

# Contemporary moral problems and issues philosophy essay

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



As Glaucon recalls the legend of Gyges he said that, a Shepherd found a powerful magic ring in a fissure opened by an earthquake. If the ring was worn, the person will become invisible and would be able to travel anywhere and do anything undetected. However, he used the ring for evil, to get what he wants and satisfaction. There are two kinds of ring, the virtue and the vice. In the story the morality that has been raised in the story was about being greedy on the power that he possesses. This power made him to think evil rather than doing good deeds and he cannot let go of what he has. He acted selfishness, choosing to become immoral to the whole society and go against the cleanliness of his heart.

## 2. Distinguish between psychological and ethical egoism.

– Psychological egoism, means that all men are self-centered in everything that they do. Just to satisfy his needs for his own good which acts as self-interest. And Ethical egoism, means how men ought to act. That gives a factual response of a person's behavior; they have no obligation to do anything what is in their own interest, regardless of the effect on others.

## 3. Rachels discusses two arguments for psychological egoism. What are these arguments, and how does he reply to them?

– The first argument describes one person's action as selfish, and another person's action as unselfish. We are overlooking the crucial fact that in both cases, assuming that the action is done voluntarily, the agent is merely doing what he most wants to do. The first argument shows a bad example it would not deserve to be taken seriously, because it rests on the premise that

people never voluntarily do anything except what they want to do. And the second argument for psychological egoism is the so-called unselfish actions always produce a sense of self-satisfaction in the agent, and since this sense of satisfaction is a pleasant state of consciousness, rather than to bring about any good for others.

4. What three commonplace confusions does Rachels detect in the thesis of psychological egoism?

The three commonplace confusions are:

Confusion of Selfishness with self-interest.

Assumption that every action is done either from self-interest or from other-regarding motives.

Common but false assumption that a concern for one's own welfare is incompatible with any genuine concern for the welfare of others.

5. State the arguments for saying that ethical egoism is inconsistent. Why doesn't Rachels accept this argument?

- An ethical egoism is inconsistent, because the egoism cannot be easily advocated that is commonly adopted by many. And if people adopted the egoistic policy of pursuing their own interests to the exclusion of his interests, as he pursues his interests to the exclusion of theirs, then such a world would be impossible. So he himself will be an egoist, but he will want others to be altruists.

6. According to Rachels, why shouldn't we hurt others, and why should we help others? How can the egoist reply?

- By doing actions that would harm others may affect them. He will protest that we may accept this as a reason, but he does not. There are limits to what can be accomplished by argument, and if the egoist really doesn't care about other people. As a reason not to do an action simply because he cares about what happens to that other person. What the egoist says that he does not accept that as a reason, he is saying something quite extraordinary.

Discussion Questions:

1. Has Rachels answered the question raised by Glaucon, namely, "Why be moral?" If so, what exactly is his answer?

- Yes, his answer was, "we must be a moral not for ourselves but for others."

2. Are genuine egoists rare, as Rachels claims? Is it a fact that most people care about others even people they don't know?

- Yes, the genuine egoists are rare, because most of the people can love or care others, even though they don't really know that person. Helping others may give a reason for doing it as a good habit to show what care really means for them.

3. Suppose we define ethical altruism as the view that one should always act for the benefit of others and never in one's own self-interest. Is such a view immoral or not?

- The view is not immoral, because things and life are never too late, in our lives no one is perfect, and to make an impact about this we should show how we develop our moral values.

## **John Arthur: Religion, Morality, and Conscience**

Review Questions:

1. According to Arthur, how are morality and religion different?

- Morality involves our attitudes toward various forms of behavior like lying and killing, it's typically expressed using the notions of rules, rights, and obligations. While religion typically involves in prayer, worship, beliefs about the supernatural, institutional forms and authoritative texts.

2. Why is religion necessary for moral motivation?

- Religion is necessary for moral motivation, because those religious motives are far from the only ones people have. The decision to do the right thing is made for a variety of reasons.

3. Why isn't religion necessary as a source of moral knowledge?

- Religion isn't necessary a source of moral knowledge, because people tends to not understand truly the idea of religion it should always be done right.

4. What is the divine command theory? Why does Arthur reject this theory?

- The divine command theory mean that God has the same sort of relation to the moral law as the legislature, which has to statutes it enacts without God's commands there would be no moral rules, just as without a legislature there would be no statutes. Arthur rejected the divine command theory, simply because he doesn't believe in God.

5. According to Arthur, how are morality and religion connected?

- The two are connected, because morality is influenced by religion and they are based on its moral code, which also creates a culture.

6. Dewey says that morality is social. What does this mean, according to Arthur?

- As Arthur made a study about the morality is social, it's about the sense that we are, subject to criticism by others for our actions. We discuss this with others what we should do, and often hear from them concerning whether our decisions were acceptable. Only through the powers of imagination can we exercise our moral powers, envisioning with the powers of judgment what conscience requires.

Discussion Questions:

1. Has Arthur refuted the divine command theory? If not, how can it be defended?

- Arthur did not refute the divine command theory, because he talks about the limitation to the premise of God he is refining god where the principle of God is very powerful. We should remember that in every religion, we can never truly understand the concept of God, because it can never decide the concerns of society and conclusion can never be a factual.

2. If morality is social, as Dewey says, then how can we have any obligations to non-human animals?

- Even though animals are not human beings. They are also a living thing that can think, feel, and etc. We should have obligations for them, because we also get some of our resources from the animals.

3. What does Dewey mean by moral education? Does a college ethics class count as moral education?

- Moral education simply means your own family tradition on how you grow up with them and how they raise you. Family is our first teacher in our lives, and we also involve within the society. Yes, because moral education has been taught, which we are learning from discussions and on how we act them in the real world. We will carry this as long as we live.

## **Friedrich Nietzsche: Master-and Slave-Morality**

Review Questions:

1. How does Nietzsche characterize a good and healthy society?

- Nietzsche characterizes a good and healthy society by allowing superior individuals to exercise their “ will to power”, their drive domination and exploitation of the inferior. The superior person follows a “ master-morality” that emphasizes power, strength, egoism and freedom, as distinguished from a “ slave-morality” that calls for weakness, submission, sympathy and love.

## 2. What is Nietzsche’s view of injury, violence, and exploitation?

- Nietzsche’s view of injury, violence and exploitation is from the result in a certain rough sense in good conduct among individuals when the necessary conditions are given. It’s a will to the denial of life, a principle of dissolution and decay.

## 3. Distinguish between Master-Morality and Slave-Morality.

- Master-Morality has the idea of a good and bad character and it’s also similar to the noble and despicable. While Slave-Morality has the idea of morality of utility and according to them the evil man arouses fear.

## 4. Explain the Will to Power.

- This is best described on how you think, if you put something on mind that you like to achieve something or a goal. The power of your will become immovable. That you’ll do everything just to get what is best. We develop this through experience, so that we will have a strong will, which strives constantly towards a self-chosen goal under the influence of a self-supplied motivation.



### Discussion Questions:

1. Some people view Nietzsche's writings as harmful and even dangerous. For example, some have charged Nietzsche with inspiring Nazism. Are these charges justified or not? Why or why not?

- Nietzsche's writings are not harmful and not may cause danger. These are very factual record that can be supported through the future. He made every opinion and classified it to have a meaningful life for the whole society, which we could easily identify what are our strengths and weaknesses.

2. What does it mean to be " a creator of value"?

- It truly defines the origin of where and how it started that belongs to their ancestors so they could master something coming from the history.

## **Mary Midgley: Trying Out One's New Sword**

### Review Questions:

1. What is " moral isolationism"?

- According to Midgley, the view of anthropologists and others that we cannot criticize cultures that we don't understand. We learn from our culture on how we live our lives. This is an essential doctrine of immoralisim, because it forbids any moral reasoning. It also falsely assumes that cultures are separate and unmixed, whereas most cultures are in face formed out of many influences.

2. Explain the Japanese custom of Tsujigiri. What questions does Midgley ask about this custom?

- Tsujigiri is a Japanese samurai sword, which means crossroads-cut because it had to be tried out if it works properly; it had to slice through someone at a single blow, from the shoulder to the opposite flank. Otherwise, the warrior bungled his stroke. This could injure his honour, offend his ancestors and even let down his emperor. So tests were needed, and wayfarers had to be extended. The questions are: “ Does the isolating barrier work both ways? Are people in other cultures equally unable to criticize us?” “ Does the isolating barrier between cultures block praise as well as blame?” and “ What is involved in judging?”

3. What is wrong with moral isolationism, according to Midgley?

- According to Midgley, moral isolationism would lay down a general ban on moral reasoning.

This is the programme of immoralism that carries a distressing logical difficulty.

4. What does Midgley think is the basis for criticizing other cultures?

- Midgley thinks that the culture of our society is the basis of criticizing other cultures. It defines that, why would we judge other culture if we also criticize our own culture.

Discussion Questions:

1. Midgley says that Nietzsche is an immoralist. Is that an accurate and fair assessment of Nietzsche? Why or why not?

- No, because each one of them has different beliefs that they follow and has also different perspective.

2. Do you agree with Midgley's claim that the idea of separate and unmixed cultures is unreal? Explain your answer.

- No, everything can change, because in one country, you can't tell whether the people there follow the same culture or not. Living in one country can have different varieties of culture and own beliefs.

## **John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism**

Review Questions:

1. State and explain the Principle of Utility. Show how it could be used to justify actions that are conventionally viewed as wrong, such as lying and stealing.

- It states that actions or behaviors are right in so far as they promote happiness or pleasure, wrong as they tend to produce unhappiness or pain. Hence, utility is a teleological principle. This once again raises some of the same basic issues of associated with hedonism, as discussed in the earlier section on Teleological Theories. Recall that a hedonist believes that the good life consists solely in the pursuit and experience of pleasure or happiness. The feelings of pleasure and pain are biological events involving our central nervous system, which are controlled by our cerebral cortex. We

obviously experience pleasure when we perform certain acts that fulfill biological functions such as doing something that can be done every time if a person is very dependent which causes to lie and steal.

2. How does Mill reply to the objection that Epicureanism is a doctrine worthy only of swine?

– Mill reacted by saying that represent human nature in a degrading light; since the accusation supposes human beings to be a capable of no pleasures except those of which swine are capable. The comparison of the Epicureanism life to that of beasts is felt degrading, precisely because a beast's pleasure do not satisfy a human being's conceptions of happiness. He doesn't consider the Epicureanism to have been by any means faultless in drawing out their scheme of consequences from the utilitarian principle.

3. How does Mill distinguish between higher and lower pleasures?

– The two pleasures are, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure or the higher pleasure. If one of the two is, by those who are competently acquainted by both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small amount.

#### 4. According to Mill, whose happiness must be considered?

-Mill said, neither of the happiness should be considered. He said that neither pains nor pleasures are homogenous and pain is always heterogeneous with pleasure. He said that for that standard is not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether. Utilitarianism could only attend its end by the general cultivation of nobleness of character, even if each individual were only benefited by the nobleness of others and his own, so far happiness is concerned, were a sheer deduction from the benefit but the bare enunciation of such an absurdity as this last, renders refutation superfluous.

#### 5. Carefully reconstruct Mill's proof of the Principle of Utility.

- The Principle of Utility says that happiness is nothing more than one's pleasure and absence of pain. However, happiness is subjective from one person to the other. One's happiness can or cannot be another person's happiness. Happiness varies from person to person. Also, one's perception of what happiness is varies from one person to the other. One might think that he is doing an act that will make him happy however, it really does the opposite. A man is destined to be happy. Man's end is to reach Happiness. Subjective in a sense that they believe certain things that doesn't make them happy, they feel happiness temporarily. However, man's being subjective prevents man to achieve happiness.

Discussion Questions:

1. Is happiness nothing more than pleasure and the absence of pain? What do you think?

- No, because happiness is where you feel free of thoughts that could not bring depression and won't give hatred. Happiness can be seen in a person once their desire is fulfilled. Happiness also is not being alone this is shared to others and to God.

2. Does Mill convince you that the so-called higher pleasures are better than the lower ones? What about the person of experience who prefers the lower pleasures over the higher ones?

- Yes, because higher pleasures give maximum experience once in a life time. This is where we always remember the good times. I also agree on the second question, having lower pleasures over the higher ones can test you if you really love a person. But if you give up on something, all of your hopes can disappear one by one.

3. Mill says, " In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility." Is this true or not?

- Yes, the statement is true. The principle of utility states that actions or behaviors are right in so far as they promote happiness or pleasure, wrong as they tend to produce unhappiness or pain. Hence, utility is a teleological principle. This once again raises some of the same basic issues of associated with hedonism, as discussed in the earlier section on Teleological Theories.

Recall that a hedonist believes that the good life consists solely in the pursuit and experience of pleasure or happiness.

4. Many commentators have thought that Mill's proof of the Principle of Utility is defective. Do you agree? If so, then what mistake or mistakes does he make? Is there any way to reformulate the proof so that it is not defective?

– No, because Mill's principle has explained its definition thoroughly.

Although the principle of utility is difficult to apply and often leads to immorality, it is, nevertheless, an important moral principle. Fundamental problem for utilitarianism is justifying the altruistic principle of self-sacrifice in order to benefit others.

## **James Rachels: The Debate over Utilitarianism**

Review Questions:

1. Rachels says that classical utilitarianism can be summed up in three propositions. What are they?

– As said in the book, the three propositions are actions are to be judged right or wrong in virtue of their consequences. Nothing else matters. Right actions are, simply, those that have the best consequence. Second is, assessing consequences, the only thing that matters is the amount of happiness or unhappiness that is caused. Everything else is irrelevant. Right actions are those that produce the greatest balance of happiness over unhappiness. Lastly, in calculating the happiness or unhappiness that will be

caused, no one's happiness is to be counted as more important than anyone else's. Each person's welfare is equally important. Right actions are those that produce the greatest possible balance of happiness over unhappiness, with each person's happiness counted as equally important.

2. Explain the problem with hedonism. How do defenders of utilitarianism respond to this problem?

- By hedonism, it believes that happiness is the definitive good, and unhappiness is the definitive bad.

We would always value all sort of things, including artistic creativity and friendship, for their own sakes. It makes us happy to have them, but only because we already think them good. Therefore, we think it a misfortune to lose them, independently of whether or not the loss is accompanied by unhappiness.

3. What are the objections about justice, rights, and promises?

- For justice, according to the critics of Utilitarianism this is incompatible with the ideal of justice. Justice requires that we treat people fairly, according to their individual needs and merits. It also illustrates how the demands of justice and the demands of utility can come into conflict, and so a theory that says utility is the whole story cannot be right.

For rights, this has a bond with the legal rights and morality behavior. The moral to be drawn from this argument is that Utilitarianism is at odds with the idea that people have rights that may not be trampled on merely



because one anticipated good results. But we don't think that our rights should be set aside so easily. It's a notion that places limits on how an individual may be treated, regardless of the good purposes that might be accomplished.

For promises, it's because the only kinds of considerations having to do with the future, because of its exclusive concern with the consequences, Utilitarianism has is confine our attention to what will happen as a result of our actions. Utilitarianism is that it seems to be an adequate moral theory because it excludes what we might call backward-looking considerations.

4. Distinguish between Rule- and Act-Utilitarianism. How does rule-utilitarianism reply on the objections?

– Rules will be established by reference to the principle, and individual acts will then be judged right or wrong by reference to the rules. Rule-Utilitarianism is to contrast the original theory it has no difficulty coping with the three antiutilitarianism arguments, now commonly called the Act-Utilitarianism is something McCloskey, would tempted to bear false witness against the innocent man because the consequences of that particular act would be good.

5. What is the third line of defense?

– This third line of defense discusses moreover various irrational elements, including prejudices absorbed from our parents, our religion, and the general

culture. It doesn't follow the concept of justice, individual rights and so on. It simply talks about the way of thinking.

Discussion Question:

1. Smart's defense of utilitarianism is to reject common moral beliefs when they conflict with utilitarianism. Is this acceptable to you or not? Explain your answer.

- We all know what is right and wrong; we should always understand the facts that may give a good sense and values to help each other. All of us have different beliefs, but even though they are different, we only have one goal in our lives. Common moral consciousness could bring a support for only a short term; we should know the values of life.

2. A utilitarian is supposed to give moral consideration to all concerned. Who must be considered? What about nonhuman animals? How about lakes and streams?

- We all have freedom, but we should not abuse it. It's also our responsibility to save the animals and also the lakes and streams. Not all the time they are still there for us, because most of the time we always abuse our planet, and we don't respect and love the animals and our environment. It could create an unhappy result for the animals, lakes and streams.

3. Rachels claims that merit should be given moral consideration independent of utility. Do you agree?

- I agree that merit should be given moral considerations, because it can give a lot of benefits that may help the people to think what would benefit for them. Even if it's only a small reward, this can help people to do good deeds and it would practice a good moral for everyone.

## **Immanuel Kant: The Categorical Imperative**

Review Questions:

1. Explain Kant's account of the good will.

- It's impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will. For Kant, good will is not good, because of what it affects or accomplishments. Its fitness for attaining some proposed end, it's good through its willing alone, which is good in itself.

2. Distinguish between hypothetical and categorical imperative.

- Hypothetical means possibility or circumstances. As for categorical imperative means having knowledge about what it contains, which has no conditions to be applied.

3. State the first formulation of the categorical imperative (using the notion of a universal law), and explain how Kant uses this rule to derive some specific duties toward self-and others.

- From the illustration, this principal of self-love can become a universal law of nature. It's then seen at once that a system of nature by whose law the

very same feeling whose function is to stimulate the furtherance of life should actually destroy life would contradict itself and consequently could not subsist as a system of nature.

4. State the second version of the categorical imperative (using the language of means and end) and explain it.

– For the universality of a law that everyone believing himself to be in need can make any promise he pleases with the intention not to keep it would make promising, and the very purpose of promising, itself impossible, since no one would believe he was being promised anything, but would laugh at utterances of this kind as empty shams.

Discussion Question:

1. Are the two versions of the categorical imperative just different expressions of one basic rule, or are they two different rules? Defend your answer.

– I think they differ in expressions of one basic, we should think first before we do an action. The same treatment with everyone else, by simply looking what is the right way to do. But as for the second formulation, it discusses a means and ends.

2. Kant claims that an action that is not done from the motive of duty has no moral worth. Do you agree or not? If not, give some counterexamples.

- I agree, because it is truth that there are no moral worth since everyone should consider their duty as an individual. Rational nature exists as an end in itself. Thus the value of all objects that can be produced by our action is always conditioned.

3. Some commentators think that the categorical imperative (particularly the first formulation) can be used to justify nonmoral or immoral action. Is this a good criticism?

- Yes, because commentators has good insight about the categorical imperative. It can also be justified if a person's action is morally right or wrong. I can say that it's a good criticism, because they have a point of what it really is.

## **Aristotle: Happiness and Virtue**

Review Questions:

1. What is happiness, according to Aristotle? How is it related to virtue? How is it related to pleasure?

- According to Aristotle, all human beings seek happiness, and that happiness is not pleasure, honor, or wealth, but an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. Virtue is of two kinds, moral and intellectual. Moral virtue comes from training and habit, and generally is a state of character that is a mean between the vices of excess and deficiency.

2. How does Aristotle explain moral virtue? Give some examples.

– According to Aristotle, Virtue is of two kinds, moral and intellectual. Moral virtue comes from training and habit, and generally is a state of character that is a mean between the vices of excess and deficiency.

Example is that Aristotle portrays the virtue of courage as a mean between the extremes of rashness and cowardice.

3. Is it possible for everyone in our society to be happy, as Aristotle explains it? If not, who cannot be happy?

– Yes, it is possible for everyone in our society to be happy, but it's hard to know what kind of happiness would the society like, because most of the people have different definition of being happy. Not like what Aristotle explained. A character of a person should have passion and love. All of us deserve to be happy and want to feel happy.

Discussion Questions:

1. Aristotle characterizes a life of pleasure as suitable for beasts. But what, if anything, is wrong with a life of pleasure?

– Aristotle define pleasures which are suitable for beasts, most of them cannot change what a human being thinks. They are defined as a whole different level, which can be expressed in a bad manner and can be done with evil things and thoughts.

2) Aristotle claims that the philosopher will be happier than anyone else?

Why is this? Do you agree or not?

- I agree on what Aristotle said that it can bring happiness than anyone else, since a mission has been made, and it was been fulfilled. If we compare it to others, his definition of happiness doesn't compose of pleasure, honor or even wealth.

## **Joel Feinberg: The Nature and Value of Rights**

Review Questions:

1) Describe Nowheresville. How is this world different from our world?

- As defined by Feinberg, Nowheresville is a world like our own except that people do not have rights. As a result, people in this world cannot make moral claims when they are treated unjustly. They cannot demand or claim just treatment, and so they are deprived of self-respect and human dignity.

2. Explain the doctrine of the logical correlativity of rights and duties. What is Feinberg's position on the doctrine?

- The doctrine of the logical correlativity of rights and duties means that all duties entail other people's rights and all rights entail other people's duties. Feinberg believes from both ways as he defined it.

3. How does Feinberg explain the concept of personal desert? How would personal desert work in Nowheresville?

- Based on Feinberg, he calls it a sovereign monopoly of rights. When a person is said to deserve something good from us what is meant in parts is that there would be certain propriety in our giving that good thing to him in

virtue of the kind of person he is, more likely in virtue of some specific thing he has done. A desert has evolved a good bit away from its beginning by now, but nevertheless, it seems clearly to be one of those words. One should be happy that they ever treat us well, not grumble over their occasional lapses. It deserves from what you teach and learn to expand all knowledge and share experience.

4. Explain the notion of a sovereign right-monopoly. How would this work in Nowheresville according to Feinberg?

– As a sovereign right-monopoly, it means that one country is being self-governed; we don't have any rights to complain, because for it, we have no knowledge about it.

The notion of a sovereign right-monopoly means that if one country self-governed us, we have no right to complain since we are not knowledgeable of our rights. It's also about treating people in a good and bad way.

Sovereign was quite capable of harming his subjects, he could commit no wrong against them that they could complain about, since they had no prior claims against his conduct.

5. What are claim-rights? Why does Feinberg think they are morally important?

– Claim-rights are person that has claim to the rights. God could have claimed performance of the martial duties as his own due and God alone had claim-rights violated by the nonperformance. By believing in claim-rights



these are important, because if we won't claim it people might abuse our rights.

Discussion Question:

1. Does Feinberg make a convincing case for the importance of rights? Why or why not?

-Yes, because Feinberg shows the possibilities of having the right and respecting others by not stepping on the boundaries of each individuals.

2. Can you give a noncircular definition of cl