

## **103 Ethics**

The below reading list covers eight topics, including the three main schools of normative ethics (consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics) and metaethics (represented here by non-cognitivism).. Weeks on well-being and rights are intended to complement consequentialism and deontology respectively, and help answer the later practical questions ‘why be moral?’ and abortion. There is some scope for deviating from this list (e.g. replacing abortion with animal ethics or non-cognitivism with relativism) – but unless agreed in advance we will follow this schedule.

Essays should be about 2,000-2,500 words, and include a bibliography of all you’ve read and references (with page numbers!) for any quotations. Please email your essay, preferably in Word (.doc) format, to [b.m.saunders@gmail.com](mailto:b.m.saunders@gmail.com) by the agreed deadline prior to the tutorial. I’m not too fussy about general presentation (fonts, etc), but please make sure you include your name and page numbers. You may wish to exchange and read each other’s essays before the tutes (optional).

If you have eight tutorials in a term (which is usual for most PPEists, but may vary), you are only expected to write six essays. In the other two weeks, you are still expected to have done the reading and come to the tutorials with some thoughts or an essay plan to present. You may use at most one of these essay-free weeks in the first half of term. If you are in a pair, at least one of you will write an essay each week for discussion (we will arrange this by taking turns whose duty it is to provide an essay – though I don’t normally require you to read it aloud).

Each topic includes some suggested essay questions. The most important readings are identified as ‘core’ (though you are not necessarily expected to read all of these). The usefulness of any further readings may vary depending on your choice of question – feel free to ask for guidance, but also remember that your notes shouldn’t focus only on that week’s essay. Readings marked \* are generally good places to start, due either to their importance or introductory nature. (You may also wish to consult the Stanford Encyclopedia online)

### **1) Consequentialism**

#### **Essay Questions**

1. ‘The end justifies the means’ Does this adequately characterise consequentialism? Is it true?
2. What, in your opinion, is the most telling objection to consequentialism? Can it be overcome?
3. ‘Consequentialism is the grain of truth in utilitarianism’. Discuss.
4. ‘Consequentialism is too demanding’. Is this an objection to a moral theory?

#### **Core Readings:**

- \*J. L. Mackie (1977) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* ch. 6
- B. Williams & J. J. C. Smart (1973) *Utilitarianism: For and Against*
- L. W. Sumner (1987) *The Moral Foundations of Rights* ch. 6 (esp. pp.165-75)
- J. Raz (1986) *The Morality of Freedom* ch. 11
- P. Railton (1984) ‘Alienation, Consequentialism and the Demands of Morality’  
*Philosophy and Public Affairs* 13 134-71. Reprinted in S. Scheffler (ed.) (1988)

*Consequentialism and its Critics* and P. Railton (2003) *Facts, Values, and Norms: Essays toward a Morality of Consequence*

Further Readings:

- B. Hooker (2000) *Ideal Code, Real World* ch. 4 (esp. §4.1-4.3)  
J. Rawls (1971/1999) *A Theory of Justice* Sections 5, 6 and 30  
S. Scheffler (1982) *The Rejection of Consequentialism* chs. 1-2  
A. Sen (1985) 'Well-Being, Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures' *Journal of Philosophy* 82:4 169-221  
J. Griffin (1982) 'Modern Utilitarianism' *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 31 336-75  
\*T. Beauchamp & J. Childress (2001) *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* 5<sup>th</sup> edition Ch. 8 'Moral Theories' Section on 'Utilitarianism: Consequence-Based Theory'  
P. Pettit 'The Consequentialist Perspective' in M. Baron, P. Pettit, and M. Slote (1997) *Three Methods of Ethics*

Three Useful Collections (including some of the above):

- S. Scheffler (ed.) (1988) *Consequentialism and Its Critics* Especially papers by Railton, Williams, Foot, Nagel, Rawls, Nozick, Sen, and Scanlon  
J. Glover (ed.) (1990) *Utilitarianism and Its Critics* Especially introduction and papers by Bentham, Narveson, Rawls, Sidgwick, Sen, Smart, R. M. Adams, and Scheffler  
A. Sen & B. Williams (eds.) (1982) *Utilitarianism and Beyond* Especially introduction and papers by Hare, Scanlon, Taylor and Elster

## **2) Well-Being**

Essay Questions:

1. Is pleasure the only intrinsically valuable thing?
2. Must I experience what makes my life go better?
3. Is the individual always best-placed to know how well his/her life is going?
4. What is the moral importance of individual well-being?

Core Readings:

- \*L. W. Sumner (1996) *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics* chs. 3-5  
R. Dworkin (2000) *Sovereign Virtue* ch. 6  
\*J. Glover (ed.) (1990) *Utilitarianism and Its Critics* Part Two, which includes:  
    J. Griffin (1986) *Well-Being* ch. 1  
    R. Nozick (1974) *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* pp. 42-5  
D. Parfit (1984) *Reasons and Persons* Appendix I.

Further Readings:

Hedonism:

- J. Bentham (1823) *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* chs. 1-5  
J. Smart & B. Williams (1973) *Utilitarianism: For and Against*: Smart §3 (pp.12-27)  
C. D. Broad (1930) *Five Types of Ethical Theory* pp.179-92

Desire Satisfaction:

- \*A. J. Ayer (1954) *Philosophical Essays* ch. 11  
J. Griffin (1986) *Well-Being* chs. 1-3  
T. M. Scanlon 'Value, Desire and Quality of Life' in M. Nussbaum & A. Sen eds. (1993) *The Quality of Life*  
R. Brandt (1996) *Facts, Values and Morality* ch. 2

Objective List:

- \*J. Finnis (1980) *Natural Law and Natural Rights* chs. 3-4  
C. Taylor 'The Diversity of Goods' in A. Sen & B. Williams (eds.) (1982)  
*Utilitarianism and Beyond*  
Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I  
J. Ackrill 'Aristotle on eudaimonia' in A. Rorty (ed.) (1980) *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*  
The Importance of Well-Being:  
S. Kagan (1992) 'The Limits of Well-Being' *Social Philosophy and Policy* 9 169-89  
J. Raz (1986) *The Morality of Freedom* chs. 12-13  
A. Sen (1979) 'Utilitarianism and Welfarism' in *Journal of Philosophy* 76 463-489

### **3) Contemporary Deontology**

#### Essay Questions:

1. How can we know what we have a duty to do?
2. Is the requirement to treat each person as a separate end determinate enough to guide our actions?
3. Can it be rational not to bring about the best consequences?
4. Are there absolute moral requirements?

#### Core Readings:

- W. D. Ross (1930) *The Right and the Good* ch. 2  
\*T. Scanlon 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism' in B. Williams and A. Sen (eds.) (1982) *Utilitarianism and Beyond*  
S. Scheffler (1982) *The Rejection of Consequentialism* ch. 4  
J. Rawls (1971/1999) *A Theory of Justice* secs. 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 23 and 26-30

#### Further Readings:

- R. Nozick (1974) *Anarchy, State, & Utopia* pp.28-51  
T. Nagel (1986) *The View from Nowhere* Ch. 9 'Ethics' (an excerpt of which is reprinted in S. Scheffler (ed.) (1988) *Consequentialism and Its Critics* as 'Autonomy and Deontology')  
S. Freeman (1994) 'Utilitarianism, Deontology, and the Priority of Right' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 23:4 313-349  
J. Taurek (1977) 'Should the Numbers Count?' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 6:4 293-316  
D. Wasserman & A. Strudler (2003) 'Can a Nonconsequentialist Count Lives?' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 31:1 71-94  
\*N. Davis 'Contemporary Deontology' in P. Singer (ed.) (1991) *A Companion to Ethics*

#### Contract Theory

- S. Darwall (ed.) (2002) *Contractarianism/Contractualism* 'Introduction'  
D. Gauthier (1986) *Morals by Agreement* ch. 1  
A. Nelson (1988) 'Economic Rationality and Morality' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 17 149-66 [Review of D. Gauthier (1986)]  
T. M. Scanlon (1998) *What We Owe to Each Other* Introduction and ch. 5  
W. Kymlicka 'The Social Contract Tradition' in P. Singer (ed.) (1991) *A Companion to Ethics*

### **4) Rights**

#### Essay Questions:

1. What grounds rights?
2. What difference does a right make to whether or not I can do X?
3. Does a 'right to do wrong' make sense?
4. Can consequentialism account for rights?

Core Readings:

- J. Waldron (ed.) (1985) *Theories of Rights* 'Introduction' and papers by Hart, Mackie, Raz and Gewirth.  
L. W. Sumner (1987) *The Moral Foundations of Rights* chs. 1, 6&7  
J. J. Thomson (1990) *The Realm of Rights* chs. 1-2  
\*D. Lyons (1994) *Rights, Welfare and Mill's Moral Theory* Introduction, chs. 1&6

Further Readings:

- R. Nozick (1974) *Anarchy, State & Utopia* pp.28-35 and 45-51  
J. Raz (1986) *The Morality of Freedom* chs. 7, 8&10  
A. Gewirth 'The Basis and Content of Human Rights' in J. R. Pennock & J. W. Chapman (eds.) (1981) *Nomos XXIII: Human Rights* (You might also want to read the next three papers, which are brief criticisms of Gewirth's argument)  
J. Locke *Second Treatise on Government* (various editions) chs. 1-8  
\*L. Wenar (2005) 'Rights' in E. N. Zalta (ed) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2005 Edition) URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2005/entries/rights/>  
A. Sen (1982) 'Rights and Agency' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 11:1 3-39. Reprinted in S. Scheffler (ed.) (1988) *Consequentialism and its Critics* and J. Glover (ed.) (1990) *Utilitarianism and Its Critics* Part Three.  
T. M. Scanlon 'Rights, Goals and Fairness' in S. Scheffler (ed.) (1988) *Consequentialism and its Critics*  
R. Dworkin (1977) *Taking Rights Seriously* chs. 7&12

**5) Virtue Ethics**

Essay Questions:

1. Does Virtue Ethics provide an alternative to consequentialism and deontology?
2. Must the virtues always benefit their possessor?
3. What motivates virtuous action?
4. Can virtues conflict? What should a virtue ethicist do when they do?

Core Readings:

- R. Crisp and M. Slote (eds.) (1997) *Virtue Ethics* Especially papers by Anscombe, Stocker, Foot, Hursthouse, McDowell, MacIntyre, Schneewind and Slote

Further Readings:

- R. Crisp (ed.) (1996) *How Should One Live?* Especially papers by Crisp, Hursthouse and Driver.  
S. Darwall (ed.) (2002) *Virtue Ethics*  
R. Hursthouse (1999) *On Virtue Ethics*  
C. Swanton (2001) 'A Virtue Ethical Account of Right Action' *Ethics* 112 pp.32-52  
C. Swanton (2003) *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* Ch. 11  
T. Hurka (2001) *Virtue, Vice, and Value* Ch.8  
J. Driver (2001) *Uneasy Virtue*. See also the discussion in *Utilitas* 16:1 (March 2004)  
J. Wallace (1978) *Virtues and Vices*

M. Slote (1983/9) *Goods and Virtues*

\*J. L. Mackie (1977/90) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* ch. 8, §6

## **6) Non-Cognitivism**

### Essay Questions:

1. In what sense, if any, are moral judgements 'true'?
2. 'If there is no moral truth, everything is permitted'. Discuss.
3. Is it wrong for people in one society to condemn the values of another society?
4. Is morality merely a matter of social convention?

### Metaethics Core Readings:

\*J. L. Mackie (1977/90) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* ch. 1

S. Blackburn (1984) *Spreading the Word* chs. 5-6

D. McNaughton (1988) *Moral Vision* ch.3 'Moral Realism – An Outline'

### Expressivism Core Readings:

\*A. J. Ayer (1954) *Philosophical Essays* ch. 10

\*R. M. Hare (1968) *The Language of Morals* ch. 1

### Further Readings:

G. Harman (1977) *The Nature of Morality* ch. 3 'Emotivism as Moderate Nihilism'

G. Harman and J. J. Thomson (1996) *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* ch. 7

A. Gibbard (1990) *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* chs. 1-2

S. Blackburn (1998) *Ruling Passions*

R. M. Hare (1988) *Moral Thinking* ch. 6

## **7) Why be Moral?**

### Essay Questions:

1. Is it in my interest to be moral?
2. Can we say anything to the amoralist?
3. Do we need a reason to be moral?
4. What is the connection between rationality and morality?

### Core Readings:

\*R. M. Hare (1981) *Moral Thinking* ch.11

B. Williams 'Egoism and Altruism' in his (1973) *Problems of the Self*

\*D. Gauthier 'Three Against Justice: The Foole, the Sensible Knave, and the Lydian Shepherd' in his (1990) *Moral Dealing*

### Further Readings:

#### Modern:

B. Gert (2005) *Morality: Its Nature and Justification* ch.13 ("Why Should I Be Moral?")

P. Foot 'Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives' in her (1978) *Virtues and Vices*

P. Railton (1984) 'Alienation, Consequentialism and the Demands of Morality' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 13 134-71

D. Gauthier (1986) *Morals by Agreement* chs. 1&6

T. M. Scanlon (1998) *What We Owe to Each Other* ch. 4

D. Parfit (1984) *Reasons and Persons* ch.1, §1-9

T. Nagel (1970) *The Possibility of Altruism* chs. 5&9-12 [difficult]

Classic Texts [recommended modern editions – not compulsory]:

\*Plato *Republic* [Grube/Reeve translation, Hackett] Book II, up to 367e, and Book IX.

Hobbes (1651) *Leviathan* [Macpherson, Penguin] chs.13-17

\*D. Hume (1751) *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* [Selby-Bigge & Nidditch, Clarendon] §5, 9, App. II

J. S. Mill (1861) *Utilitarianism* [Crisp, OUP] ch.3

H. Sidgwick (1907) *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed. Bk.1 chs.6-7, bk2 ch.1, bk.4 concluding chapter

Secondary:

J. Drier 'Decision Theory and Morality' ch.9 in A. R. Mele and P. Rawling (eds.) (2004) *The Oxford Handbook of Rationality*

A. Wood (1981) *Marx* ch.10

H. A. Prichard (1912) 'Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?' *Mind* XXI: 21-37 (available online)

J. Rawls (2007) *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy – Hobbes* 3

C. Beitz (1979) *Political Theory and International Relations* Part1

B. Williams 'Plato Against the Immoralist' in his (2006) *The Sense of the Past* (M. Burnyeat, ed.)

**8) Abortion**

Essay Questions:

1. What difference does it make to the morality of abortion whether the foetus is a person?
2. On what grounds would it be immoral to have an abortion?
3. What are the differences between abortion and murder?
4. How should we choose between the mother's life and the foetus' life?

Core Readings:

\*J. J. Thomson (1971) 'A Defence of Abortion' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 47-66. Reprinted in P. Singer (ed.) (1986) *Applied Ethics* and P. Singer (ed.) (2006) *Bioethics: An Anthology*

M. Tooley (1972) 'Abortion and Infanticide' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2 37-65. Reprinted in P. Singer (ed.) (2006) *Bioethics: An Anthology*

J. Glover (1977) *Causing Deaths and Saving Lives* chs. 9-12 (15 and 7 may also be of some relevance)

J. Finnis (1973) 'The Rights and Wrongs of Abortion' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2 117-145

Further Readings:

R. M. Hare (1975) 'Abortion and the Golden Rule' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 4 201-222

P. Foot (1978) *Virtues and Vices* ch. 2 'The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect'

R. Hursthouse 'Virtue Theory and Abortion' in R. Crisp and M. Slote (eds.) (1997) *Virtue Ethics*

M. Warren (1997) *Moral Status: Obligations to Persons and Other Living Things* ch. 9 'Abortion and Human Rights'

M. Williams (2004) 'An Ethics Ensemble: Abortion, Thomson, Finnis and the Case of the Violin-Player' *Ratio Juris* 17:3 381-397