ADVANCE INFORMATION ON MIDTERM EXAM  PHILOSOPHY 13  FALL, 2004

The midterm for Philosophy 13 will take place in class, at the regular class time, on Monday, October 25.
No use of books or notes is permitted at any time during this exam.

The actual exam will be drawn from questions exactly as they appear on the lists below.
On the actual exam, two essay questions will be posed, and you will be asked to answer one of these two questions.
On the actual exam, six short-answer questions will be posed, and you will be asked to answer five of these six questions.

Essay questions

1. In chapter 2 of Utilitarianism Mill notes that the utilitarian claim that “pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends” has been criticized on the ground that there are “better and nobler” objects “of desire and pursuit” or in other words “higher ends” than pleasure. State the main counterarguments that Mill develops against this criticism. Which side gets the better of this dispute, in your view? What reasons support your answer?

2. In “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” Peter Singer develops an argument concerning what we are morally required to do by way of providing assistance to distant needy strangers. Some object that Singer’s position is unreasonable in that it (like the act consequentialist doctrine it somewhat resembles) demands excessive self-sacrifice. Present Singer’s argument including his response to this objection. Compare his position to that asserted by Susan Wolf in “Moral Saints.” In your view, who gets the better of this dispute? What reasons support your answer?

3. In his essay “Moral Constraints and Moral Goals” Robert Nozick defends the view that we should conceive of moral rights as side constraints to be respected rather than as goals to be promoted. Explain the difference between these two ways of conceiving of moral rights and state Nozick’s main reasons for favoring the side constraint approach. Develop one or more significant criticisms of this position and either defend Nozick against these criticisms or your criticisms against Nozick. (In this connection you may wish to consider Amartya Sen’s critical discussion.)

Short-answer questions {there are 19 in all; make sure you have the entire handout}
1. State the distinction between act utilitarianism and act consequentialism.

2. Rehearse in your own words the “experience machine” example introduced by Robert Nozick and explain the main point or claim he is making by means of this example.

3. State briefly the argument for the principle of utility that Mill presents in chapter 4 of *Utilitarianism*.

4. “The good life for each of us is achieving our own life aims that we care about the most.”—State the main criticisms of this position made by Robert Adams and Richard Kraut.

5. At some points in his book *Utilitarianism*, Mill appears to be asserting the doctrine of act utilitarianism or something close to it. In other passages he appears to be asserting one or another different version of utilitarianism, to serve as the criterion of right and wrong. Rehearse a passage in which Mill appears to be proposing a version of utilitarianism that is not act utilitarianism, and state the non-act-utilitarian principle that you see Mill proposing in that passage.

6. Describe examples that illustrate the point that according to Mill it can be reasonable to find a person praiseworthy for doing a morally wrong act and blameworthy for doing a morally right act.

7. State the Doctrine of Double Effect. Present an example that illustrates how the Doctrine of Double Effect would sometimes affect judgments about what it is morally permissible to do.

8. State the main objections that Judith Thomson raises against the Doctrine of Double Effect in her essay “Self-Defense.”

9. Describe an example in which a hedonistic account of what is intrinsically good for a person and a desire satisfaction account of what is intrinsically good for a person disagree. Use the example to explain the difference between these rival conceptions of what is intrinsically good for a person.

10. Act utilitarianism is proposed as a criterion of right and wrong, not necessarily as a practical decision making guide. If act utilitarianism is not a practical decision making guide, what would or could be the point of accepting it? Describe an example that provides reasons for one who accepts act utilitarianism as a criterion of right and wrong not to adopt act utilitarianism as a practical decision making guide.
11. Explain how ideal rule utilitarianism and act utilitarianism would assess the morality of pacifism (the doctrine that one should never resort to violence under any circumstances).

12. In her essay “Self-Defense” Judith Thomson describes types of cases she calls “Villainous Aggressor,” “Innocent Aggressor,” and “Innocent Threat.” How do these three types of case differ from each other? Describe how according to Thomson the cases are also significantly alike, in a way that explains and justifies the claimed fact that all three are classified as “Yes cases” with respect to the right of self-defense.

13. Thomas Nagel distinguishes between agent-neutral and agent-relative reasons. State the distinction as Nagel draws it. Nagel goes on to describe three types of agent-relative reasons that he labels autonomous, deontological, and obligatory on the basis of special ties. Describe these three types of agent-relative reasons.

14. In “Relationships and Responsibilities” Samuel Scheffler observes that the idea that social relationships such as friendship and family ties give rise to special responsibilities has been criticized from two different standpoints. He labels the two criticisms the “voluntarist objection” and the “distributive objection.” State the voluntarist and the distributive objections.

15. In “Agent-Relativity and Deontology” Thomas Nagel states that deontological reasons are “formally puzzling.” By this he means that they may be incoherent. What according to Nagel is the feature of deontological reasons that renders them puzzling in this way? Nagel tentatively suggests a way in which we can understand deontological reasons as making sense. Characterize his suggestion.

16. The Doctrine of Doing and Allowing holds that it is sometimes morally impermissible to do something, when a certain outcome would result if the thing was done, even though it would be morally permissible in similar circumstances to allow that same or an equivalent outcome to occur. State the distinction between doing and allowing on which this doctrine is based and describe an example in which some people would hold that the distinction makes a difference to the determination of what it is right and wrong to do.

17. Suppose that you are the prosecuting attorney charged with deciding whether or not to press charges against a person who has been arrested on suspicion of committing a terrorist crime. You happen to know the suspect is innocent, but you also know you can rig the evidence and by violating the rules of criminal procedure you can bring about the conviction of this man for a crime he did not commit. You have excellent reasons to believe that securing this
unjust conviction of an innocent person will deter other would-be terrorists and thus prevent many serious crimes that otherwise would occur. In other words, you know that by committing an injustice you can bring about more rights fulfillment overall and thus that committing this injustice maximizes human happiness in the long run. (Don’t worry about how you know this; just accept the assumption that you know it.) Suppose that the prosecuting attorney looks to chapter 5 of Mill’s Utilitarianism for guidance. Present some serious considerations, adduced by Mill in that chapter, in favor of the position that one should do what utilitarianism recommends when utility conflicts with justice, as in this sort of case.

18. Describe the choice problem that Amartya Sen calls ”Donna’s Choice” and explain how Sen uses this example to urge the implausibility of both constraint-based deontology and utility-based criteria of what is morally right and wrong.

19. In “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” Peter Singer presents an argument concerning what one is morally required to do to aid distant needy strangers, and then adds, “The outcome of this argument is that our traditional moral categories are upset. The traditional distinction between duty and charity cannot be drawn, or at least, not in the place we normally draw it.” What revision of our traditional moral categories is implied by Singer’s argument, according to Singer? What features of his argument imply this result in his view?