

MIDTERM EXAM ESSAY QUESTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS: The following are the essay questions for the midterm exam. On the day of the exam, Monday, November 1 (regular class time and room), you will be given at least two of these and be required to answer one. The rest of your exam will consist of true/false and multiple choice questions. If you are well prepared for all of the following essay questions, you shouldn't have difficulty with the other portions of the test. Some of the following questions overlap. Since you will be answering only one, this is not a problem, but you should be aware of it so that you don't think you are misunderstanding a question just because it has a partial overlap with another.

You are free to study for this exam with others in practically any way you want (divide and conquer, duplicate efforts for thoroughness, read each other's draft answers, *etc.*). On the day of the exam, you will have a pen and a blank exam booklet at your disposal—oh, and one more thing, your mind, hopefully not blank. (That's *your* mind, not those of others with whom you may have studied). Get the understanding into your mind about any way you like, but make sure *you* understand it well enough to *explain* it on your own—not just well enough to follow it when someone else explains it.

1. What is divine command theory? What are the major arguments for and the major arguments against divine command theory? How might the divine command theorist respond to the arguments against this position?
2. What is normative ethical relativism? How does it differ from descriptive ethical relativism? Consider and critically discuss the arguments for both descriptive ethical relativism and for normative ethical relativism. In particular, if it were to turn out that descriptive ethical relativism is true, would this provide good grounds for accepting normative ethical relativism.
3. Some people seem to accept normative ethical relativism because they believe doing so requires or promotes tolerance of other cultures. Others have criticized this view, claiming that, in fact, normative ethical relativism undermines the moral basis for tolerance. Explain why people believe normative ethical relativism supports tolerance and then critically evaluate this claim in light of the arguments presented in class and in readings.
4. What is ethical egoism and how does it differ from psychological egoism? Is ethical egoism an adequate moral theory? Defend your answer.
5. Consequentialism tells us that the rightness (or wrongness) of an action depends upon the intrinsic value produced by the action. However, there is serious disagreement over the nature of intrinsic value. Bentham's hedonism encounters several serious problems. Describe these problems and discuss whether Mill's eudaimonism does any better against these problems.
6. It is often argued that consequentialist theories in general and utilitarian theories in particular cannot adequately account for considerations of justice (both retributive and

- distributive justice). Describe the problems raised for consequentialistic theories by issues of justice. Why does justice raise problems for such theories? How might a consequentialist respond to these problems? Be sure to consider the sorts of replies that Mill, specifically, gives to the charge that utilitarianism can't give adequate weight to duties of justice.
7. What is the essential difference between a consequentialist theory and a deontological theory? What are the various sources of rules which have been suggested by deontologists? Explain briefly what each of these views asserts and choose at least three of them to critically evaluate.
 8. Explain in as much detail as you are able how Kantian moral theory determines the moral permissibility of actions. Be sure to explain the following Kantian concepts: a good will, duty, a categorical imperative, a hypothetical imperative, a maxim, a contradiction of the will, a formal contradiction. What is **THE** Categorical Imperative and what role does it play in Kant's moral theory?
 9. One problem with Kant's ethics concerns the determination of an agent's maxim of action. Describe this problem in detail and its implications for Kant's theory.
 10. What is the "problem of the fanatic" for Kant? Be sure to show why it arises for Kant and why it at least appears to be a serious problem. How might Kant reply to the problem? Do you think his reply is adequate? Explain.