it is not true that women who serve as models for pornography are treated by consumers of pornography as a means only.
6. What is MacKinnon’s argument that pornography degrades women?
7. What does MacKinnon think of the role of civil rights in this issue?
8. Explain MacKinnon’s idea that pornography is a harm in itself. What does she mean by this? Which parties are harmed by pornography? How?
9. How would MacKinnon respond to Dworkin’s arguments?
10. How do the arguments put forth by Hill and MacKinnon differ? What are the important similarities and differences?
11. What would MacKinnon say about Mill’s position? Where are the key points of disagreement? What is at stake in their disagreement? Explain.

Further reading online

* American Civil Liberties Union page on free speech, <http://www.aclu.org/free-speech>
* Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry, "Freedom of Speech", <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/freedom-speech/>
* Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry, "Pornography and Censorship", <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pornography-censorship/>
* "Hate speech or free speech? " *New York Times*, June 11, 2008., <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/world/americas/11iht-hate.4.13645369.html?_r=1>
* ***Feminist Ethics***
  + SEP, topics in feminism: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-topics/>
  + The largest feminist organization in the United States: <http://now.org/>

**Reading & Study Guide, Part 7**

**• Pope John Paul II, “The Unspeakable Crime of Abortion”**

**• Mary Anne Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion”**

**• Don Marquis, “Why Abortion Is Immoral”**

Pope John Paul II, “The Unspeakable Crime of Abortion”

According To Pope John Paul II, a human fetus from conception is an innocent human being and “is to be respected and treated as a person” and thus has the same right to life (and in the same degree) as any other person. Thus, abortions that kill the fetus are instances of murder, and various considerations that are often given in defense of abortion, including the health of the pregnant woman, cannot justify killing the innocent fetus.

Mary Anne Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion”

One standard anti-abortion argument goes as follows. (1) It is wrong to kill innocent human beings. (2) Fetuses are innocent human beings. (3) Therefore, it is wrong to kill fetuses. Warren argues that this argument is unsound, because the term human being is ambiguous. In the moral sense, a human being is "a full-fledged member of the moral community, who is also a member of the human species." In the genetic sense, a human being is simply "any individual entity that belongs to the human species." Warren argues that only human beings in the moral sense—which she calls persons—have basic moral rights. Although fetuses are genetically human, Warren argues that they are not persons.

To establish this, Warren provides a list of criteria that she claims are central to the concept of personhood. According to Warren, persons tend to be sentient, emotional, rational, capable of communication, self-aware, and capable of moral agency. Because fetuses lack any of these traits early in a pregnancy and have them only to a very small degree late in a pregnancy, they are not persons. Because of this, Warren argues, any rights they have as potential persons are outweighed by the rights of the actual person in question, the mother.

Warren argues that personhood is morally important because it is persons who invent moral rights, and are capable of respecting them. Although persons are capable of extending basic moral rights to nonpersons, such as infants or the severely disabled, Warren claims they should not do so in cases that involve an "unacceptably great cost to their own wellbeing and that of those they care about." Because extending basic rights to fetuses would involve such a cost to women who are unwillingly pregnant, Warren argues that we should regard fetuses as lacking basic rights, and abortion as morally permissible.

Don Marquis, “Why Abortion Is Immoral”

Marquis begins by arguing that the abortion debate has reached a standoff, and that the standard arguments on both sides have insurmountable problems. Opponents of abortion typically argue that all human beings have a right to life and the fetus is a human being, so the fetus has a right to life. Marquis objects that cancer-cell cultures are biologically human, but do not have a right to life. On the other hand, those who believe abortion is morally permissible often claim that only persons have a right to life and the fetus is not a person, so the fetus does not have a right to life. Marquis objects to this argument as well, on the grounds that infants and the severely retarded do not seem to be persons in the relevant sense, but clearly have a right to life. This suggests that a different approach to the abortion debate is needed.

Marquis proceeds by asking what it is that makes killing normal adult human beings wrong. After examining several possibilities, he settles on this answer: Killing is wrong because it deprives the victim of a valuable future. In general, Marquis claims, killing someone is wrong if it deprives her of a "future like ours" (FLO). This account is supported by four considerations: It fits with our considered judgment about the nature of the misfortune of death, it explains why murder is the worst of crimes, it coheres with our judgments about cases, and it is analogous to a persuasive argument for the wrongness of animal cruelty. If one accepts the FLO account of the wrongness of killing, one must conclude that abortion is presumptively seriously wrong, because (in most cases) abortion deprives the fetus of a future like ours. Marquis closes by replying to several objections to his view, including the complaint that his view seems to entail that contraception is immoral.

Study Questions (Common)

1. Describe John Paul II’s arguments for the claim that all abortions are instances of murder. Reconstruct the arguments in premise-conclusion form. How might one object to this argument?
2. We often allow exceptions to the general moral rule against killing human beings (e.g., cases of self-defense). How might Pope John Paul II respond to the objection that some cases of abortion (e.g., when the mother’s life is at stake) are also exceptions to this rule?
3. Describe the objection Warren discusses in her “Postscript on Infanticide.” Why might someone think that her argument justifies infanticide?
4. Describe Warren’s thought experiment with the space explorer who is captured by alien scientists. What point is Warren trying to make with this thought experiment?
5. Why, according to Marquis, might someone think that his view entails that contraception is wrong? How does Marquis respond to this objection?
6. Warren’s view of the moral status of abortion. What is her view of the moral permissibility of abortion, and what reasons does she give for it? Do you agree with her? Why or why not.
7. What is a *person,* according to Warren? Why is personhood a morally important feature on her view? Do you find her account of personhood to be plausible? Defend your answer.
8. How does Warren respond to the criticism that her view justifies infanticide? Do you find her response convincing? Why or why not?
9. Where do moral rights come from, according to Warren? How does she think we can decide who has basic rights and who does not? How plausible is her view?
10. What standard anti-abortion argument does Warren discuss? What is her objection to this argument? Do you think it is a good one?
11. What is the *moral* *community,* and who does Warren think belong to it? What reasons does she give for her view? Do you find her account compelling? Why or why not?
12. According to Marquis, what is the standard argument against abortion? What objections does he raise to this argument? Do you think they are good ones? Why or why not?
13. What does Marquis claim is the standard argument for the permissibility of abortion? What problems does Marquis raise for this argument? Do you think these problems can be overcome?
14. What do you think is the best argument in favor of Marquis’s FLO account of the wrongness of killing? Do you think the argument is sound? Defend your answer.
15. What is Marquis’s explanation of why the abortion debate seems intractable? Do you agree with his diagnosis? Why or why not?
16. Why is it wrong, according to Marquis, to kill adult humans? What implications does this have for the morality of abortion? Do you think his account is correct? Defend your answer.
17. Does it follow from Marquis’s view that using contraception is wrong? Why or why not?

Further reading online

* SEP, The Grounds of Moral Status, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/grounds-moral-status/>
* Full text and discussion of Roe v. Wade, <http://laws.findlaw.com/us/410/113.html>
* Intercollegiate Studies Institute Lecture Library, "Is Abortion Morally Justifiable in a Free Society?", <http://www.isi.org/lectures/lectures.aspx?SBy=lecture&Sfor=28e773af-4bd2-44da-8b3e-be5570fad64d>
* Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry, "Abortion", <http://www.iep.utm.edu/abortion/>
* Reasons Why Women Have Induced Abortions: Evidence from 27 Countries, <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/2411798.html>
* University of San Diego's Ethics Updates page on Abortion, <http://ethics.sandiego.edu/Applied/Abortion/index.asp>

**Reading & Study Guide, Part 8**

* **Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”**
* **Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue Ethics and Abortion”**

Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”

Most opponents of abortion claim that a fetus is a person from the moment of conception. For the sake of argument, Thomson grants this claim, and asks whether it follows that abortion is morally wrong. Opponents of abortion typically argue that it does follow, because every person has a right to life, and it is wrong to intentionally kill the bearer of a right to life. In response, Thomson asks us to consider a thought experiment. You wake up one morning and have been hooked up to a famous violinist, so that your kidneys extract poisons from his blood. You are told that if you unhook yourself from the violinist he will die, but if you do not unhook then you will be confined to bed for nine months until the violinist recovers. Thomson claims that you are not obligated to remain in bed for nine months; it is permissible for you to unhook yourself from the violinist. But if this is so, then the claim that is always wrong to intentionally kill the bearer of a right to life cannot be correct.

As Thomson sees it, the right to life is not a right not to be killed, but only a right not to be killed unjustly. In the case of the violinist, Thomson claims that unplugging the violinist is not unjust because the violinist has no right to the use of your body. In general, Thomson claims, "no person is morally required to make large sacrifices to sustain the life of another who has no right to demand them." This naturally leads to the following question: Under what circumstances does a mother grant a fetus the right to the use of her body? Thomson acknowledges that the issue is complicated, but suggests that in cases where precautions against pregnancy are taken, the mother does not grant the fetus the right to the use of her body, and thus aborting the fetus would not constitute unjust killing. Thomson concludes that although there might be some cases in which abortion is "indecent," it is often morally permissible.

Study Questions for Thomson

1. On what premise does most opposition to abortion rest, according to Thomson? What does Thomson think of this premise? What role does it play in her argument?
2. Consider the different accounts of the right to life that Thomson discusses. Which does she ultimately decide is correct? Do you find her account plausible? Why or why not?
3. What is a Good Samaritan, according to Thomson? What relevance does the notion have to her argument concerning abortion?
4. What is the point of the case of the violinist? What does Thomson conclude from the case? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
5. What is the right to life, according to Thomson? Under what circumstances does Thomson think it is permissible to kill someone who has a right to life? Do you find her account plausible?
6. What is Thomson’s final verdict on abortion? In what cases does she believe it is morally permissible? Do you agree with her? Defend your answer.

Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory and Abortion”

Hursthouse defends virtue theory, the view that an action is right if and only if it is what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances. A virtuous agent is defined as one who exercises all the virtues, where a virtue is conceived of as a character trait that human beings need to flourish or live well. In the first half of the paper, Hursthouse presents nine common objections to virtue theory, along with replies to these objections. Some of these objections, Hursthouse claims, are simply based on misunderstandings of the theory, whereas others are serious but are equally problematic for other ethical theories. The major criticism of virtue theory, according to Hursthouse, is that the theory cannot get us anywhere because it cannot provide rational grounds for the acceptance of its practical conclusions. Hursthouse argues that this criticism relies on an implausible condition of adequacy for normative theories, namely that they provide an easy way of resolving ethical disputes without relying on any substantive views about what kinds of activities are worthwhile. Furthermore, Hursthouse claims that by applying virtue theory to the issue of abortion, we can see that the theory yields reasonable conclusions about cases.

Hursthouse argues that although the debate about abortion has tended to be focused on two considerations—the moral status of the fetus and the rights of the mother—virtue theory regards these two considerations as largely irrelevant to the issue. Instead, Hursthouse claims that we should begin by asking how the familiar biological facts of abortion figure in the practical reasoning of a virtuous agent. Reflection on these facts prompts the realization that pregnancy is not just one among many physical conditions, but a state that is typically attended by strong emotions and attachments. To take it lightly, Hursthouse claims, is to display callousness and light-mindedness. Nonetheless, Hursthouse argues that there might be cases in which abortion is the morally appropriate choice. Determining such cases requires a sensitivity to context and reflection on which pursuits in life are most worthwhile.

Study Questions for Hursthouse

1. Consider virtue theory compared to consequentialism and deontology. How does each theory define right action? In what sorts of cases might the two theories yield differing verdicts? Which do you think is preferable, and why?
2. Of the nine criticisms of virtue theory that Hursthouse discusses, which do you think is the most serious? What are the nine criticisms? Do you find her replies adequate?
3. What considerations are usually taken as central to debates about abortion? Why does Hursthouse regard these considerations as largely irrelevant? What factors does she focus on instead? Do you think her approach is a reasonable one?
4. What is Hursthouse’s final verdict on the morality of abortion? Do you agree with it? Why or why not?
5. What is virtue theory, and how does it differ from consequentialist and deontological approaches to ethics? Do you think it provides a plausible moral theory? Why or why not?
6. What does Hursthouse regard as the “major criticism” of virtue theory? How does she respond to this criticism? Is her response satisfactory?
7. What implications does Hursthouse claim that virtue theory has for the abortion debate? Does virtue theory provide reasonable moral guidance on this issue? Why or why not?

Further reading online

* Thomson’s faculty page, <http://www.mit.edu/~philos/thomson.html>
* Hursthouse’s faculty page, <http://artsfaculty.auckland.ac.nz/staff/?UPI=rhur007>
* Aristotle's ethics, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>
* Resources on Aristotle's ethics, <http://ethics.sandiego.edu/theories/aristotle/>
* Virtue ethics, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/>
* More on virtue ethics, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/virtue/>