

Authority of Morality Essay Questions

General Themes

- Morality and Self-Interest (210528 Q9 Either, 210528 Q9 Or, 180525 Q5 Or, 150528 Q9)
- Necessity of Moral Reasons (Foot) (200601 Q6 Or, 180525 Q5 Either, 160526 Q9)
- Value and Reasons (Kant, Korsgaard, Scanlon, Raz) (220608 Q8, 170527 Q7, 130423 Q17)

220608 Q8

'Far from being able to assess the relative value of options for an agent by their possible contribution to his well-being, we cannot judge their contribution to his well-being except by reference to their value.' (JOSEPH RAZ) Is this the basis of a successful response to the amoralist?

- Discussed at 1h20m

210528 Q9 Either

'There is no essential conflict between morality and self-interest because a good life is one that involves attention to the interests of others.' Discuss.

210528 Q9 Or

'A person's virtues are called good with respect to their presumed effects not on him but on us and society—the praise of virtues has always been far from "selfless", far from "unegoistic"! [...] The neighbour praises selflessness because it brings him advantages! [...] Hereby we hint at the fundamental contradiction in the morality that is very much honoured just now: the motives to this morality stand in opposition to its principle!' (NIETZSCHE) Discuss.

200601 Q6 Or

If an act is morally obligatory, does it follow that it would be irrational not to perform it?

190603 Q7 Or

Could moral beliefs be intrinsically motivating?

180525 Q5 Either

'To be sure, it is not inconsistent or incoherent to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. But it is contrary to reason.' Discuss.

180525 Q5 Or

'There is no imprudence more flagrant than that of Selfishness in the ordinary sense of the term.' (SIDGWICK) Discuss.

- This sounds implausible if you think of morality and self-interest as two separate strands that must be aligned. The efforts to align morality and self-interest are unsuccessful. These efforts include the idea that immorality is punished, and that conscience haunts the immoral.
- The Aristotelian conception has better prospects.
- "But this seems like an objectionably egoistic reason for acting rightly."
- But to think that virtue ethics is objectionably egoistic is to bring an independent conception of flourishing and suppose that the answer that virtue ethics gives to "why be virtuous" is that a person will flourish according to such an independent conception. But the virtue ethicist does not accept such an independent conception of flourishing. Flourishing, to the virtue ethicist, just is being kind, just and so on.
- "But you might raise questions about the bindingness of flourishing." The virtue ethical response seems to be no more than that "it is good that you should be virtuous". But a person who does not care about being virtuous would reject that conception of flourishing.

170525 Q7

'[B]eing good, or valuable, is not a property that itself provides a reason to respond to a thing in certain ways. Rather, to be good or valuable is to have other properties that constitute such reasons.' (SCANLON) Discuss.

160526 Q9

How much turns on the possibility of persuading the amoralist to be moral?

150528 Q9

'[I]n all ingenuous natures, the antipathy to treachery and roguery is too strong to be counter-balanced by any views of profit or pecuniary advantage. Inward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our own conduct; these are circumstances, very requisite to happiness, and will be cherished and cultivated by every honest man, who feels the importance of them.' (HUME) How good a response is this to the amoralist?

140529 Q7

What is the best response to the amoralist?

130423 Q17

Are moral considerations always overriding?