

This assignment is due in class on Tuesday, November 25. Late papers will be subject to grade penalty.

Write an essay of about five to seven pages on one of the following topics. (Please indicate clearly on your title page which topic you have chosen.)

1. Robert Nozick states, "Individuals have rights, and there are things no individual or group may do to them (without violating their rights)." In the reading "Moral Constraints and Moral Goals" he develops a conception of moral rights as side constraints. State the side constraint conception of moral rights and defend or attack it (along with the arguments Nozick advances to support it) in the light of the criticisms of it that Amartya Sen presents and that a utilitarian would raise.

2. Suppose the English government has in custody an individual who is suspected of engaging in a terrorist plot to kill some English people who let us assume are not legitimate targets of attack. The English police have a hunch the individual might be withholding information that would save these innocent lives if the police could learn it. From here the story unfolds in two different ways: Version 1: The English can gain the information they seek (if their hunch is correct) by flying the individual to Egypt, to be interrogated and tortured by the Egyptian police to force him to reveal the information. Version 2: The English can gain the information they seek (if their hunch is correct) by flying the individual to Egypt, where the sight of the Pyramids will induce him to give up the information they seek if anything will. Once this individual is in Egypt, it is inevitable that before being returned to England he will be taken into custody by the Egyptian police and tortured (to an identical extent as would occur in Version 1). Does the Doctrine of Double Effect, in either the standard conception or in Warren Quinn's revision of it, when applied to the story in either version 1 or 2, affect the permissibility status of what the English police propose to do? If so, how so, and if not, why not? Warren Quinn asserts and Judith Thomson denies that the Doctrine of Double Effect plays a role in determining whether an action an individual might do is morally permissible or not. State their views on this matter and defend or attack one or the other or both of their positions.

3. In her essay "Tradeoffs," Judith Thomson mentions that Robert Nozick calls rights "side-constraints" and another writer calls them "trumps." Of these characterizations, she writes, "since claims vary in stringency, these attractive metaphors have to go. The most we can say is that rights are more or less high cards, or more or less spongy side-constraints." State Thomson's position on the sponginess and rigidity of side constraints as advanced (a) in her essay "Tradeoffs and (b) as amended in her essay "Self-Defense." Defend or criticize her positions in the light of the opposed concerns (1) that her position is too rigid, and prohibits more infringements of moral rights than it should, and (2) that her position is insufficiently rigid, and allows more infringements of moral rights than it should.

4. In her essay "Self-Defense," Judith Thomson proposes an answer to the question, under what circumstances is it morally permissible for you (or someone else acting on your behalf) to kill a person (or persons) when doing so is necessary to save yourself from death or grievous harm. State her view on this issue. Explain what her view would imply for these cases: (a) Some sailors, adrift at sea and threatened by dehydration and exposure, can survive only if they kill and eat one of their party, (b) you are robbing a bank, the police happen on the scene and shoot at you to defend the bank employees and customers. You can survive only by shooting and killing the police. (c) A child on board a ship entering San Diego harbor is unknowingly carrying a very contagious virus, which will not kill the child, but will infect and kill you if the ship docks with the child on board. You can save your life only by killing the child before the ship docks. (d) You move to the front of a crowd to shake hands with a celebrity. Your appearance fits the Psychotic Killer Profile that triggers heightened alert by the celebrity's bodyguards. When you reach for your handkerchief inside your coat, one bodyguard reasonably believes you are about to assassinate the celebrity and starts shooting at you. You can save your life only by killing the

bodyguard. (1) In the light of these examples, attack or defend Thomson's proposal as to how to draw the morally correct line between Yes cases in which killing to save your life is morally permissible and No cases in which killing to save your own life is morally impermissible. (2) Consider the amendment to Thomson's position which holds that it is morally preferable to kill a morally guilty bystander than a morally innocent aggressor in a predicament in which someone must die. Do you agree or disagree with the amendment? For what reasons?

Your essays will be graded according to the cogency of your arguments, the soundness of the understanding of course texts you display, and the clarity of your prose.

Avoid long quotations from course texts. To show that a course text says what you say it does, support your interpretations of texts with precise footnote references.

Your essay should reflect your own independent reading and thinking about the topic, and should not plagiarize--represent another person's ideas or words as your own. Any borrowing of the words or ideas of another in your paper should be acknowledged in footnotes. See the UCSD Student Code on Integrity of Scholarship.

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