

Review Sheet for Final Examination

The purpose of this sheet is to provide a brief list of learning objectives for the exam. It focuses principally on the sorts of material that will be covered on the longer essays and in some of the sort essay questions. It is not meant to cover all material assigned in the readings. Some shorter questions will focus on material assigned in reading but not covered in class. Remember that in studying the positions of a philosopher, you must be concerned with the particular claims of the philosopher, the reasons which are offered to support the claim, and the definitions of critical terms provided by the philosopher.

You may be asked to compare and contrast the positions we have studied in class. The concepts of compatibility and incompatibility play a crucial role in assessing philosophical positions as well as comparing and contrasting them with other positions. Statements are COMPATIBLE with each other when they can be held without contradiction. For example, the statement (A) there are rationally discoverable moral standards is compatible with (B) the utilitarian claim that actions are good only when they promote good consequences for the greatest number. Statement (A) is also compatible with (C) Kant's claim that actions are inherently right or wrong. Statements are INCOMPATIBLE with each other when they cannot be held without contradiction: if one is false the other must be true (although both may be false). For example, statements (B) and (C) above are incompatible with each other. Also, for example, (at least in the world in which we live) it is incompatible to hold that Dr. Jones is a porcupine and that Dr. Jones is a giraffe. (Note that both these statements are false.)

1) Moral Judgments:

You should be able to:

set forth the basic structure of a moral judgment such as "Smith ought (ought not) do B."

compare and contrast factual, aesthetic, and moral judgments in terms of what the judgments are about; how and whether they are true/false, and whether and in what sense there can be legitimate disagreements among judgments of the same kind.

define, compare and contrast the basic kinds of moral standards (invented and discoverable, and their sub-categories);

2) Psychological Egoism

You should be able to:

define strong PE and weak PE. (Remember that Bond recognizes strong PE as the only form of PE.)

(Bond makes a difference between selfish and self-regarding motivations. You should know that difference but for the purpose of this class, I regard the two as equivalent since selfish motivations need not refer only to motivations and associated actions that harm others.)

to state what each version of PE implies about human motivation and behavior as well as the justification for each version. (Strong PE as a priori theory of human nature; weak PE as based on empirical observation about humans.)

to discuss the connection between each version of PE and normative ethical theories.

to set forth Bond's basic criticism of the justification of strong PE (namely, that it confuses the owner of desires with the object of desires).

You should be familiar with the various points about PE that Bond raises in his Summary of PE on pages 17-20 of his book.

3) Cultural Relativism:

You should be able to:

define cultural relativism and distinguish between simple CR and sophisticated CR.

present and discuss the argument for simple CR as presented by Bond as well as his criticism of this form of relativism;

present and discuss Lovland's version of sophisticated CR and Bond's criticism of it;

discuss the claims that any version of CR makes about the obligations of individuals in a culture to follow the moral norms of that culture;

discuss why CR precludes criticizing the moral norms of one culture from those of another culture or criticizing the moral norms of a particular culture at one point in its history in terms of the norms of that culture at different points of its history.

4) Moral subjectivism/emotivism

You should be able to:

define moral subjectivism and emotivism and indicate what these positions hold about the nature and possibility of moral standards;

discuss how the moral subjectivist would critique CR and argue that it collapses into subjectivism;

discuss why subjectivism denies that there is any basis for criticizing moral judgments;

(You should be familiar with the respective features of the above theories as presented on the summary chart of moral skepticism in Bond. I'll put a pdf of the summary on the website.)

5) Divine Command Theory

You should be able to:

State this theory and provide a justification for it;

Discuss the dilemma for this theory -- either falls back to a rational standard or seems to allow outrageous things as good if the divine will is not inherently good;

Connection between the theory and the assumption that moral norms require a law-giver;

The sense in which this theory posits a discoverable but non-rational good

6) Outline of normative moral theories:

You should be able to set forth the basic principles and briefly compare and contrast the major normative ethical theories: teleological, consequentialist (ethical egoism and utilitarianism), and deontological.

7) Ethical egoism:

You should be able to:

Define, compare and contrast: Individual ethical egoism; personal ethical egoism; and Universal Ethical Egoism;

To explain why the first two versions fail as ethical theories;

Set forth the basic principle of Universal Ethical Egoism;

Explain how it is different from ethical subjectivism and 'selfishness'

Explain how universal ethical egoists can cooperate with one another to resolve certain situations where their own self-interests might conflict;

Discuss the criticisms of UEE that in certain situations the universal ethical egoist cannot offer consistent advice without either violating the principle of UEE or abandoning it as a rational moral theory;

8) Utilitarianism

You should be able to:

Define utilitarianism;

Set forth the five issues that any utilitarianism must address and the sorts of criticisms that might be raised about the ability of U to address these issues in a rational and non-arbitrary manner;

The difference between Bentham and Mill as to whether there are different kinds of pleasures;

How Mill seeks to provide a non-arbitrary way to decide that rational pleasures are superior to physical pleasures;

Set forth the criticism that utilitarian analysis might amount to little more than guesswork about what we should do;

Explain how the utilitarian can provide moral guidance before we act and the limitations to such guidance;

Discuss the criticism that utilitarianism might be incompatible with justice in the sense that it might require the sacrifice of an innocent person for the sake of the majority.