

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Spring Semester 2005  
 Philosophy 140g, Contemporary Moral and Social Issues  
 2:-3:15 MW, In Seely G. Mudd, room 123

Instructor: Dallas Willard

In the “USC Catalogue” this course is described as follows: “Application of philosophical theories in ethics to problems such as racial and sexual discrimination, I. Q. and social justice, rights of animals, law and morality, and privacy. *Current enrollment*: WRIT 140.”

This, I am afraid, will not be very informative to the uninitiated as to what the course is about, and as to why it might be thought important enough for the University to offer it under the “Social Issues” section of its “General Education” program. So let’s back up for a moment and see if there might be some important human need addressed by the course: one such that people would be better off for successfully undertaking the course.

Human beings live constantly in contexts of decision. They (you) are active beings who are always, with little respite, deciding what to do. Some decisions are of little significance: Shall it be a tuna sandwich or a bean salad for lunch? Others are tremendously important, even to the point of determining whether our life will be worthwhile or not, or whether we become despicable or admirable human beings. The shocking fact is that actions, choices, are forever. They cannot be un-done. And in many cases, though not in all, the action or choice will be seriously right or wrong, with major consequences for our life and for the lives of those around us, as well as grave implications for the kind of person (or society) we are or are to become.

There is a special category of right and wrong, good and bad, which concerns the moral (or immoral) in human choice, action and character. Everyone has personal experience and acquaintance with this category or dimension of human life, for it is indispensable to human existence and one of its most vivid and gripping elements. We experience it from early on in a specific type of approval or disapproval that comes to us from others—first and foremost from parents, family, playmates and neighbors. It is not easy to characterize the specifically moral aspect of action and character, but those regarded as good human beings, and as people who do what is right, are normally the objects of a special kind of respect, support, admiration, imitation, trust, honor—and even a certain amount of authority not extended to others. One regarded as an evil or bad human being characteristically is despised, resisted or attacked, disdained, not imitated and certainly not trusted or honored—they are spurned and shunned in a deeply incisive manner not common to other forms of disapproval. If they are not only regarded as good (or bad), but really are such, then they are understood to be worthy of such positive (or negative) attitudes, and those who do not extend the appropriate attitudes will themselves be thought worthy of “blame.” (If you “diss” a good person “There must be something wrong with you.” Also if you don’t appropriately “diss” a ‘bad’ person.)

Now it doesn’t matter much what a person says, or what their “culture” or theories are, in real life they will all pretty much behave in the manner just indicated. The moral dimension of life is a deep and dangerous one with great peril and great promise for human well-being and grief. It is not to be taken lightly.

Because this is so, issues of moral right and wrong, good and bad, duty and moral failure are matters in which society at large, and even government, take great interest. When significant

segments of a society become agitated morally concerned about a particular type of action, that then becomes a “moral issue” for that society, and a topic for the area of discussion now known as “Social Ethics.” In ancient Roman society, sensitivity and concern about human life as such was not very strong. Thus the “exposure” of infants—leaving them by a roadside or public place to perish or be taken by whoever wanted them—was not an “issue.” Similarly for public ‘games’ in which people killed one another or were slain by animals while onlooking multitudes cheered. As time went by, the rise of Christian teachings to prominence made these practices a social “issue” and led to their elimination. Currently, some in present Western society are trying to make the use of animals for food an “issue.” With not too much success, one would have to say. “Vegetarianism” or “Animal Rights” is not close to being something candidates for office would include in their policy proposals (“platforms”). Similarly for the amount of money paid to CEOs and top level management. Divorce and illegitimacy were, not too long ago, “social issues,” but are no longer so. By contrast, Abortion, Genetic Engineering, Euthanasia, Homosexuality, and Racial Discrimination (or, in general, “Equal Rights”) are now issues which candidates must address and which sometimes determine the outcome of elections. That is a pretty good indication that these matters are “Social Issues” which “Social Ethics” must look into.

But we want to be clear that our interest in this course primarily attaches to the moral aspect of these issues. They do have other aspects. And not all social or governmental issues are moral in their bearings—for example, within limits at least, tattoos, dress, hair style, tax rates, military policy, or regulation of commerce and the financial world. Social Ethics deals with issues that have become social issues—matters of intense and pervasive disagreement and debate, usually involving governmental policy—because of the moral concerns that people widespread throughout a society have about them. The aim of work in Social Ethics is to discover true, or at least highly reasonable, views as to moral right and wrong, good and bad concerning particular practices in question. This aim assumes that, in addition to the highly charged emotional side to the disagreements, there is also a cognitive side, a dimension of knowledge or of rational justification. It focuses upon the meaning, truth and logic of the various positions taken on abortion, compulsory military service, equal rights and so forth. For example, what is discrimination (what does “discrimination” mean)? Is it true that discrimination is morally reprehensible (sometimes, always, under what conditions)? Why is it morally wrong, and why are those who practice it morally reprehensible? What about it makes it wrong? What reasons are there for believing it to be wrong? **This course is, basically, extensive practice in dealing with questions such as these as they apply to several topics within current Social Ethics.**

The “USC Catalogue,” under the section “General Education Categories,” describes this and other courses under this category as follows: “VI. *Social Issues*—Courses in this category prepare students for informed citizenship, by teaching them to analyze compelling local, national and/or international issues or problems. Analytical tools are examined systematically, so that students may fruitfully redeploy them in understanding a broad range of social phenomena. In this category students develop the analytical and critical skills that enable them to make sense of complex questions about human beings and societies.”

So our work in this course will have a two-fold focus: *One* on the subject matter—Social Ethics, and certain specific issues within Social Ethics—and, *Two*, on the method of working toward understanding and truth, or at least toward **reasonableness**, with reference to those

specific issues. The method, of course, is one that generalizes to most, if not all, questions of truth and reasonableness in every area of thought and life. That is one of the main reasons this course is a part of general education. There are things we need to know, and need to be able to do, that apply to life in general; and education in them is vital to our well-being and well-doing. General Education, as a part of the University curriculum, is designed to help us with these.

With reference to the method to be followed here, you have two resources in your required texts.

These texts are:

Vincent Ruggiero, *Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, McGraw-Hill, 2004.

Judith Boss, *Analyzing Moral Issues*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition McGraw-Hill, 2005.

The Boss text has a CD in it that covers the topics of Moral Reasoning (ch. 1), Critical Reading Skills (ch. 2) and Writing a Paper in Moral Philosophy (ch. 3). I recommend that you print it out and read it through as soon as you can. It will probably help you to review it several times through the semester. The text by Ruggiero does not deal with logic in general to the extent that the Boss CD does, but it very helpfully does deal with some general issues concerning arguments within the field of ethics which we need to have in mind before starting on the specific issues. This is also true of chapter 1 in the Boss volume **Be sure to bring the Ruggiero text to class with you at our next meeting (on the 12<sup>th</sup> of Jan.).**

In general, our procedure in class time (“lectures”) will be to work through one or more of the texts from Boss assigned for reading for that day. So you **MUST** bring the texts assigned with you to class. The same thing will be true for your discussion sections. Each day after the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, class time will be devoted to examining positions taken on an ethical issue in society with respect to the meaning, truth and reasonableness of those positions. The most effective way to do this is by analyzing texts in class, and that is what we will do. I will be clarifying the positions and outlining and evaluating arguments for and against the positions stated in the texts. You will need to follow along in the texts and take notes on the arguments and the main points covered in the discussion. If you do this, you will find your preparations for papers to be assigned and for the exams given to be very simple.

For the **discussion sections**, you will have a reading assigned for each week. (See schedule below.) For some method with these readings (as well as all the others), have a look at Chapter 2: “Critical Reading Skills,” on the CD in Boss, and prepare for the discussion meeting accordingly. Ruggiero, pp. 14-17, gives some useful hints on how (and how not) to engage in discussions. You are expected to attend the discussions sections and engage in the discussion. To what degree you do so will be factored into your final grade. But that’s not the real point. Your participation in discussions **can be one of the most beneficial things you will ever do in your undergraduate career**. Most people never learn how to engage in a serious discussion. If you find you just cannot force yourself to participate, be sure to have at least 3 or so private discussion sessions with the TA for your section during the semester. There will frequently be brief reading quizzes (3 or 4 fairly obvious questions on the assigned reading) in you discussion sections. Remember, the role of the TA is not to lecture (though they may if they wish, on occasion), but to lead a discussion. Sometimes they may simply wait on you to talk.

Note please: Contrary to what may be suggested by the present state of moral discourse in our society, the basic moral issues for human beings are never just social, but is always intensely personal. You cannot have a non-discriminatory society unless you have individuals

who are free of prejudice. And the issues dealt with in Social Ethics would still be moral issues if they failed to be social issues. Being “social” does not make them moral, but being social does lend an additional dimension of importance to them. Still, the most important and difficult ethical question any individual has to deal with is: What kind of person am I and what should I be and do? To lie awake at night, or to rush about in the day, concerned about the moral condition of one’s society, is a very different posture than seriously coming to grips with one’s own failure to be the person and do the things they are sure they should be and do. But this opens up into a more inclusive take on the moral life than is possible for this course.

### **FORMAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE:**

1. A Mid-Term and a Final as scheduled.
2. Three 5 to 8 page papers as scheduled. Topics to be selected later.
3. Attendance and participation in weekly discussion sections as explained above.
4. Attendance at lectures and notes taken on material covered. Comments and questions in class welcome, as time allows. At any point the instructor may ask to see you notes on lectures and discuss them with you.

Please Note: Papers will be marked as one day late if turned in after 3:15PM on the day they are due, two days late after 3:13 of the next day and so on. For each day late, one grade level (e.g., from A- to B+) will be deducted. Valid excuses are of course permitted.

Also: Your use of a lap-top computer in class indicates your agreement to use it only for taking notes on the current lecture. Only such notes are allowed on the lap-top screen. And pleeeeeeezzzzz turn your phones off.

### **SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND OTHER ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Lecture 1 (Jan. 10):** Introduction to the course and a few preliminary distinctions.

NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF THE SEMESTER.

**Lecture 2 (Jan. 12):** Basic Logical issues: Meaning, Truth, Validity and Soundness in Reasoning or Argument. Read Chapter 1 from the CD in Boss, especially the section on “Recognizing Arguments,” pp. 6-10, and bring *Thinking Critically about Ethical Issues* to class with you for discussion/lecture.

January 17---University Holiday.

**Lecture 3 (Jan. 19):** Some Basic Ethical Concepts and Distinctions. Primary Factors in Thinking about right and wrong, good and bad. Read pp. 67-148 of the Ruggiero text, and pp. 1-42 of Boss. **Discussion sections:** Read pp. 42-49 of Boss and critically compare the theories of Aristotle and Mill. (Look also at pp. 20-24 & 36-40 of Boss on those theories. If your section fell on Monday the 17<sup>th</sup>, try to sit in on one of the later sections this week—See the “Schedule of Classes” for times and places.)

**Lecture 4 (Jan. 24):** Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. During the week of January 24-28 the assigned readings are Boss, *Analyzing Moral Issues*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 181-226. Be sure to bring the

text with you to lecture. **Discussion sections:** Study pp. 199-206 of Boss. Have a look at the two “cases” on pp. 232-233.

*Topic for first short paper given out on January 26.*

**Lecture 5 (Jan. 26):** Continuation of Euthanasia, etc.

**Lecture 6 (Jan. 31):** Punishment and the Death Penalty. During the week of January 31-February 4 the assigned readings are Boss, pp. 234-288. **Discussion sections** for this week study pp. 249-259 of Boss. Have a look at the two “cases” on pp. 289-290.

**Lecture 7 (Feb. 2):** Continuation of Punishment, etc.

*First short paper due Feb. 7 at class.*

**Lecture 8 (Feb. 7):** Abortion. During the week of February 7-11 the assigned readings are Boss, pp. 77-125. **Discussion sections** for this week study pp. 91-101. Have a look at the “case” spanning 125-126.

**Lecture 9 (Feb. 9):** Continuation on Abortion

**Lecture 10 (Feb. 14):** Review of concepts and arguments to this point. No additional readings for lecture or for **Discussion sections**.

**February 16---Mid-term Exam**

**February 21---University Holiday:** Genetic Engineering and Cloning. During the week of February 21-23 the assigned readings are Boss, pp. 132-174. **Discussion sections** for this week study pp. 160-167. Have a look at the “cases” on pp. 174-175.

**Lecture 11 (Feb. 23):** Continuation on Genetic Engineering, etc.

**Lecture 12 (Feb. 28):** Drug and Alcohol Use. During the week of February 28-March 4 the assigned readings are Boss, pp. 297-341. **Discussion sections** for this week study pp. 318-325. Have a look at the two “cases” on pp. 344-345.

**Lecture 13 (Mar. 2):** Continuation on Drug and Alcohol Use.

**Lecture 14 (Mar. 7):** Sexual Intimacy and Marriage. During the week of March 7-11 the assigned readings are Boss, pp. 349-419. **Discussion sections** for this week study pp. 386-391. Have a look at the “cases” on pp. 420-421.

**Lecture 15 (Mar. 9):** Continuation on Sexual Intimacy and Marriage.

*Topic for second short paper given out on March 9.*

### **March 14-19---Spring Break**

**Lecture 16 (Mar. 21):** Feminism, Motherhood, and the Workplace. During the week of March 21-25 the assigned readings are Boss, pp. 563-622. **Discussion sections** for this week study pp. 590-599.

*Second short paper due March 23 at class*

**Lecture 17 (Mar. 23):** Continuation on Feminism, etc.

**Lecture 18 (Mar. 28):** Racism and Affirmative Action. During the week of March 28-April 1 the assigned readings are Boss, pp. 498-555. **Discussion sections** for this week study pp. 518-523. Have a look at the “cases” on pp. 556-557.

**Lecture 19 (Mar. 30):** Continuation on Racism, etc.

**Lecture 20 (Apr. 4):** War and Terrorism. During the week of April 4-8 the assigned readings are Boss pp. 629-699. **Discussion sections** for this week study pp. 649-656.

**Lecture 21 (Apr. 6):** Continuation on War and Terrorism.

**Lecture 22 (Apr. 11):** Nonhuman Animals and the Environment. During the week of April 11-15 the assigned readings are Boss pp. 707-772. **Discussion sections** for this week study pp. 731-739. Have a look at the “cases” on pp. 772-773.

*Topic for final paper given on April 13.*

**Lecture 23 (Apr. 13):** Continuation on Nonhuman Animals, etc.

**Lecture 24 (Apr. 18):** Freedom of Speech. During the week of April 18-22 the assigned readings are Boss pp. 427-489. **Discussion sections** for this week study pp. 474-483. Have a look at the “cases” on pp. 489-491.

**Lecture 25 (Apr. 20):** Continuation on Freedom of Speech.

**Lecture 26 (Apr. 25):** Review and Conclusions. Some Other Issues in “Social Ethics.” Now What Difference Could It Make in Your Future as an Individual and as a Citizen. No further readings. **Discussion sections** also devoted to review and to work on final paper.

*Final paper due at class on April 27.*

**Lecture 27 (Apr. 27):** Continuation of Review and Conclusions.

**Final exam. Mon. May 9, 2-4PM**

## The Morally Good Person

The morally good person is a person who is effectively intent upon advancing the various goods of human life with which they are effectively in contact, in a manner that respects their relative degrees of importance and the extent to which the actions of the person in question can actually promote the existence and maintenance of those goods. Thus, moral goodness is a matter of the organization of the human will called "character."

"Character" refers to the settled dispositions to act in certain ways, given the relevant circumstances. Character is expressed in what one does without thinking, as well as to what one does after acting without thinking. The actions which come from character will usually persist when the individual is unobserved, as well as when the consequences of the action are not what one would prefer. A person of good moral character is one who, from the deeper and more pervasive dimensions of the self, is intent upon advancing the various goods of human life with which they are effectively in contact (etc.).

The person who is morally bad or evil is one who is intent upon the destruction of the various goods of human life with which they are effectively in contact, or who is indifferent to the existence and maintenance of those goods.

Being morally good or evil clearly will be a matter of degree and there surely will be few if any actual human beings who exist at the extreme ends of the scale. (An interesting but largely pointless question might be how humanity distributes on the scale: a nice bell curve or...what?)

This orientation of the will toward promotion of human goods is the fundamental moral distinction: the one which is of primary human interest, and from which all the others, moving toward the periphery of the moral life and ethical theory, can be clarified. For example: the moral value of acts (positive and negative); the nature of moral obligation and responsibility; virtues and vices; the nature and limitations of rights, punishment, rewards, justice and related issues; the morality of laws and institutions; and what is to be made of moral progress and moral education. A coherent theory of these matters can, I suggest, be developed only if we start from the distinction between the good and bad will or person--which, admittedly, almost no one is currently prepared to discuss. That is one of the outcomes of ethical theorizing through the 20th Century. It is directly opposite to the consensus of the late decades of the 19th Century, which was that **the fundamental subject of ethical theorizing was the will and its character.** (See Green, Bradley, Sidgwick, Dewey)

I believe that the orientation of the will provides the fundamental moral distinction because I believe that it is the one that ordinary human beings naturally and constantly employ in the ordinary contexts of life, both with reference to themselves (a touchstone for moral theory) and with reference to others (where it is employed with much less clarity and assurance). And I also believe that this is the fundamental moral distinction because it seems to me the one most consistently present at the heart of the tradition of moral thought that runs from Socrates to Sidgwick--all of the twists and turns of that tradition notwithstanding.

Just consider the role of "the good" in Plato, Aristotle and Augustine, for example, stripped, if possible, of all the intellectual campaigns and skirmishes surrounding it. Consider Aquinas' statement that "this is the first precept of law, that good is to be done and promoted, and evil is to be avoided. All other precepts of the natural law are based upon this; so that all the things which the practical reason naturally apprehends as man's good belong to the precepts of the natural law under the form of things to be done or avoided." (Treatise on Law, Question

XCIV, Second Article) Or consider how Sidgwick arrives at his "maxim of Benevolence"--"that each one is morally bound to regard the good of any other individual as much as his own, except in so far as he judges it to be less, when impartially viewed, or less certainly knowable or attainable by him." (Methods of Ethics, Book III, Chap. XIII, 7th edition [p. 382 of the Dover edition, New York, 1966] Sidgwick of course tried hard to incorporate his intuitions of justice and prudence into this crowning maxim.)

A few further clarifications must be made before turning to my final points:

1. I have spoken of the goods of human life in the plural, and have spoken of goods with which we are in effective contact, i.e. can do something about. The good will is manifested in its active caring for particular goods that we can do something about, not in dreaming of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" or even of my own 'happiness' or of "duty for duty's sake." Generally speaking, thinking in high level abstractions will always defeat moral will. As Bradley and others before him clearly saw, "my station and its duties" is nearly, but not quite, the whole moral scene for the individual, and can never be simply bypassed on the way to "larger" things. One of the major mistakes of ethical theory since the sixties has been, in my opinion, its almost total absorption in social and political issues. Of course these issues also concern vital human goods. But moral theory simply will not coherently and comprehensively come together from their point of view. They do not essentially involve the center of moral reality, the will.

2. Among human goods--things that are good for human beings and enable them to flourish--are human beings and certain relationships to them, and, especially, good human beings. That is, human beings that fit the above description. One's own well-being is a human good, to one's self and to others, as is what Kant called the moral "perfection" of oneself. Of course non-toxic water and food, a clean and safe environment, opportunities to learn and to work, stable family and community relations, and so forth, all fall on the list of particular human goods. (Most of the stuff for sale in our society probably does not.)

There is no necessity of having a complete list of human goods or a tight definition of what something must be like to be on the list. Marginal issues, "Lifeboat" cases, and the finer points of conceptual distinction are interesting exercises and have a point for philosophical training; but it is not empirically confirmable, to say the least, that the chances of having a good will or being a good person improve with philosophical training in ethical theory as that has been recently understood. It is sufficient to become a good or bad person that one have a sound general understanding of human goods and how they are effected by action. And that is also sufficient for the understanding of the good will and the goodness of the individual. We do not have to know what the person would do in a lifeboat situation to know whether or not they have good will, though what they do in such situations may throw light on who they are, or on how good (or bad) they are. The appropriate response to actions in extreme situations may not be a moral judgment at all, but one of pity or admiration, of the tragic sense of life or amazement at what humans are capable of, etc. etc.

3. The will to advance the goods of human life with which one comes into contact is inseparable from the will to find out how to do it and do it appropriately. If one truly wills the end one wills the means, and coming to understand the goods which we effect, and their conditions and interconnections, is inseparable from the objectives of the good person and the good will. Thus, knowledge, understanding and rationality are themselves human goods, to be appropriately pursued for their own sakes, but also because they are absolutely necessary for moral self-realization. Formal rationality is fundamental to the good will, but is not sufficient to it. It must be acknowledged that one of the moral strong points of Naturalism is its concern

about advancing the goods of human life and about combating the forces of ignorance and superstition that work against those goods. One cannot understand Naturalism as a historical reality or a present fact if one does not take this point into consideration. But Naturalism (the view that physical reality is all there is) proves to be incapable of providing an understanding of human goodness, rightness of action, and the nature of duty or moral obligation.

4. The morally good (or evil) will or person will necessarily incorporate the following elements of human personality:

- (a). Consciousness, the various intentional states that make up the mental life.
- (b). Knowledge of the various goods of human life and of their conditions and interconnections. This will include much knowledge of fact, but also logical relations, as well as the capacity to comprehend them to form hypothetical judgments and to reach conclusions on the basis of premises.
- (c). The capacity to form and sustain long-range, even life-long intentions. One is not a morally good person by accident or drift, but by a choice settled into character: a choice to live as a person who is intent upon advancing the various goods of human life with which they are effectively in contact, etc. The corresponding is true of a morally evil person. Intention--settled intention, or disposition--is the fundamental locus of moral value, deeper than will as a mere faculty (which does not by itself yield moral value) or as an act of will or choice (which is momentary, as character is not). It is this type of intention, worked into the substance of one's life, that is moral identity. And it is the moral identity of persons that Naturalism would have to account for if it were successfully to accommodate the moral life and ethical theory.

5. Clearly, then, knowledge of moral distinctions depends upon knowledge of the human self, the subject of those distinctions. What E. Anscombe said decades ago about the need to quit doing moral theory until we have an adequate "moral psychology" seems very sensible. Of course we can't do it. We have to continue thinking about moral distinctions, because we have to find out how to act. But we can never regain the self as a subject of knowledge so long as we insist in forcing the self into a scientific ("naturalistic") mold. Moral knowledge disappears with authentic self-knowledge, which disappears with the ascendancy of "naturalism." Moral character is not a matter of the physical body or its "natural" relations to world and society. As long as the physical realm is regarded as the only subject of knowledge, there will be no moral knowledge and no cognitive foundation of the moral life. And that is precisely where we stand today in Western culture and in the University system that presides over it.

#### Questions to keep in mind while reading the literature of Ethics and its history.—

In order to profit from the literature of moral theory, students should have constantly in mind, as they read, the principal questions that the authors studied are attempting to answer. No doubt the two questions which are always being pursued, directly or indirectly, in this literature are: 1st, When is a person truly well off, or what constitutes human well-being or welfare? We might also put this question by asking, Who is the person to be envied? (Closely related to this is the question. What is the wise way to live?) 2nd, What sort of person is a truly good human being, a good person? We might also put this question by asking who is the person to be respected or admired? (Closely related to this is the question. What is the morally praiseworthy way to act? Also, What is the difference between the right action and one that is wrong?)

Now these two questions, or two groups of questions, are pretty clearly different from one another. A person whom no one would respect may be in an enviable position, or even have many enviable qualities. And one can certainly respect those whom one does not envy--Mother Theresa of Calcutta, for example, or someone dying wisely and bravely of cancer. As W. K. Frankena has put it, one may have a good life without leading a good life. And certainly one can lead a good life without having "the good life." Nevertheless, those who have devoted much intelligence and effort to answering these two questions have found great difficulty in holding them apart, and in speaking to one without confusing it with the other. Though different, they are closely related in some important manner. And this is a good reason for having certain more analytic questions in mind as we read, though we must not lose sight of the two primary questions just stated.

One may, then, use the following four questions as a guide to the literature of Ethics. Any full-blown theory of the moral life should provide answers to each of them. It is best for the student to try to write down, with appropriate quotations and page references, any answers of any author to these questions--insofar as they actually do answer them:

- (a). What is goodness, rightness, moral worth, obligation, virtue, etc., and their opposites? (The question of meaning or intension.)
- (b). Which particular types of persons, things, acts, character traits, institutions, etc., are good, right, obligatory, praiseworthy, blameworthy, etc.? (The question of the extension or application or denotation of moral terms.)
- (c). How does one identify or know which things or acts or persons etc. are good, right, obligatory, etc.? I.e., What are the criteria or evidences of goodness and rightness in application. (The Epistemic question: How do we know in moral judgments?)
- (d). How are good persons and institutions, or right and praiseworthy actions and behavioral traits, produced or maintained? By education? Training? Sanctions? Something else (drugs, genetic engineering, evolution, divine grace)? (The question of production: How do we get and sustain things with positive moral properties?)

The answers to these questions will always rest upon an understanding of the nature of the human being--of what are the parts of a human being, the properties, interrelations and functions of those parts, and of the properties and functions of the human being as a whole. In particular, is the human being a spiritual being in some important sense, and a citizen of a universe that is fundamentally spiritual, as for example Plato, Descartes, Locke and Kant thought?

Such an understanding of human nature will, obviously, always rest on metaphysical (ontological) and epistemological views: views of what ultimate kinds of things there must (and can) be, and of what there can (must) be knowledge of and how it can be known. This explains why so much of ethical writing through the centuries has actually been devoted to ontological and epistemological questions. That is necessarily the case and can only be evaded, not avoided. Even the Aemotivists" or "non-cognitivists" (Ayer, Stevenson) based their theories on such ontological and epistemological assumptions about human nature. Those ethical theorists who claim to avoid such assumptions and questions may be sincere, but they are certainly misguided.

## SOME CENTRAL STATEMENTS OF BIBLICAL ETHICS\*

“I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery:

You shall have no other gods than me.

You shall not make for yourself a sacred image of anything.

You shall not misuse my name.

Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it separate for me.

Honor your father and your mother.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

(The “Ten Commandments,” Exodus 20:2-17)

“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. . . . The foreigner who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (Leviticus 19:18 & 34)

“For He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

“You have heard that it is said that ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy’. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, in order to have the character of your Father in the heavens; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what’s the big deal? Crooks in government do that. And if you greet your brothers only, what do you more than others? Even those totally ignorant of God do that. Have the goodness your heavenly Father has.” (Matthew 6:43-48)

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:12-13)

“Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.” (Romans 13:8-10)

“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (I John 4:8)

“Though I speak languages of human beings and of angels, but lack love, I am just making noise—like a raucous gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I can foretell events and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have so much faith I can move mountains, but lack love, I amount to nothing. And if I give away everything I have to feed the poor, and if I submit my body to the fire, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind, is not jealous, does not brag and is not arrogant, does not do stupid stuff, does not seek its own, is not easily angered, does not keep a list of bad things done to it, does not rejoice in what is wrong but in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never quits. . . . The only things that really last are faith, hope, and love. These three—but the greatest of them is Love.” (I Corinthians 13)

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\*I include here some passages from the Bible because the texts for the course omit any basic information on the single most influential source on ethical teachings in the Western world and the world as a whole.

Four views of what a just society is, so far as the distribution of wealth is concerned:

I. Hospers (Libertarian): There is distributive justice in any society to the extent that rights to life, liberty and property are not violated, or, alternatively stated, to the extent that the life, liberty and property of no one is being taken from them by force, whether to be redistributed to others or not. This conception hardly addresses the issue of fairness and need in the distribution of the necessities of life.

II. Nielson (Radical Egalitarianism): There is distributive justice in a society to the extent that there is equality of basic condition for everyone--"the full and equal meeting of needs and wants of everyone." (Sterba, p. 35) In a just society, each person has an equal right to the most extensive total system of liberties and opportunities compatible with a similar treatment of all, and, after appropriate allowances for differing needs and just entitlements, the income and wealth is so divided that each person will have a right to an equal share. (p. 37) This conception certainly addresses the issues of fairness and need, but much more. While equality of basic condition would do the trick, alright, much less is required for distributive justice to prevail. I may resent or envy my neighbor if he has more than me (with respect to any of the goods of life), but mere inequality does not mean I am wronged, that I suffer injustice. On the other hand, the idea of equality of basic condition simply has no application to human beings as we know them. The equality of \$5.00 in the hand of one person and \$5.00 in the hand of another means nothing when one has talent, experience or life situation that gives a power to his \$5.00 that the other does not have. There is no such thing as economic equality in terms of money or other possessions alone. Nielsen tries unsuccessfully to come to grips with this on pp. 41-42

III. Rawls (Social Contract): There is justice in a society in so far as it is conducted according to rules that would be agreed upon by human beings "behind the veil of ignorance," who have no knowledge of what their particular position will be in the resultant socio/political system. (p. 44) This is what Rawls calls "fairness," because what is required and given to everyone is a result of principles or rules that they rationally choose to live under (p. 44), not because the result is "equality of basic condition." Rawls' view is that rational people behind the veil would chose two principles of justice: That each person have equal right to the most extensive basic

liberty compatible with similar liberty for others, and that inequalities are only those that are advantageous to everyone and attached to positions open to all. (p. 49) He holds that the inequalities chosen will be such as to maximize the condition of the least advantaged.

Phil. 140g: Notes on Punishment

Punishment is: Voluntary imposition of discomfort upon a person because of their voluntary behaviors. (Compare Sterba 474d)

MENNINGER simply rejects all punishment as such. He seems to take the view that all "criminal" behavior is involuntary, and that the correct response is the "therapeutic attitude." (483d) We should try to modify the internal dynamics of personality that produce behaviors now "punished." He seems to be supporting his view on the general ineffectiveness of current penal practices to reform the criminal and on the idea that punishment is vengeful and even sadistic.

C. S. LEWIS' critique of Menninger's view: That this "therapeutic" view deprives the criminal of her rights as a human being: "When we cease to consider what the criminal deserves and consider only what will cure him or deter others, we have tacitly removed him from the sphere of justice altogether; instead of a person, a subject of rights, we now have a mere object, a patient, a 'case'." (Sterba 492a) Further, we place him in the hands of "experts," not in the hands of public moral conscience (492b-c), and there is now no restraint on what "cured" may mean. (492-3) They are at the mercy of good (493-4) or evil "caretakers." (494a-b) "Mercy" detached from justice becomes unmerciful. (495)

R. B. BRANDT: Punishment justified on Utilitarian grounds. Rule utilitarian grounds. (486b-c) Note that he is thinking of justification in "forward" looking terms--see the three points on 486d. But he does tie punishment to "past acts." (486d)

Degrees of severity of punishment can be justified by utility. (487a-b) Also excuses from culpability. (487c-488) Also mitigating excuses. (488c) And does not excuse the punishment of the innocent for good results. (488d-489)

How a (rule) utilitarian theory would handle penal reform. (489-490)

The problem remains of restricting punishment to specific past actions. How the past ties into "utility." Why utility might not justify punishment no matter what happened in past.

E. L. PINCOFFS: "Classical Retributivism." Summary--Kant's position. (495-496) Why consequences have nothing to do with punishment--the direction of justification. (497c-d) The solution. (498d-499c) Summary. (501a-b) Some remaining problems. (502d-503)

DEATH PENALTY: E. v. d. Haag's three reasons for. (505a-b) And Schwartz's five reasons against. (506d-507b) Gregg v. Georgia Supreme Court case: Why Cap. Pun. not "cruel and unusual." (508-511d; see especially 510c-d) Brennan's argument from "human dignity." (512a-c) and Marshall's reference to the "total denial of the wrongdoer's dignity and worth." (514)

## REVIEW QUESTION, 2nd MID-TERM, Phil. 140g, Spring 1991, U.S.C.

1. Review questions 1-7 & 11 from the REVIEW QUESTIONS for the 1st mid-term. (See back of this sheet)
2. Explain the Libertarian position on justice in distribution of wealth. (Sterba 16-32) Explain its difference from "egalitarianism." (33-43)
3. When would there be social justice in a society according to Rawls? <rationality, veil of ignorance, maximin> (Sterba 43-56)
4. What are the two views of self underlying the debate between communitarians and liberal positions on social justice, and how do they make a difference in the interpretation of social justice?
5. Explain Singer's argument concerning our obligations to distant people in need? (Sommers. 758ff) Arthur's reply? (769ff)
6. What does "lifeboat ethics" tell us to do, according to Hardin? (Sommers 777ff) State the reply by Murdoch and Oaten. (790ff)
7. What is DeGeorge's argument against the rights of "future generations"? (Sterba 99ff) How does Sterba try to reply? (110-111) Does he? Why? Why not?
8. Explain Thomson's position on abortion, given that the fetus is a person, and state (don't explain) her argument. (Sterba 131ff)
9. Explain Noonan's interpretation of how we should proceed in developing a judgment on the rightness or wrongness of abortion. What is his objection to Thomson? (Sterba 140ff)
10. What is Warren's defense against the charge that she must accept infanticide, given her acceptance of abortion? (Sterba 159-160)
11. Explain the doctrine of "double effect," and its relationship to the killing/letting die distinction. (Sterba 126-128)
12. Why does Rachels hold that killing someone is not, in the medical cases described by him, morally worse than letting someone die? (Sterba 176ff)
13. How does Steinbock reply to Rachels? (187ff)
14. Explain the moral relevance of procedure and consultation in cases of "letting die"?
15. Under what conditions should one be permitted to die? Defend your view briefly.
16. Exactly what is the disagreement between Lin Yutang and English"? (Sommers, 673- 688)
17. Explain the difference between the "assimilationist" position of Wasserstrom (Sommers 707ff) and the "androgynism" adopted by Trebilcot. (718ff)

18. Explain Menninger's position of 'punishment' (Sterba 478ff) and Lewis' critique thereof. (491ff)
19. What is "classical retributivism," according to Pincoffs? (Sterba 495ff) Do you accept it or reject it? Why?
20. What is the "Volunteerist" thesis (Sommers p. 744), and how does it undermine the family according to Sommers? (p. 730-751)