

Philosophy 1000, Fall 2008
Reading Questions: FREEDOM & ETHICS

All reading questions (assignments) must be typed, 1-2 pages maximum, double-sided is okay, and be turned in during the class scheduled for that reading. See online schedule for details.

Holbach, p. 462

1. Briefly summarize the reasons Holbach gives (in the first two/three pages of the essay) for thinking that the human will is not free. For example, why does Holbach think, "The man who drinks the poisoned water appears a madman; but the actions of fools are as necessary as those of the most prudent individuals"?
2. Why does Holbach think that "choice" doesn't prove that we have free will?
3. What is the difference between restrained and unrestrained action? According to Holbach, does this show that we are free?
4. How does Holbach explain the feeling that we are free? Do you agree?

Stace, p. 486

1. What is a "verbal dispute" and how does one resolve such a dispute, according to Stace?
2. How is the problem of freewill a verbal dispute?
3. What is the important difference between free and unfree acts, according to Stace?
4. How does this distinction between free and unfree acts solve the problem of freewill according to Stace? Do you agree?

Chisholm, p. 492

1. What is the difference between "transeunt" causation and "immanent" causation? According to Chisholm, which helps to solve the problem of freewill?
2. In your own words, what is the second objection and how does Chisholm respond to it?
3. Explain the difference between the "Hobbist approach" and the "Kantian approach." Which does Chisholm favor and why?
4. Why does he reject determinism and indeterminism as accounting for responsibility? That is to say, why does he favor for the third option?

Pereboom, p. 464

1. Pereboom defends a position he calls "hard incompatibilism." In a nutshell what is this position?
2. According to Pereboom, why does compatibilism fail to show we are free or responsible?
3. According to Pereboom, why does libertarianism fail to show we are free or responsible?
4. Why is hard incompatibilism a better option, according to Pereboom? Do you agree?

Rachels, (pdf)

1. Summarize the "Cultural Differences" argument, and in your own words describe the logical point raised against this argument by Rachels.
2. What is Cultural Relativism? If cultural relativism is true what are the ethical consequences, according to Rachels? Does this show cultural relativism to be false or inaccurate?
3. What does Rachels offer as an alternative to cultural relativism? Do you agree? Explain.
4. What can be learned from cultural relativism?

Quinn, p. 610

1. Briefly describe what Divine Command Theory is, and why it might be considered a plausible account of morality for monotheists.
2. What is the Karamazov objection and how does Quinn reply to it?
3. What is the Euthyphro objection and how does Quinn reply to it?
4. Do you think Quinn has provided a successful defense of Divine Command Theory? Explain. What are some of its strengths and weaknesses as an account of morality?

Mill, p. 640

1. How does Mill define utilitarianism? What is the "principle of utility" or the "Greatest-Happiness" principle?
2. What test is there to distinguish between the higher pleasures from the lower? What is meant by "Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied"?
3. Why do some critics say that utilitarianism sets too high a standard for humanity?
4. Summarize at least one other objection raised against utilitarianism in the text and explain how Mill responds.

Rawls, p. 600

1. Why does Rawls think justice ("morality") should be understood as a principle of fairness?
2. What role does the "original position" play in determining the principles of justice, according to Rawls?
3. What sort of people does Rawls envisage as parties to the original position? Are they altruistic, egoistic, selfish, or rationally self-interested? What is the level of ignorance of the parties in the original position?
4. What two principles of justice does Rawls think any body in the original position will agree to? What is his justification for this?