

**Monsoon 2023**  
**End-semester Examination**  
**HS0.203: Basics of Ethics**

Max. Marks: 30

Time: 3 hours

28<sup>th</sup> November, 2023

**Answer any 3 Questions. Be precise and clear in your answers**

**Word Limit: 300-400 words**

**3 × 10**

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**PRATHISHTHA**

**1. What is moral responsibility?**

**Bring out the differences between the following:**

**(a) active and passive responsibility and**

**(b) accountability and blameworthiness.**

**Briefly summarize the four conditions of blameworthiness.**

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**Definition of Moral responsibility (2 marks)**

**Differences between**

**(a) 2 marks**

**(b) 2 marks**

**Four conditions of blameworthiness (4 marks)**

**2 + 4 + 4**

**Definition of moral responsibility—2 marks**

**Moral responsibility: moral responsibility is the accountability of persons for their actions and their consequences. This makes persons subject to responses such as blame, praise, punishment, or reward on account of the action.**

**Difference between active and passive responsibility—2 marks**

**active responsibility is responsibility before something has happened. It takes the form of moral duty or care for bringing about certain states of affairs.**

**Passive responsibility is applicable only after something has happened. It takes the form of requiring a justification for why one did what they did.**

**Difference between accountability and blameworthiness—2 marks**

**Accountability has to do with being held to account for or justify one's actions**

**Blameworthiness has to do with being a proper target of blame for one's actions and their consequences**

**Four conditions of blameworthiness—4 marks—1 mark for each of the conditions**

**1. wrong-doing,**

**2. causal contribution,**

**3. foreseeability,**

**4. freedom**

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**HRISHI**

2. By way of an example of a technological disaster, illustrate how it may be evaluated from the following normative frameworks: (a) utilitarian, (b) Kantian, and (c) virtue ethics.  
Which of these frameworks do you find to be the most ethical? Justify your position.
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2 + 4.5 + 3.5

**Example of technological disaster: 2 marks**

**Evaluation**

**(a) Utilitarian: 1.5 marks**

look for the mention of 'greatest good for greatest number'. Yes it may be a disaster, but as long as fewer lives are lost than the ones living, then it could very well be justified towards the greater good. For example, Aadhaar.  
A utilitarian may argue that the loss of rations to a few is justified as long as it is the exception.

**(b) Kantian: 1.5 marks**

A Kantian would look into the intentions of the designers/users and the purposes behind the technology. Is it for a purpose that does not satisfy Kantian principles of universalizability and humanity? If so, then it is unjust.

**(c) Virtue Ethics: 1.5 marks**

A virtue ethicist would look into the actors behind the technology and evaluate whether their character was virtuous or vicious. Could they have prevented the disaster by exercising practical wisdom? Was the technology towards the end of human flourishing in any way? Etc.

**Most ethical framework: 0.5 marks**

There's no right answer for this. It's up to them and how they wish to argue for it.

**Justification of position: 3 marks**

Here look for how they argue for their framework (2 marks)

And how they argue against the other frameworks (1 marks)

**NOTE: use your discretion in all the above.**

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**BALAJI**

3. Describe the two principles of Kantian ethics. What role does freedom play in the ethical theory of Kant? By way of an example, illustrate how an ethically permissible act according to utilitarianism might be unethical in the Kantian sense.

**4 + 3 + 3**

## 2 Principles of Kantian ethics—4 marks (2 each)

### 1. Principle of Universalizability

An act is morally acceptable if, and only if, the action (or the maxim underlying the action) can be universalizable (i.e., does not lead to a contradiction).

### 2. Principle of Humanity

Act in such a way that you always treat humanity [other persons] never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.

### Role of freedom in Kant's ethical theory (3 marks)

Freedom is the foundation of Kantian ethics. It is only because we are free that we can give laws to ourselves. This is what makes us 'autonomous'. This is in contrast to other physical bodies and other non-human animals. Humans, who have the capability of reason, can give laws to themselves and act according to these laws—rather than simply following the dictates of their desires. As Kant says, *"Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the more often and intensely reflection is drawn to them: the starry heaven above me and the moral law within me"*.

Look out for the three underlined points.

1 mark for each point.

If they've written something along these or even beyond this, then use your discretion and mark accordingly.

Example of ethically permissible utilitarian act which is impermissible from a Kantian perspective (3 marks)

1 mark for the example. Any relevant example will do.

1 mark for how it is permissible from a utilitarian perspective.

1 mark for how it is unethical from a Kantian perspective.

E.g., a healthy person walks into a hospital in which there are three dying patients who each require a kidney, a heart, and a liver.

Utilitarians (act utilitarians in particular, but does not matter for the purposes of this question): would say that it is permissible to sacrifice the life of a healthy person to save the life of the three, for this leads to the greatest good of the greatest number.

Kantians:

would say that this goes against the principle of humanity, since the healthy person is being treated as a means to an end and not as an end in themselves.

Other examples could be: trolley problem, kidnapping the innocent; etc.

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PRADHUMAN

4. How does virtue ethics account for morality? Define and explain the following aspects of virtue ethics: (a) virtue (b) eudaimonia (c) practical wisdom.  
How are these three aspects related?

1 + 6 + 3

1 marks for definition

(1) it accounts for morality by evaluating the person on the basis of their character/virtue (rather than on the basis of their actions or what the right thing to do is). We become ethical by becoming virtuous persons.

2 marks for each of the below definitions: 6 marks

(2) (a) virtue: mean between the extremes of defect and excess. It is knowing and following the middle path—the golden mean.

(b) eudaimonia (human flourishing): this is the end of human life. It is human excellence which is achieved by fulfilling one's purpose, i.e., by exercising reason and becoming rational beings.

(c) practical wisdom: this has to do with knowing how to act in a particular situation. This is attained through experience and habit.

Relation between the aspects: 3 marks

(3) how these aspects are related?

For Aristotle, the purpose of human life is excellence in terms of eudaimonia (flourishing). This is excellence in all walks of life. It is a life well-lived. In order to achieve this, one must be virtuous and act in such a way as to follow the middle path—as a mean between the extremes. And it is only by cultivating practical wisdom that one can attain this virtue. Practical wisdom is context-sensitive and can vary from situation to situation. It has to do with how to act in a particular situation.

Relation: practical wisdom enables the exercise and practice of virtue which realizes eudaimonia (flourishing).

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YUG

5. Briefly explain utilitarianism as an ethical framework. (3 marks)  
Bring out the difference between act and rule utilitarianism. (3 marks)  
Explain with an example: what limitations of act utilitarianism does rule utilitarianism help address? (4 marks)

3 + 3 + 4

Explain utilitarianism: 3 marks. Look out for any 2 points (1.5 marks each).

1. utilitarianism is a consequentialist theory which evaluates an action on the basis of the outcomes it leads to
2. that action is right which produces the greatest good for the greatest number.

**Difference between act and rule utilitarianism (1 mark for definition of each; 1 mark for the difference between the two): 3 marks**

**Act utilitarianism (A-U): 1 mark**

An action is moral because it produces the greatest good for the greatest number (conventional utilitarianism)

**Rule utilitarianism (R-U): 1 mark**

An action is moral because it conforms to an optimific rule.

**Differences: 1 mark for any of the below**

1. A-U judges actions and their consequences, whereas R-U judges the rules underlying the actions and the consequences of everyone following the rule.
2. A-U is concerned with immediate consequences of actions; R-U takes long-term effects of rules into consideration
3. A-U aims for greatest good for greatest number, whereas R-U aims at socially optimific rules
4. any other valid point.

Explain with an example: what limitations of act utilitarianism does rule utilitarianism help address? (4 marks)

**Example: 2 marks**

Any valid example which brings out the different ways in which A-U and R-U handle the case

**How R-U helps address the limitations of A-U (2 marks)**

**Sample example:**

A healthy person walks into a hospital in which there are three dying patients who each require a kidney, a heart, and a liver.

**A-U:** would say that it is permissible to sacrifice the life of a healthy person to save the life of the three, for this act leads to the greatest good of the greatest number.

**R-U:** would say that if such action were to be codified into a rule, and if everyone were to follow this rule, then it would NOT lead to the greatest good of the greatest number. Because then no healthy people would walk into hospitals, there would be no incentive to be healthy and what not....

NOTE: Use your own discretion in evaluating the students' examples, but look for the way in which they use it in response to the question asked.

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