

**Hinsdale Central  
Social Studies Department  
Philosophy and Ethics  
Sample Packet**

Philosophy and Ethics  
Chapter 4—Personal Identity  
Thinking Exercises

Name:

“Take, for example, this piece of wax; it is quite fresh, having been but recently taken from the beehive; it has not yet lost the sweetness of the honey it contained; it still retains somewhat of the odor of the flowers from which it was gathered; its color, figure, size, are apparent (to the sight); it is hard, cold, easily handled; and sounds when struck upon with the finger. In fine, all that contributes to make a body as distinctly known as possible, is found in the one before us. But, while I am speaking, let it be placed near the fire--what remained of the taste exhales, the smell evaporates, the color changes, its figure is destroyed, its size increases, it becomes liquid, it grows hot, it can hardly be handled, and, although struck upon, it emits no sound.” --Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Meditation

1. Does the same wax still remain after this change?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. You are programming a robot to visually identify ordinary house cats. Compile a list of essential properties that it should look for.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Replace a part on your car. Do the same with another part, and then do so each day until you have replaced every part with a new one. Is what you have at the end of the process the same car (with new parts), or is it a different car? And, if it is different, when did it become so? Is it numerically the same throughout the process?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Assume that E is an essential property of X, and that A is an accidental property. Which of the following statements are true?
  - a) This would not be X without A.
  - b) This would not be X without E.
  - c) If it was not an X, then it would not have A.
  - d) If it was not an X, then it would not have E.
  - e) E is a sufficient condition for X.
  - f) E is a necessary condition for X.
  - g) A is a sufficient condition for X.
  - h) A is a necessary condition for X.

5. Is it still a table if I cut off its legs?
6. Is it still water if it is no longer liquid?
7. Is the log still wood after it's been burned to ash?
8. Is this still the same train as yesterday even though it has a different set of cars?
9. Is it still a zebra even though it has no stripes?
10. Would you still be the same person if you were born a day earlier?
11. Identity Conditions: Would you still say "It's the same person" if
  - a) She loses her memory, completely and permanently, but her body persists.
  - b) She turns into a monkey, retains her memories as a human being, but has developed a strong affinity for bananas (she used to hate them).
  - c) She turns into a monkey, but loses her memories as a human being.
  - d) Her body exists intermittently. Two out of every three minutes she has a physical body that you can perceive and converse with, but during the other minute there is nothing perceivable occupying the space where her body was. She picks up the conversation exactly at the same point when she reappears.
  - e) Her body disintegrates before your eyes, but her voice (or one that sounds exactly like hers) continues to speak.
  - f) After her body disappears before your eyes, it (or another body just like it) returns ten years later, complete with the woman's memories and personality traits.

Philosophy and Ethics  
Mind-Body—Quest  
Form B

From the list below, choose FIVE terms and then define the term, as well as analyze its relation to the mind-body problem in philosophy. Aim for approximately 3-5 sentences per term.

indiscernibility of identicals  
Putnam's Super Spartans Thought Experiment (TE)  
Phineas Gage  
Searle's Brain Replacement TE  
multiple realizability  
Putnam's Inverted Spectrum TE  
intentionality  
eliminative materialism  
folk psychology  
downward causation

Philosophy and Ethics  
Exploration of God (20 pts.)

Name:

**Please answer the following questions in groups of 3-4; you may consult but should produce your own work. Some call for full sentences.**

1. List what you consider the essential attributes of God. Are any of these properties in conflict with one another? Explain.

2. Is there anything (logic, a force, an object, e.g.) that would prevent God from existing? Why or why not? Is God a "logically necessary" being?

3. Is it rational to believe in God? Which of the rational proofs (cosmological, design, ontological) for God's existence seems the most convincing? the least convincing? Explain your answers.

4. What are the similarities and differences in how science and religion explain phenomena and existence? What should be the appropriate relationship between these two areas of knowledge?

5. What kinds of evidence or experiences might convince a believer as well as an atheist to change their postures toward God?

6. What is your reaction to Kierkegaard's presentation of the Abraham and Isaac story in *Fear and Trembling* that religious faith is and should be an unexplainable, absurd, irrational leap in the dark?

# Sample Project

Philosophy and Ethics  
Metaphysics Projects

1. Mind-Body Presentation

On Wednesday, September 26, a group of students will present on the mind-body issue. The presentation will last at least 25-30 minutes and should:

- \* include visual support in the form of PPT, posters, diagrams, etc.
- \* address the implications of neuroscience research
- \* consider the implications of artificial intelligence
- \* integrate several of the thought experiments mentioned in the text
- \* make extensive use of the Internet sources provided at the text site

2. Personal Identity Forum

On Wednesday, October 10, several students will conduct a forum on the issue of personal identity. To prepare, each student will write a 2-page paper defining the criteria for personhood and address the thought experiments from the text. The forum should address the implications of artificial intelligence and other potential technological advances for how we define persons in the future.

Students should also seriously consider the ethical desirability of such technological advances for definitions of personhood. Students will also take questions from the audience and each other.

3. Free Will Debate

On Wednesday, October 24, three groups of students (libertarians, determinists, compatibilists) will conduct a debate on the following questions: **Do humans possess free will? Are humans responsible for their actions?** The debate will be structured so that each side will take turns of 3 minutes presenting arguments, evidence, and rebutting the points of the other two sides. There will also be an open forum, moderated by myself, to allow for a more open-ended exchange. Students are strongly advised to prepare some formal statements in advance. Each group should employ thought experiments and evidence from Web resources associated with the text. The audience will have a chance to ask questions and respond to the debate.

Each project will be worth 100 points, which will have both group and individual grade components.

**Sample Document Based  
Question\Written Response**

Philosophy and Ethics  
Philosophy of Religion

Option 1

Write a brief 3-4 page essay (typed, double-spaced) on the following question: **Evaluate ONE of the rational proofs for the existence of God. How valid is the argument? What are its flaws?**

Your essay should frame the question clearly, state a thesis, survey and assess the arguments, and defend your position. Assume the reader lacks familiarity with the issue. You may quote selectively, but you should demonstrate some mastery of the issue without continually relying on the words of others. Attempt to evaluate the competing points of view. Use your textbook and at least TWO readings by a philosopher. You may use those from the end of the chapter or articles from the textbook Web site. Make sure you provide a BIBLIOGRAPHY and appropriate CITATIONS!

These are due at the beginning of class on Monday, November 12. For citation of quotes, it will be sufficient to put the author's name and the page number in parentheses, such as (Aquinas, 43). Please demonstrate pride in your work by using spell-check and also proofreading for clarity and accuracy. This assignment is worth 100 pts.

Option 2

**Resolved. Intelligent Design (ID) is a legitimate scientific theory and should be taught alongside evolution in public schools.**

Opening Statement (2-3 mins)

3 arguments (2 mins. each)

3 rebuttals (1.5 mins. each)

Open Forum/Questions (3-5 mins.)

Closings (2 mins.)

Each member of the debate team must complete a 1-2 page explanation/outline of the group's arguments IN HIS/HER OWN WORDS. The debate will be held on Tuesday, November 13 and will also be worth 100 pts.

I will provide each side with a number of resources. Focus more on the scientific and philosophical merits and less on the political agendas involved.

**Sample Homework**  
**Textbook\Supplemental Reading**

# DOING PHILOSOPHY

From DOING PHILOSOPHY by Schick & Vaughn. Copyright © 2006 McGraw Hill, Inc. or its affiliate(s). Used by permission. All Rights Reserved.

THEODORE SCHICK, JR.      LEWIS VAUGHN

# DOING PHILOSOPHY

---

*An Introduction through Thought Experiments*

Third Edition

THEODORE SCHICK, JR.

*Muhlenberg College*

LEWIS VAUGHN

From DOING PHILOSOPHY by Schick & Vaughn. Copyright © 2006 McGraw Hill, Inc. or its affiliate(s). Used by permission. All Rights Reserved.



Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York  
San Francisco St. Louis Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Kuala Lumpur  
Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan Montreal New Delhi  
Santiago Seoul Singapore Sydney Taipei Toronto

The McGraw-Hill Companies



## Higher Education

Published by McGraw-Hill, an imprint of The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. Copyright © 2006. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written consent of The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., including, but not limited to, in any network or other electronic storage or transmission, or broadcast for distance learning.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 DOC / DOC 0 9 8 7 6 5

ISBN-13: 978-0-07-299197-0

ISBN-10: 0-07-299197-6

Editor in Chief: Emily Barrosse  
Publisher: Lyn Uhl  
Sponsoring Editor: Jon-David Hague  
Editorial Coordinator: Allison Rona  
Marketing Manager: Suzanna Ellison  
Project Manager: Brett Coker  
Manuscript Editor: Darlene Bledsoe  
Design Manager: Preston Thomas  
Cover Designer: DiAnna VanEycke  
Text Designer: Ellen Pettengell  
Art Editor: Ayelet Arbel

Illustrator: Larry Daste  
Photo Research Coordinator:  
Nora Agbayani  
Photo Researcher: David Tietz  
Production Supervisor: Tandra Jorgensen  
Media Producer: Christie Ling  
Composition: 10.5/12 Goudy  
by TBH Typecast, Inc.  
Printing: 45# New Era Matte  
by R. R. Donnelley & Sons

Cover: Homero Aguilar. ART-IMAGE © 2004. Oil on canvas. 29 × 23".  
[www.homero-aguilar.com](http://www.homero-aguilar.com).

Credits: The credits section for this book begins on page C-1 and is considered an extension of the copyright page.

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Schick, Theodore.

Doing philosophy: an introduction through thought experiments /  
Theodore Schick, Jr., Lewis Vaughn.—3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-07-299197-0 ISBN 0-07-299197-6 (alk. paper)

1. Philosophy—Introductions. I. Vaughn, Lewis. II. Title.

BD21.S34 2005

100—dc22

2005052238

The Internet addresses listed in the text were accurate at the time of publication. The inclusion of a Web site does not indicate an endorsement by the authors or McGraw-Hill, and McGraw-Hill does not guarantee the accuracy of the information presented at these sites.

[www.mhhe.com](http://www.mhhe.com)

### *Ayn Rand on the Virtue of Selfishness*

In a series of novels and essays including *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, Ayn Rand has argued for a version of ethical egoism called *objectivism*. She writes,

The basic social principle of the Objectivist ethics is that just as life is an end in itself, so every living human being is an end in himself, not the means to the ends or the welfare of others—and, therefore, that man must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself. To live for his own sake means that *the achievement of his own happiness is man's highest moral purpose*.<sup>21</sup>

To achieve happiness, however, individuals must do more than try to satisfy their desires, because de-

sires can conflict. Rather, they should try to satisfy their *rational* desires, for “the rational interests of men do not clash—that there is no conflict of interests among men who do not desire the unearned, who do not make sacrifices nor accept them, who deal with one another as traders, giving value for value.”<sup>22</sup> Thus Rand’s objectivism is not a true egoism, for built into it is a principle of justice and fair play. We can’t fulfill just any desire but only our rational desires, she argues. And our rational desires are directed only on what we’ve earned. So Ayn Rand’s egoism is more properly viewed as a form of *libertarianism*, which holds that individuals should be free to do whatever they want as long as it doesn’t interfere with the rights of others.

*Seek happiness for its own sake, and you will not find it; seek for duty, and happiness will follow as the shadow comes with the sunshine.*

—TRYON EDWARDS

whenever anyone was faced with a difficult decision, the individual should ask, “How can I most benefit Al Franken?”

There is something odd about an ethical theory that cannot be advocated by its adherents. In fact, it points to what may be ethical egoism’s biggest flaw: it doesn’t treat equals equally. If there is no morally relevant difference between people, there is no reason not to treat them the same. Anyone who treats them differently is guilty of unfair discrimination. The fact that others are members of a particular race or sex is irrelevant from a moral point of view. Thus anyone who discriminates against others simply because they belong to a different race or sex is guilty of racism or sexism. Similarly, the fact that others are not identical to you is irrelevant from a moral point of view. Thus if you discriminate against others simply because they are not you—if you don’t treat them with the same respect that you treat yourself—you are guilty of egoism, which seems just as morally objectionable as racism or sexism. An adequate ethical theory should not treat people differently unless there is a good reason for doing so, for justice requires treating equals equally.

### Act-Utilitarianism

*The most delicate, the most sensible of all pleasures, consists in promoting the pleasure of others.*

—JEAN DE LA BRUYERE

The most plausible and widely discussed consequentialist ethical theory is utilitarianism. Traditional utilitarianism takes happiness to be the only thing that’s intrinsically valuable, that is, valuable for its own sake. Unlike ethical hedonism, however, it does not maintain that we should seek to maximize only our own happiness. Rather, it maintains that we should seek to maximize the total amount of happiness in the world. Consequently, it avoids many of the problems facing ethical egoism. Specifically, traditional utilitarianism

anism (also called “act-utilitarianism”) does not allow people to do something simply because it makes them happy. The happiness of the other people involved must also be taken into account.

Because utilitarianism considers happiness to be good in and of itself, no one’s happiness is more valuable than anyone else’s. Thus, in determining which action will produce happiness, everyone’s happiness must be counted equally. **Act-utilitarianism**, then, says that what makes an action right is that it maximizes happiness, everyone considered.

Act-utilitarianism suggests a straightforward procedure for determining what we should do in any given situation:

1. Identify the different actions that can be performed in the situation.
2. Identify the individuals who will be affected by those actions.
3. Calculate the amount of happiness each individual will receive from those actions.
4. Sum the individual amounts of happiness to determine which action will produce the most happiness.

Suppose we had a situation in which there were three possible courses of action and three people involved. Then we could put the results of the utilitarian calculation in the form of a table (a “util” is a unit of happiness):

	<i>Action 1</i>	<i>Action 2</i>	<i>Action 3</i>
John	3 utils	4 utils	4 utils
Sue	3 utils	2 utils	5 utils
Mary	<u>3 utils</u>	<u>2 utils</u>	<u>5 utils</u>
	9 utils	8 utils	14 utils

In this situation, action 3 is the right action to perform because it produces the most happiness, everyone considered.

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), the first to provide a systematic defense of utilitarianism, assumes that the happiness produced by various actions differs only in degree and thus can be measured on a single scale. He claims that, by using his “hedonic calculus,” we can quantify the amount of happiness produced by an action. His calculus takes into account such factors as the *intensity* of the happiness, the *duration* of the happiness, the *probability* that the happiness will occur, the *propinquity* (nearness in time) of the happiness to the action, the *fecundity* of the action (the probability that it will produce more happiness in the future), and the *impurity* of the action (the probability that it will produce less happiness in the future).

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), a follower of Bentham and one of the most influential philosophers of the nineteenth century, argues that the happiness produced by various actions differs not only in degree but also in kind and, thus cannot be measured on a single scale. He writes,

It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize the fact that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that, while in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.<sup>23</sup>

**act-utilitarianism**

The doctrine that what makes an action right is that it maximizes happiness, everyone considered. Also termed “traditional utilitarianism.”

### *Jeremy Bentham: Making Philosophy Do Work*

Besides John Locke, probably no philosopher in the English-speaking world has had a more powerful influence on social policy than Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832). Bentham was an Oxford-educated philosopher who studied law and focused his intellectual energy on ethics and political-legal theory. Very early in his career he was deeply affected by the injustice that he saw in British law and morals. In response, he not only developed his ethical theory of utilitarianism but spent much of his life trying to put his ideas into action.

Bentham's utilitarianism was in direct conflict with conventional thinking on public policy and morals. His ethical theory—or certain aspects of it—is now taken for granted in many quarters but was considered radical when he proposed it. By utilitarian lights, much of traditional morality is twisted: it condemns actions that do no harm and encourages actions that do great harm. It might, for example, ban certain sexual practices even though they hurt no one, and promote various restraints on sexual activity that can cause psychological or so-

cial harm. Bentham thought that the world would be a much better place if people judged actions and policies not by convention but by their power to maximize happiness and minimize pain.

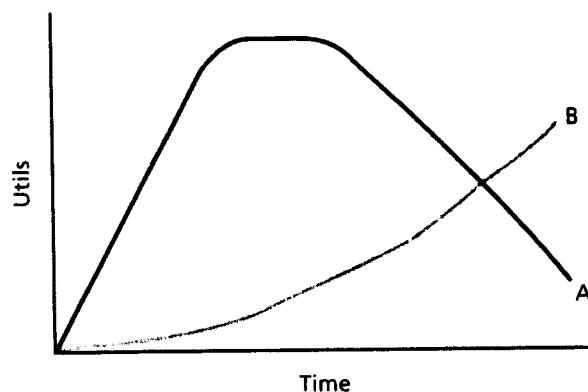
Bentham and his followers advocated the abolition of imprisonment for indebtedness; equal rights for women; the use of civil service examinations for government employees; the liberalization of laws concerning sexual activity; and the reform of prisons. Bentham himself proposed a model prison designed according to utilitarian principles. He thought that the purpose of imprisonment should be to deter crime, not to punish criminals.

One of the many legacies of Bentham and his followers is University College in London. They founded the university in 1826, England's first one since the Medieval period. Believe it or not, Jeremy Bentham is still there to this day. That is, his embalmed body, topped by a wax model of his head, is on display. Not too long ago Bentham was a regular attendee to board meetings, though he is said to have been a nonvoting member.

Mill believes that happiness differs in quality as well as quantity. Thus in determining what action to perform, we have to consider the kind of happiness produced as well as the amount.

To see what Mill is getting at, compare the happiness derived from playing chess with that of getting drunk. Although playing chess may not produce as much happiness as getting drunk, it could be argued that it produces a better kind of happiness. If so, playing chess is a more worthwhile activity than getting drunk. This is the basis of Mill's famous dictum, "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."

Having to rank the various forms of happiness in terms of their quality, however, makes the utilitarian calculation much more difficult. For there seems to be no objective way to do it. Mill suggests that we poll those who have experienced the different types of happiness and go with the majority. He says, "Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of a feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure."<sup>24</sup> Although this may seem an eminently democratic procedure, there is no guarantee it will produce the results Mill wants. For the masses may well prefer the lower pleasures to the higher. Even highly educated people may do so. To maintain the distinction between higher and lower pleasures, then, it looks like Mill



HAPPINESS PRODUCED BY TWO ACTIONS OVER TIME.

In the time span depicted, the happiness produced by A is greater in the short term than that produced by B. Does that mean that A is the better action?

must appeal to another standard of value besides utility. But if he does, his theory is no longer utilitarianism.

Even if it were easy to calculate how much happiness an action would produce, utilitarianism faces another problem: when to perform the calculation. Every action we undertake has consequences indefinitely into the future. At what point should we measure the happiness produced? The answer we give to this question will have a profound effect on what actions we consider to be permissible. An action that produces little happiness in the short term may produce a great deal of happiness in the long term. Consider the graph above. It represents the amount of happiness produced by two different actions (A and B) over time. In the short term, A produces much more happiness than B. In the long term, however, B produces much more happiness than A. The graph could represent the choice between building nuclear power plants and investing in alternative renewable sources of energy, such as solar power or wind power. The advantage of building nuclear power plants is a quick return on our investment. The disadvantage is that they create radioactive wastes that must be disposed of, and the plants themselves must eventually be sealed up and kept off-limits for more than ten thousand years. An investment in alternative renewable sources of energy will not have as quick a return, but it may produce more happiness in the long term because these sources of energy don't pollute and they don't run out. Should we take future generations into account when performing the utilitarian calculation? Act-utilitarianism is silent on this point.

*Happiness is a pig's philosophy.*

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

*That all who are happy are equally happy is not true. A peasant and a philosopher may be equally satisfied, but not equally happy.*

—SAMUEL JOHNSON

### Thought Probe

#### Animal Rights

Jeremy Bentham believed that what made a being worthy of ethical consideration was not whether it could reason but whether it could suffer. Consequently, he thought that an action's effect on animals should be taken into account when performing utilitarian calculations. Do you agree? Is it possible for us to gauge animal suffering? If so, how much should animal suffering be weighed in the calculation? As much as human suffering?

*The rights of one are as sacred as the rights of a million.*

—EUGENE V. DEBBS

### *Problems with Rights*

According to utilitarianism, the end justifies the means. As long as an action achieves the goal of maximizing happiness, it's morally correct, no matter how it was accomplished. This is not consistent with our notion of rights, however. We believe that certain things shouldn't be done to people, even if doing them would have good consequences. H. J. McCloskey illustrates this in the following thought experiment.

#### *Thought Experiment*

##### McCloskey's Utilitarian Informant

Suppose a utilitarian were visiting an area in which there was racial strife, and that, during his visit, a Negro rapes a white woman, and that race riots occur as a result of the crime, white mobs, with the connivance of the police, bashing and killing Negroes, etc. Suppose too that our utilitarian is in the area of the crime when it is committed such that his testimony would bring about the conviction of a particular Negro. If he knows that a quick arrest will stop the riots and lynchings, surely, as a utilitarian, he must conclude that he has a duty to bear false witness in order to bring about the punishment of an innocent person.<sup>25</sup>

According to utilitarianism, if falsely accusing and convicting an innocent person would maximize happiness, then we are morally obligated to do so. But this does not accord with our experience of the moral life. It's wrong to bear false witness even if doing so will produce more happiness than not.

Not only could act-utilitarianism mandate lying, it could mandate killing, as Richard Brandt demonstrates.

#### *Thought Experiment*

##### Brandt's Utilitarian Heir

Let us suppose that Mr. X is considering whether it is his duty to hasten his father's death. Let us suppose further that Mr. X's father is well-to-do, whereas the son is poor. The father gives the son no money, and the son and his family are continually missing the joys of life because they do not have the means to pay for them. Furthermore, the father is ill and requires nursing care. The cost of nursing care is rapidly eating into the father's capital. Moreover, the father himself gets no joy from life. He must take drugs to make life tolerable, and his physician says that his condition will gradually become worse, although death is still several years away.

On the utilitarian theory, it can well be (and on the hedonistic form, certainly will be) the son's duty to bring about the demise of his father, provided he

can do this so that his deed will be undetected (thereby avoiding legal calamities for himself and his family, and not weakening the general confidence of fathers in their sons). But would this in fact be his duty? It does not seem so.<sup>26</sup>

If killing someone—even your father—would produce more happiness than keeping him alive, act-utilitarianism would have us believe that he should be killed. But that is inconsistent with our notion of rights. You are not morally obligated to kill someone to make people happy.

### *Problems with Duties*

Not only is utilitarianism inconsistent with our notion of rights, it is also inconsistent with our notion of duties. We have a number of duties to others, including a duty not to break our promises. Act-utilitarianism maintains, on the contrary, that our only duty is to maximize happiness. If performing that duty requires breaking our promises, then so be it. British philosopher W. D. Ross illustrates.

*Duty has nothing to do with what somebody else conceives to be for the common good.*

—ROBERT MILLIKAN

### *Thought Experiment*

#### Ross's Unhappy Promise

Suppose, to simplify the case by abstraction, that the fulfillment of a promise to A would produce 1,000 units of good for him, but that by doing some other act I could produce 1,001 units of good for B, to whom I have made no promise, the other consequences of the two acts being of equal value; should we really think it self-evident that it was our duty to do the second act and not the first? I think not. We should, I fancy, hold that only a much greater disparity of value between the total consequences would justify us in failing to discharge our *prima facie* duty to A. After all, a promise is a promise, and is not to be treated so lightly as the theory we are examining would imply.<sup>27</sup>

Act-utilitarianism holds that we should break a promise whenever doing so will produce more happiness than keeping the promise will. But promises are more important than that. Our obligation to keep our promises is no less binding than our obligation to maximize happiness.

Some duties derive from our membership in a community, whereas others derive from the special roles we play in that community. Parents have special duties to their children, doctors have special duties to their patients, lawyers have special duties to their clients, and so on. But just as act-utilitarianism doesn't provide an adequate account of our ordinary duties, it doesn't provide an adequate account of our special duties either. British political theorist William Godwin, an early defender of utilitarianism, highlights this aspect of utilitarianism in the following thought experiment.

### *Thought Experiment*

#### Godwin's Fire Rescue

A man is of more worth than a beast; because, being possessed of higher faculties, he is capable of a more refined and genuine happiness. In the same manner the illustrious archbishop of Cambrai was of more worth than his valet, and there are few of us that would hesitate to pronounce, if his palace were in flames, and the life of only one of them could be preserved, which of the two ought to be preferred. . . .

Suppose I had been myself the valet; I ought to have chosen to die, rather than Fenelon should have died. The life of Fenelon was really preferable to that of the valet. . . .

Suppose the valet had been my brother, my father or my benefactor. This would not alter the truth of the proposition. The life of Fenelon would still be more valuable than that of the valet; and justice, pure, unadulterated justice, would still have preferred that which was most valuable.<sup>28</sup>

Godwin claims that if his brother, his father, or his benefactor were trapped in a building with the archbishop and he could save only one of them, he should save the archbishop because that would produce the most happiness. In the first edition of his book, Godwin claimed that he should save the archbishop even if the other person was his mother. This created such an outcry that he had to change the example. But even the new situation is a counterexample to act-utilitarianism. Our duties to our family and friends often outweigh our duty to produce happiness.

### *Problems with Justice*

*Justice is to give every man his due.*

—ARISTOTLE

Although act-utilitarianism requires that everybody's happiness be counted equally, it doesn't require that the happiness produced by an action be distributed equally. All that matters from a utilitarian point of view is that the amount of happiness produced be the greatest possible. If we can produce more happiness by distributing it unequally, that is what we should do. British philosopher A. C. Ewing provides this example.

### *Thought Experiment*

#### Ewing's Utilitarian Torture

Suppose we could slightly increase the collective happiness of ten men by taking away all happiness from one of them, would it be right to do so? It is perhaps arguable that it would be if the difference in happiness of the nine was very large, but not if it was very slight. And if the happiness of the nine were purchased by the actual torture of the one, the injustice of it would seem to poison the happiness and render it worse than valueless even if they were callous

LADY JUSTICE.  
Is utilitarian justice  
consistent with that  
represented by Lady  
Justice?

From DOING PHILOSOPHY by Schick & Vaughn. Copyright © 2006 McGraw Hill, Inc. or its affiliate(s). Used by permission. All Rights Reserved.

enough to enjoy it. Yet on the utilitarian view any distribution of good, however unfair, ought to be preferred to any other, however just, if it would yield the slightest additional happiness.<sup>29</sup>

Act-utilitarianism would have us believe that justice is served by maximizing happiness. So, by that argument, if the amount of happiness that the Marquis de Sade experienced by torturing innocent young girls exceeded the amount of unhappiness the girls felt by being tortured, he was morally justified in torturing them.

Questions of justice arise not only with regard to the distribution of goods but also with regard to the retribution for crimes. The basic principle of retributive justice is captured in the phrase “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life.” This conception of justice requires giving everyone their due. It is represented by the figure of Lady Justice who, blindfolded, carries a balance, symbolically ensuring that no one gets more — or less — than what’s coming to each. Act-utilitarianism has no place for such a principle. According to utilitarianism, punishment is justified only if it maximizes happiness.

It has traditionally been thought that punishment can maximize happiness in two ways: by making the criminal a better person or by lowering the overall crime rate. But, in order to accomplish these goals, it is not necessary that

*Justice, when equal scales  
she holds, is blind; nor  
cruelty, nor mercy change  
her mind.*

— SIR JOHN DENHAM

### *In the News: Killing Disabled Babies*

Utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer has made headlines across the globe because of his controversial views on, among other things, the right of parents to kill their seriously disabled infants. Consider this report:

He has been called a “notorious messenger of death” in his hometown of Melbourne, Australia. The British media have denounced him as “the man who would kill disabled babies,” and in Germany he’s been compared to Hitler’s henchman Martin Borman. Protesters in wheelchairs have fought his appearances, chained themselves to barricades and smashed his glasses.

He’s also been called the most influential philosopher alive. . . .

His most famous book, *Animal Liberation*, published in 1975, jump-started the entire animal rights movement, converting many readers to lifelong vegetarianism and inspiring reforms in humane treatment for laboratory animals and livestock. But animal liberation is only one facet of Singer’s ethics. Indeed, his goal is to reconfigure our entire moral landscape.

According to Singer, religion’s 2000-year domination of morality ended . . . in 1993, when British law ruled that a comatose man named Anthony Bland could be killed by his doctors. That decision, he maintains, dealt a “mortal” blow to the unquestioned sanctity of human life.

Singer argues that ethics today should be guided by a particular brand of utilitarianism: he

calls himself a “preference utilitarian.” In classic utilitarianism, what is good is defined as what brings happiness. But happiness is hard to measure. Singer proposes instead that good be defined by “preference.” Under this philosophy, moral decisions are based on the most intense preferences of a given individual or group.

Thus, claims Singer, many times animals will be more deserving of life than certain humans, including disabled babies and adults who are brain-injured or in vegetative comas. Presumably, a healthy chimp’s preference for life is more intense than a disabled infant’s. This philosophy would rule out most medical experimentation on animals, as well as the breeding of animals to provide organs for human transplants.

Even more radical, Singer suggests that since preference is influenced by self-awareness, babies should not be considered “persons” until they are one month old. Before that time, parents and their doctors should be free to kill a baby if, for instance, it has Down’s syndrome and the parents don’t wish to raise it.<sup>30</sup>

#### *Thought Probe*

Singer’s “Preference Utilitarianism”

Is Singer’s “preference utilitarianism” more plausible than conventional act- or rule-utilitarianism? Do you agree with Singer’s position on the permissibility of killing disabled infants? Why or why not?

the punishment fit the crime. It is not even necessary that we punish only criminals. Ewing considers these consequences in the following thought experiment.

#### *Thought Experiment*

##### Ewing’s Innocent Criminal

Suppose that in a particular case it is impossible to find the real criminal, but suppose also that we have got hold of a person generally believed guilty so that the deterrent effects of punishing him would be the same as if he really were

guilty. Suppose, further, that psychological experts could assure us that his character would benefit by a spell of imprisonment. (Even a very good man's character often benefits by suffering; very possibly it is more likely than a bad man's to do so.) That surely would not make the punishment right, yet it ought to on the utilitarian theory.<sup>31</sup>

If punishing an innocent person would maximize happiness, then act-utilitarianism says we should do so, whether the person has it coming or not. But that violates the principle of justice, which says that equals should be treated equally.

### *Thought Probe*

#### The Utility Machine

Suppose that an inventor approaches the president of the United States with a device that will increase the happiness of those who use it by 1,000 percent. The inventor wants to put the device into production but only if the president agrees to his terms. The president, of course, is interested in providing for the common good and promoting the general welfare, so he asks the inventor what he has in mind. The inventor tells him that he wants to be able to kill at random 50,000 users of the device every year. (Warning labels on the device would alert users to this potential hazard.) The president is concerned about all the pain and suffering the deaths of these 50,000 people would cause. The inventor assures him that even taking into account the suffering caused by their deaths, the people of the United States will still be 1,000 percent happier with the device than without it. Should the president allow the device to go into production? Why or why not? (Such a device is already on the market. Can you guess what it is?)<sup>32</sup>

### Rule-Utilitarianism

Act-utilitarianism is inconsistent with our experience of the moral life because it does not fit with our notions of rights, duties, and justice. To try to salvage act-utilitarianism's basic insight — that we should be concerned with promoting the common good — some have proposed what is known as rule-utilitarianism. Rule-utilitarianism maintains that the rightness of an action is determined not by its consequences but by the consequences of the rule it falls under. If an action falls under a rule that would maximize happiness if it were generally followed, then the action is right. **Rule-utilitarianism**, then, is the doctrine that what makes an action right is that it falls under a rule that, if generally followed, would maximize happiness, everyone considered.

According to act-utilitarianism, the procedure for deciding whether an action is right is a two-step process: (1) identify the alternative courses of action, and (2) determine which action would produce the most happiness.

#### **rule-utilitarianism**

The doctrine that what makes an action right is that it falls under a rule that, if generally followed, would maximize happiness, everyone considered.

Chapter 5—The Problem of Relativism and Morality

**Note:** Please use all bolded terms in your responses.

*Introduction*, pp. 326-28

Identify 3-4 considerations when engaging in ethics. What is the role of ethical theory?

*Section 5.1*

1. What are subjective absolutism and subjective relativism and how do they differ? Do you find either theory appealing? Why or why not? (pp. 329-31)
2. What do you think is the driving force behind the theory of emotivism? How well does the Thought Experiment (p. 332) critique it? (pp. 331-33)
3. Provide an argument for the doctrine of cultural relativism. Does it promote tolerance? Do you believe there are universal human rights? (pp. 333-36)
4. How do we make moral judgments? Is morality innate (see feature on p. 337)? Address the Thought Probe on p. 338. (pp. 336-38)
5. What is the Euthyphro Dilemma? How convincing is the divine command theory? (pp. 338-43)
6. Identify ONE universal moral principle and defend it. (pp. 343-44)

*Section 5.2*

1. Explain the basis for consequentialist theories of ethics. **intrinsic value** **instrumental value** (pp. 347-48)
2. What is the difference between psychological hedonism and ethical hedonism? Are all actions truly self-regarding or designed to maximize happiness? Evaluate the Thought Experiment and arguments in this section against ethical egoism. Does Rand's objectivism seem like an improved version? (pp. 348-52)
3. What is the basis for act utilitarianism? Can pleasure be calculated as Bentham believes? Is Mill correct in arguing that pleasures differ in quality and that this fact is morally relevant? (pp. 352-55)
4. Examine the following criticisms of utilitarianism and the related Thought Experiments in this section. How would you defend utilitarianism against these views? **problems with rights** **problems with duties** **problems with justice** (pp. 356-61)
5. Peter Singer (p. 360) advocates animal rights, often over that of disabled infants or the elderly based on their ability to feel pleasure or pain. Is this a natural outgrowth of utilitarianism? Do you support Singer's ideas? (p. 360)
6. How does rule utilitarianism differ from act utilitarianism? Is it a better theory? (pp. 361-64)
7. Address Nozick's Happiness Machine Thought Experiment (pp. 363-64) and complete the Discussion Questions 1-5 on pp. 366-67.

*Section 5.3*

1. What does Kant mean when he says only a good will is good without qualification? What about happiness? (p. 368)
2. What are the characteristics of the Categorical Imperative? Give some examples of how it might be applied. What kinds of duties does Kant argue that humans have? (pp. 368-73)

3. Does the 2<sup>nd</sup> form of the Categorical Imperative adequately address the Thought Experiments on pp. 371-72, 372-73, 375, and 377? (pp. 373-77)
4. What are the implications for public and foreign policy of the idea of negative and positive rights and Kantian v. utilitarian notions of war? (pp. 375-76)
5. Does Ross's pluralistic formalism help address the problem raised in Kant of conflicts of duties? Address the Thought Probe on pp. 378-79. **actual duty** *prima facie* **duty** (pp. 377-79)
6. Draw an annotated diagram or chart using the following terms to explain Rawls's contractarianism: **veil of ignorance, original position, justice as fairness, maximin strategy, principle of equal liberty, principle of fair equality of opportunity, difference principle**. Answer the Thought Probe on p. 382. (pp. 379-82)
7. Is Libertarianism an improvement on Rawls's "justice as fairness" system? Why or why not? (pp. 382-84)
8. How do the social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Nozick differ? (pp. 385-87)
9. Do you think that men and women reason differently on ethical issues? Should an "ethic of care" form a part of our ethical approaches? (pp. 388-90)
10. Using pp. 390-93, address the Thought Probe on p. 393.
11. Address Discussion Questions 1, 3, 7-11 on pp. 394-95.

#### *Section 5.4*

1. According to the beginning of this chapter, what is missing from the virtuous utilitarian and virtuous Kantian? (pp. 396-98)
2. Why is morality important for society? How does the existence of psychopaths affect our view of moral theory? (pp. 398-400)
3. Define and explain how each of the following terms fits with Aristotle's virtue ethics: **virtue, happiness, Function Argument, intellectual and moral virtues, "golden mean," moral education, justice**. What are the advantages of this theory over the others we have studied? (pp. 400-02)
4. Do you agree that there are certain basic ingredients to a good life? What are they? (pp. 402-05)
5. Is virtue ethics too vague to be useful? (p. 405)
6. What would you do with the Ring of Gyges? Explain. (p. 406)

#### Chapter Readings

**W.T. Stace, *Are Ethical Values Relative?***, pp. 408-13

1. What does Stace argue is a common misconception people make regarding ethical relativist claims?
2. How does Stace interpret the anthropological evidence for diverse moral standards?
3. How does Stace respond to the idea that no absolute moral standards can be found?
4. According to Stace, explain the implications for society if moral relativism were accepted.

**Jeremy Bentham, *Of the Principle of Utility***, pp. 414-16

1. According to Bentham, what motivates human behavior?

2. What arguments does Bentham provide for the principle of utility?
3. How might utilitarianism be viewed as a radical philosophy?

**Immanuel Kant, *Good Will, Duty, and the Categorical Imperative*, pp. 417-21**

1. What, according to Kant, is the only thing good without qualification? Why?
2. Why does Kant use the device of a maxim to test proposed actions? Does this seem workable? consistent?
3. What is the difference between a hypothetical and a categorical judgment? Provide an example of each.
4. What kinds of duties seem to be suggested by Kant's four examples?
5. How does the 2<sup>nd</sup> formulation of the Categorical Imperative add to the 1<sup>st</sup>?

**John Rawls, *The Original Position and Justification*, pp. 422-24**

1. What conceptions of justice does Rawls aim at? How do the "original position" and "veil of ignorance" propose to secure this conception? Could this work?
2. What principles does Rawls claim trustees in the original position will choose? Why not utility?
3. Why is Rawls's theory viewed as a "contract"? How does it differ from our current conception of society?

**Ursula K. Leguin, *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*, pp. 429-32**

1. How does the author describe the city of Omelas? What, if anything, seems to be lacking in its life?
2. If you found out about the locked-up child, how do you think you would react?
3. Would you be willing to accept this same bargain for a world like the Omelas? What is implied by the author about those who visit the child and then leave the city?