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PHIL 200E.01: Ethics: The Great Traditions

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Philosophy 200E
Ethics: The Great Traditions
Fall 2001

Administrative

- Class: T,R 2:10-3:30, LA 11
- Professor: Irene Appelbaum
- Office: LA 159; x4837
- Office Hours: W 3:15-5:00 & by appt.
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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to general normative ethics. By "normative" ethics we mean theories which purport to be action-guiding - that is, theories which make claims about what one ought to do, rather than simply describing ethical behavior (descriptive ethics), or making claims about the status of ethical claims (meta-ethics). By "general" normative ethics we mean theories concerned with the fundamental principles of ethics and their relation to one another, as opposed to the application of these principles to concrete problems in real-life (applied ethics).

The three major traditions within general normative ethics are consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. The central concept in consequentialist theory is "the good" (what has intrinsic value); in deontology the central concept is "the right" (what one ought to do); and in virtue ethics, the central concept is "character" or "virtue" (how one ought to live). Through a close reading of the central texts from each of these traditions we will come to an understanding of the characteristic features, problems, and relative merits of each. Questions to be addressed include: what characteristic features make an action right; what kinds of things have value; how are good things related to what to do; what rights must an ethical theory recognize; are rights basic or derivative; should moral theories take particular acts or general rules as primary.

Texts

- Aristotle (4th c. BC). *Nicomachean Ethics*[NE]. Trans. D.Chase, NY: Dover 1998.
- Immanuel Kant (1785). *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* [Grounding]. Trans. J. Ellington, Indianapolis: Hackett, 3rd ed., 1993.
- John Stuart Mill (1861). *Utilitarianism*. Indianapolis: Hackett 1979.
- Bernard Williams (1985). *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* [ELP]. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Faculty Packet [FacPac] containing:

- Jeremy Bentham (1789). from *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* [IPML]. Darien, CT: Hafner 1970, pp. 1-32.
- John Rawls (1955). Two Concepts of Rules. *Philosophical Review*, LXIV(1), 369, pp. 3-32.
- W.D. Ross (1930). What Makes Right Acts Right? In *The Right and the Good*, London: Oxford University Press, pp.16-47.

Requirements

- *Readings*: The readings are short but difficult. You should read each assignment at least once before class and twice afterwards. Always bring your text to class.
- *Exams*: There will be 4 in-class exams during the semester, each worth 20% of your grade. If you miss an exam you will receive an F for that exam. Exceptions will be made only for medical reasons (with a written statement from a physician) or family emergencies. Exams will be given on specified dates (see p. 2) regardless of what readings have been covered by that date.
- *Final Exam*: There will be a final exam worth 20% of your grade. **The Final Exam is scheduled for Monday, December 17, 3:20-5:20.**

Reading Schedule (subject to change)

09/04 Introduction

Part I: Consequentialism

- 09/06 Bentham, IPML, Ch. I (pp.1-7) *FacPac*
- 09/11 Bentham, IPML, Ch. II (pp. 8-23) *FacPac*
- 09/13 Bentham, IPML, Ch. III (pp. 24-28) *FacPac*
- 09/18 Bentham, IPML, Ch. IV (pp. 29-32) *FacPac*
- 09/20 TEST #1
- 09/25 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-5)
- 09/27 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 2 (pp. 6-25)
- 10/02 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 3 (pp. 26-33)
- 10/04 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 4 (pp. 34-40)
- 10/09 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 5 (pp. 41-63)
- 10/11 TEST #2
- 10/16 Rawls, Two Concepts of Rules, Sections 1,2 (pp. 3-18) *FacPac*
- 10/18 Rawls, Two Concepts of Rules, Sections 3,4 (pp. 18-32) *FacPac*

Part II: Deontology

- 10/23 Ross, What Makes Right Acts Right?, (pp. 16-47) *FacPac*
- 10/25 Kant, *Grounding*, Preface, Sec. 1 (pp. 1-5; pp.7-9 [through para 7])
- 10/30 Kant, *Grounding*, Sec. 1 (pp. 9-17)
- 11/01 TEST #3
- 11/06 Kant, *Grounding*, Sec. 2 (pp. 19-30 [through first full para])
- 11/08 Kant, *Grounding*, Sec. 2 (pp. 30-48)

Part III: Virtue Ethics

- 11/13 Aristotle, NE, Bk. I (pp. 1- 19)
- 11/15 Aristotle, NE, Bks. II, III (pp. 20-33; 34-55)
- 11/20 Aristotle, NE, Bks. VI, VII (pp.98-114;115-137)
- 11/22 *No Class (Thanksgiving)*
- 11/27 Aristotle, NE, Bk. X (pp. 179-199)
- 11/29 TEST #4
- 12/04 Williams, ELP, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-21)
- 12/06 Williams, ELP, Ch. 8 (pp.132-155)
- 12/11 Williams, ELP, Ch. 9 (pp.156-173)
- 12/13 Williams, ELP, Ch.10 (pp.174-196)