

SECTION 1: HISTORY OF ETHICS

Answer two questions from this section. Please write the question number before each answer.

Question 1: Virtue Ethics

1a. What is the role of virtue and good fortune in *eudaimonia*, according to Aristotle? How is pleasure related to *eudaimonia*?

OR

1b. Explain and evaluate some of the most important aspects of Aristotle's account of the voluntary/involuntary distinction and its relation to virtue in Book III of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. How does Aristotle argue that we are responsible for our characters? How far do you think his argument is successful, given his view of the importance of early moral education?

OR

1c. Explain and critically discuss **two** of the following objections to virtue ethics:

- a) Its focus on character leaves us clueless about how to act in particular situations.
- b) It is trivially circular: it defines right action in terms of the virtuous agent's actions, and the virtuous agent in terms of right action.
- c) Its foundational claim, namely that the virtues are necessary for the agent's own happiness, is mere wishful thinking.
- d) Recent evidence, such as that discussed by John Doris in *Lack of Character*, suggests that, except in very narrowly defined situations, most people's behavior is explained not by character traits, but by situational influences. In other words, the virtue ethical claim that character traits are robust and enduring is false. Hence virtue ethics must be rejected as a useful guide to life and action for most people.

OR

1d. Who do you think is more admirable, and in what respect: the person who does the right thing spontaneously and habitually (i.e., Aristotle's virtuous person), or the person who has to struggle against temptation or inertia to do the right thing, and succeeds in doing it? Consider arguments for each side, then state and justify your considered view.

Question 2: Kantian Ethics

2a. Explain, with examples, Kant's idea that persons are ends-in-themselves and must never be treated as mere means. Be sure to include in your answer an explanation of what this idea implies for our treatment of ourselves.

OR

2b. After briefly discussing the difference between a hypothetical imperative and a categorical imperative, discuss Kant's argument that a moral imperative must be categorical. What is Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative? Why does he contend that the other formulations are merely different versions of the same imperative?

OR

2c. Giving examples of actions that an agent might consider committing, explain how the categorical imperative is supposed to function as a decision procedure. Within your explanation, discuss two versions of the categorical imperative. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this procedure?

Question 3: Utilitarianism

3a. Mill argues that Utility should be the supreme principle of morality. What does he mean by Utility, and what is his argument for the supremacy of Utility in morality? Critically assess this argument.

OR

3b. Explain the utilitarian ground that Mill proposes for justice. How would he reply to the criticism that utilitarianism permits and, under some circumstances, even endorses, violations of justice (such as punishing an innocent person in order to achieve a benefit for others or for society)? Is his reply successful?

OR

3c. How does Mill argue for a distinction between the higher and lower pleasures? What is the motivation for drawing this distinction? Is the distinction ultimately an asset for utilitarianism? Why or why not?

Question 4: Early Confucian Ethics

4a. The early Confucians assign high moral significance to ritual (*li* 禮). In some respects, the *li* may be counted akin to manners or etiquette. Insofar as the *li* are like manners, they may be prey to objections commonly raised against counting manners as belonging to morality. E.g., they take their particular form based on contingent conventions, they may encode pernicious class distinctions, and they may stress "superficial" appearance and thereby promote insincerity, inauthenticity, or attention to anxious trivia of human conduct. Using either the *Analects* or *Mencius* (but not both), construct a Confucian rejoinder to such objections.

OR

4b. There has been a considerable movement toward counting the moral theory of the *Analects* a species of virtue ethics. Scholars proposing this alignment, moreover, frequently discuss Confucius as close intellectual kin to Aristotle and seek in the *Analects* a virtue ethic of the sort Aristotle proposes. Discuss two significant objections to this view. Your responses may target either the general identification of Confucius as virtue ethicist or the more particular association of him with Aristotle.

SECTION 2: CONTEMPORARY ETHICS

Answer one question from this section. Please write the question number before your answer.

Question 1. Contemporary virtue ethics

1. Both Hursthouse and Foot emphasize the continuity of (a) evaluations of living things as good or bad of their kind and (b) moral evaluations of human beings. Based on this continuity, they derive naturalistic accounts of ethics and suggest that claims about morality are objective. Compare and evaluate Hursthouse's and Foot's accounts. In particular, explain their views about the similarities and differences between evaluation of other animals and evaluation of human beings (with attention to the role that reason plays in the human case). Are their naturalistic accounts of ethical evaluation persuasive? And do they provide any way of distinguishing judgments that a human being is *morally* defective from judgments about non-moral defects?

Question 2. Contemporary contract theories

2a. How is morality grounded, according to Gauthier's contractarianism? How does his version of social contract theory differ from earlier versions, such as that of Rawls? Is Gauthier right to think that these changes constitute an improvement?

OR

2b. Compare contractarianism, as understood by Gauthier and Hampton, with contractualism, as defended by Scanlon. Which account provides a more plausible grounding for morality? Explain.

OR

2c. Discuss Hampton's feminist critique of Gauthier's contractarianism. What form must contractarianism take in order to satisfy the critique, according to Hampton? Is Hampton's proposal adequate to address feminist concerns about contract theories?

Question 3. Moral particularism

3. Explain Dancy's account of morality and moral judgment. Why does he reject principle-based ethical systems? How can morality be learnable if it is not based on principles, and how can we have knowledge of right and wrong if this is not a matter of applying principles to situations? Is Dancy's account adequate?

Question 4. Care ethics

4a. Care ethics is, in significant part, a critique of moral theories that fail to take into account dimensions of human existence that have traditionally been closely aligned with women's experience. Explain what care ethics is and how it addresses important matters that earlier ethical theories ignored. Does care ethics have

limitations from a feminist perspective? Your discussion should make specific reference to the views of at least two of the following: Annette Baier, Virginia Held, Alison Jaggar, Nel Noddings and Joan Tronto.

OR

4b. A standard objection to care ethics is that it underestimates the importance of traditional moral concepts, and of justice and autonomy in particular. The general charge is that a care ethic will lack the necessary safeguards against disproportionate distribution of moral obligations and duties such that some will prosper as the "cared for" while others will be over-burdened to give care. The more particular worry is that the historical circumstance of women renders such worries especially acute as women are far more likely to bear disproportionate burdens of care and consequently *need* recourse to appeals to justice and autonomy. Do you think, then, that a viable care ethics must operate as *supplement to* rather than *substitute for* moral theory that includes justice and autonomy as important values? Can care ethics effectively co-exist with justice- and autonomy-based moral theory or would such a co-existence betray the premises on which care ethics rests?

Question 5. Contemporary Deontology

5a. In *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, Korsgaard suggests that the Formula of Universal Law and the Formula of Humanity may be applicable at different stages as we strive for a kingdom of ends: in a non-ideal world, we may need to appeal to the former rather than the latter. Explain the motivation for Korsgaard's move and assess whether it offers an attractive solution to the problem(s) it is designed to address.

OR

5b. Describe in detail Korsgaard's Kantian notion of friendship, with particular attention to the centrally important concepts of responsibility and reciprocity. To what extent are honesty and self-disclosure necessary for friendship, on this account?

SECTION 3: LYING, TRUTHTELLING AND RETICENCE

Answer one question from this section. Please write the question number before your answer.

Question 1: Reticence and lies by omission

As a matter of practical judgment exercised *in situ*, reticence may seem easily or at least plausibly distinguished from lies of omission. Where, however, we do not have any particular circumstance or context in mind but instead seek some abstract criteria by which to tell the difference, the matter is more complicated. Identify and explain one criterion by which reticence can be conceptually distinguished from lie by omission. Your answer need not identify a *sole* criterion but it should be sufficiently generalized to apply across a spectrum of possible circumstances. If, in contrast, reticence can only be identified with reference to a particular context, explain why no conceptual criteria are possible.

Question 2: Truth, reticence and autonomy

One concern with paternalistic lying is that it violates the autonomy of the one to whom one lies. This is clearly Kant's concern. Briefly explain the case for it. In what way(s) is truth necessary for the preservation and exercise of autonomy? Explain whether and how the idea that we have a duty of reticence can be defended against the charge that, by restricting the communication of truths, reticence undermines autonomy.

Question 3: Reticence, taste and morality

One profound incentive to be reticent may be that the alternative is, frankly, in *bad taste*. However, while saying what is in bad taste may have undesirable social consequences, exercising bad taste may be regrettable for reasons quite apart from legitimately *moral* concerns. There are, in other words, many good reasons not to conflate immorality and bad taste. Assuming that lack of reticence is indeed in bad taste, does this fact give any purchase to a *moral* argument for reticence?

Question 4: Lying and deception

Give an account of what it is to lie. How do lies differ from other forms of deception? What is the central moral problem with lying and deception?

**General Examination for Guy Crain
Ethics**

Spring 2012

Answer one question from each of the three sections, and one question from either section I or section II, for a total of **four** questions. Plan to write for close to one hour on each question.

Please number your answers, giving section number and question number.

Section I. History of Ethics

1. Critically discuss Plato's parallel between justice in the soul and justice in society in the *Republic*. Explain and evaluate his view that the parallel is illuminating. Would objections to Plato's view of a just society affect his view of a just person, and vice versa? Use examples.
2. Explain Aristotle's view of *eudaimonia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, including the place of virtue, the place of pleasure, and the place of good fortune. How can you tell that a person has lived a life of *eudaimonia*, according to Aristotle? Critically evaluate some aspects of his view.
3. Discuss the disagreement between Mencius and Xunzi about human nature. How did they disagree? Does a view of moral cultivation depend upon a view of human nature? Evaluate their disagreement and explain the significance of their positions on human nature for the ethical model each proposes.
4. Explain Kant's Formula of Universalizability and his Formula of Humanity, both of which are versions of his Categorical Imperative. Discuss the way they are related to each other, and why Kant thinks that both formulations are expressions of the same Categorical Imperative.
5. How does Mill understand the nature of individual freedom in *On Liberty*? What sort of freedom does he have in mind, and why should society protect it? Refer to his utilitarianism when necessary.
6. Explain Mill's Principle of Utility and the type of proof he thinks can be given for it. Evaluate Mill's argument.

Section II. Contemporary Ethical Theory

1. Explain what Rawls means by the Original Position and how he uses it to derive two fundamental principles of justice. Explain both principles and discuss whether they are the principles that people would agree to in the Original Position.
2. The idea of autonomy has been an important value in modern moral philosophy since Kant. Explain what Kant means by autonomy and some of the other senses of autonomy in contemporary discussion. What view of autonomy do you think is most defensible?

3. Explain and evaluate Bernard Williams' objection to utilitarianism on the grounds that it leads to the violation of integrity.
4. Discuss one important contemporary exponent of virtue ethics that is roughly Aristotelian in spirit (e.g., Hursthouse, MacIntyre). What is the motive for this philosopher's modifications of the theory of Aristotle. Critically evaluate the theory.
5. What does Thomas Nagel mean by moral luck? What are the categories of moral luck? How does he think we should respond to this phenomenon? Critically evaluate his claim that moral luck exists, and respond to his conclusion about the proper response to it. (You may also discuss Bernard Williams on moral luck if you wish).

Section III. The Ethics of Pacifism and Non-Violence

1. Discuss the varieties of pacifism. In your view, what features make a theory pacifist in an interesting way?
2. Explain and evaluate the view that pacifism is self-contradictory.
3. Explain Just War theory and then discuss the ways pacifists have reacted to it.
4. Explain and evaluate John Howard Yoder's defense of pacifism against the objection that it is morally permissible to use violence to defend the innocent.

General Examination for Casey Stull
Ethics
Spring 2012

Answer *two* (2) questions from Section I and *one* (1) *each* from Section II and Section III, for a total of *four* (4) questions. Plan to write for close to one hour on each question. Please **number your answers**.

Section I

1a. What is the role of *eudaimonia* (flourishing, etc.) in Aristotelian (or neo-Aristotelian) virtue ethics? How is it related to the virtues, pleasure, and good fortune? Critically evaluate this view.

OR

1b. Virtue ethics focuses on people's *characters*. How much control do we have over our own character? Explain how the answer to this question impacts the claims of virtue ethics. Eng, can individuals be held morally responsible for the state of their own characters? what are the implications for moral education and development? Explain your answers.

2a. *Autonomy* has been seen as an important value since Kant. Explain Kant's notion of autonomy and contrast it with his notion of *heteronomy*. Do prominent contemporary notions of autonomy differ from Kant's notion? If so, how? What is the most defensible notion of autonomy? Why?

OR

2b. Explain how Kant's Categorical Imperative is supposed to function as a decision procedure for making ethical judgments. Use examples and be sure to be clear about which formulation of the Categorical imperative you are employing. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the procedure?

3a. How does Mill argue for the distinction between higher and lower pleasures? What is the motivation for drawing the distinction? Given that motivation, does Mill's distinction go far enough? Is the distinction ultimately an asset for Utilitarianism? Why or why not?

OR

3b. Explain the difference between *act*-utilitarianism and *rule*-utilitarianism. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each view? Is one of those views better than the other? If so, which one? Why?

4a. Critically discuss the contractarian justification of morality as a means to one's non-moral good. Can such an account explain why someone would have reason to abide by a social contract in a situation where doing so wasn't to her advantage?

OR

4b. Explain one important version of the contraction theory of justice. Include an explanation of the role of the state of nature or the original position in the theory. Evaluate the success of the theory in justifying principles of justice.

Section II

5. What is the proper subject for moral theory: peoples' *actions* or their *characters*? That is, should morality be a matter of explaining what makes an action right or wrong, or what makes a person good or bad? Illustrate each position by reference to at least two philosophers and then defend your own view.

6. Consequentialist theories and virtue seem to have different views about what sorts of things are morally good/valuable and how those goods/values are to be advanced (brought about, respected, etc.). Using examples, explain some of these differences. In light of your analysis, how far apart are consequential and virtue theorists? Which, if either, makes a more compelling case? Explain.

7. What is the function of moral theory? Does it describe our moral experience, explain our moral judgments, or set forth norms for moral conduct? Explain your answer. (You should appeal to the views of philosophers you have read, but feel free to defend your own position.)

Section III

8. What would it mean to have an empirically adequate moral theory? What are the ways in which a moral theory might fail in this respect? How might the criterion of empirical adequacy distinguish among traditional ethical theories? (Doris' work is a possible example here.) Is empirical adequacy a worthy ideal for a moral philosopher? Why or why not?

9. According to some thinkers (e.g., Schick, Mischel), people attend to only *some* of their mental states (beliefs, desires, interests, values, etc.) at any given time. Explain. What are the implications of this claim for moral theory? E.g., does this show that being moral is just *harder* than we might have thought or is there more to it than that? Explain your view.

10. According to some thinkers (e.g., Cosmides and Tooby), our moral capacities (or at least many of them) are underwritten by domain-specific mental modules (e.g., cheater detection) that are the products of biological evolution. What are the implications of this view for moral theory as it is currently conceived? Explain your view. Are you convinced that human moral psychology is explained by a set of domain-specific mental modules that are the result of evolutionary selection pressure? Why or why not?