

ADVANCE INFORMATION ON MIDTERM EXAM PHILOSOPHY 13
FALL, 2007

The midterm exam will take place in our regular classroom (Cog Sci 002) from 10:00 to 10:50 am Monday, October 22. No use of books or notes will be permitted at any time during this exam. We'll supply paper, on which you will write your exams. The exam will cover all course materials—required readings, lectures, and handouts—up to and including the material for Friday, October 19.

Part 1 will consist of essay questions drawn from the list below. On the actual exam 3 of these questions will be posed, and you will be asked to write on one of them. Time allowed: thirty minutes. This portion of the exam counts for 60 per cent of your exam grade.

Part 2 will consist of short-answer questions testing your comprehension of course readings and handouts. These questions will be drawn from the list below. On the actual exam, five questions will be posed, and you will be asked to answer three of them.

Part 1 Essay questions.

1. Suppose someone asserts that each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the general welfare of society cannot override. Give examples of human rights that might plausibly be deemed inviolable even when violating them would maximally increase human happiness or utility on the whole. State the main arguments Mill develops against this position in chapter 5 of *Utilitarianism*. Are his arguments sound? Why or why not?
2. At the beginning of chapter 2 Mill interprets utilitarianism as a morality that calls for the maximization of happiness—that is, pleasure and the absence of pain. He then considers the objection that utilitarianism so understood is a doctrine unfit for humans, a doctrine “worthy only of swine.” What objection is Mill raising here? In the next few paragraphs of chapter 2 he presents considerations that aim to rebut the objection. State these considerations. Do they succeed in rebutting the objection? Why or why not?
3. In his essay “Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism” J. J. C. Smart defends act utilitarianism against rule utilitarianism. Act utilitarianism is the doctrine that one morally ought always to do an act, among the available alternatives, that would lead to an outcome no worse in total utility than anything else one might have done instead. What is rule utilitarianism and what according to Smart is wrong with it? Mill’s view might be interpreted as a form of rule utilitarianism. So interpreted, is Mill’s position vulnerable to Smart’s criticisms or superior to the view that Smart defends?
4. In his essay “Well-Being and Excellence” Robert Adams suggests the view that a person’s life goes better for her, the more it includes enjoyment of the excellent. In some respects this hybrid view is similar to the position on the nature of human good that Mill arrives at after his discussion in the first ten paragraphs of chapter 2 of his book *Utilitarianism*. How if at all does Mill’s position on this issue differ from Adams’s suggestion? Defend or attack one of these two hybrid views about the nature of human good. Your discussion might pit Mill against Adams, or attack hybrid views from the perspective of a simple hedonism, desire satisfaction, or objective list position, or defend a hybrid view against these rivals.
5. “There are no objective values.” Defend or attack the quoted claim,. Your discussion should include consideration of the arguments of John Mackie and Ronald Dworkin as they bear on this issue.

Part 2 Short-answer questions.

1. Describe Robert Nozick’s “experience machine” example and explain the main claim he uses the example to advance.

2. In chapter 2 of *Utilitarianism* Mill claims pleasures differ in quality as well as quantity. How according to Mill do pleasures differ in quality? Exactly what test does he propose for determining or discovering degrees of quality?

3. In chapter 4 of *Utilitarianism* Mill argues to the conclusion that happiness, and happiness alone, is desirable as an end. State his argument.

4. In "Objectivity and Truth: You'd Better Believe It" Ronald Dworkin distinguishes internal and external skepticism with regard to some supposed body of knowledge and denies that the external type of skepticism can be successful or even coherent. What is the distinction between internal and external skepticism and what according to Dworkin is wrong with external skepticism?

5. According to Richard Kraut's essay "Desire and Human Good," what are the features that determine whether supposed goods in your life such as sex, drugs and rock and roll are *per se* (in and of themselves, apart from further consequences) things that contribute to your good?

6. What is the distinction between extreme and restricted utilitarianism that J. J. C. Smart draws in his essay "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism"? Which version of utilitarianism, if any, does Smart endorse, and what are his reasons?

7. At the end of "Classical Utilitarianism" John Rawls summarizes the criticism of utilitarianism he has been developing by stating, "utilitarianism does not take seriously the distinction between persons"? What is the criticism?

8. Suppose that you unfortunately suffer lifelong severe chronic pain, which prevents you from enjoying anything in your life. According to (a) J. S. Mill, (b) Robert Adams, and (c) Richard Kraut, could your life nonetheless contain significant goods (goods that enhance your life, not just the lives of other people)? In each case, explain why or why not.

9. In chapter 1 of *Utilitarianism* Mill distinguishes between the intuitive and the inductive approach to ethics. How do these approaches differ?

10. In "Rights and Agency" Amartya Sen describes an example that is supposed to serve as a counterexample against both what he calls "welfarist consequentialism" and "rights-based deontology." Describe the example and explain how according to Sen the example tells against both views.

11. "Utilitarianism is unacceptable, because if a society taught its members always to decide what to do by trying to figure out what act, of those they could now choose, would best promote the general welfare, the results would be very bad." –In chapter 2 of *Utilitarianism* Mill provides a response to this objection. What is his response?

12. Richard Kraut in his essay "Desire and Human Good" notes that his preferred account of what makes it the case that something you get is intrinsically good or bad for you has an odd-sounding implication about the status of pain. He embraces this implication. What is it and how does his account generate it?

13. In a course reading Robert Nozick calls attention to two interpretations of moral rights—that they are goals to be promoted and that they are constraints to be respected. Which interpretation does he favor and why?

14. In chapter 3 of *Utilitarianism* Mill might be read as responding to this objection: If a society tried to train its members to accept utilitarian morality and behave accordingly, the effort would

fail. Utilitarianism is such that most people could not become motivated to conform to it. What does Mill offer in chapter 3 by way of reply to this objection?

15. In his essay "The Subjectivity of Values" John Mackie asserts that there are no objective values and then carefully explains what he means to assert by this claim. State Mackie's claim clearly in your own words and explain how that claim differs from two similar-sounding claims that he tells his readers he is not asserting.

16. In "The Subjectivity of Values" John Mackie presents two arguments to support his view that "there are no objective values." Summarize the two arguments.

17. Does Mill's utilitarianism imply that if an act is virtuous, it is morally right? Why or why not?

18. What is the informed desire satisfaction view of what makes a person's life go best, for that very person? State some significant objections against that view developed by Robert Adams in his essay "Well-Being and Excellence."

19. Imagine that someone injects you with a drug that brings it about that every morning of your life, you will have an incredibly strong desire to eat a turnip. Eating the turnip will give you no satisfaction (enjoyment), but if you did not get to eat the turnip each morning, you would experience severe pain. The person arranges that it is guaranteed with certainty that on each morning of your life, a turnip will be available for you to eat, so you will satisfy this strong desire daily, again and again. On the desire satisfaction view of human good, does the person who does all this thereby greatly increase the degree to which your life goes well for you? Why or why not?

20. In chapter 2 of *Utilitarianism* Mill states that it is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. How (according to Mill) is this claim consistent with Mill's claim that the more happy one is, the better one's life is going?