

Ph.D. General Examination

Ethics

Fall 2013

Directions

The exam will last four hours. Please 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?
2. Explain two versions of Kant's Categorical Imperative: the Formula of Universalizability and the Formula of Humanity. How are the two versions related? Is there reason to think both of them are formulations or expressions of the same Categorical Imperative? Use examples as appropriate.
3. Explain Mill's Principle of Utility and give some examples of its application. Present and evaluate some of the objections to it.
4. Explain the nature of the moral sentiments in Hume's ethics, and the place of sympathy in his view of the moral life.
5. Do you think that Buddhist ethics can be adequately characterized by any of the major categories of ethical theory in Western ethics (e.g., virtue ethics, consequentialism, etc). If so, which one and why? If not, why not?

Section II. Contemporary Ethical Theory

1. Give a summary of G.E.M. Anscombe's influential paper, "Modern Moral Philosophy." Explain (a) why she thinks modern ethical theories are very similar, (b) what she thinks is wrong with them, and (c) what she advises modern moral theorists to do.

2. 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.
3. Discuss one important contemporary exponent of virtue ethics that is roughly Aristotelian in spirit (e.g., Hursthouse, Foot). Critically evaluate the theory.
4. Explain Alasdair MacIntyre's account of the nature of virtue in *After Virtue*. Include what he means by a practice, and the difference between internal and external goods.
5. Critically discuss *either* Thomas Nagel or Bernard Williams on moral luck. Include what he means by moral luck, his examples or categories of moral luck, and how he thinks we should respond to it.

Section III: Virtue Theory and Education

1. What ethical framework do you think provides the best guide for moral education: a consequentialist theory, a deontological theory, or a virtue theory? Give examples of the type of theory you think best serves this purpose.
2. Explain and discuss some of the pedagogical implications of virtue epistemology, or an epistemological theory that focuses on intellectual virtues.
3. What is a moral virtue? What is an intellectual virtue? Give an account of some intellectual virtues and how they relate to moral virtues.
4. Discuss the perennial problem of whether virtue can be taught. Include ancient as well as contemporary philosophers in your discussion.