

## PHIL 27/POLI 27: ETHICS AND SOCIETY

Prof. Samuel C. Rickless

### FINAL EXAMINATION STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Is death ever a good thing for the one who dies? If so, under what conditions? If not, why not? Defend your answer, with reference to the contributions of Nagel and Foot on the issue.
2. Compare and contrast Brad Hooker's approach to the morality of euthanasia with Philippa Foot's approach to the morality of euthanasia. What is Hooker's theory of moral rightness and wrongness? What does his theory tell us about the moral rightness or wrongness of the various types of euthanasia? What is Foot's theory of moral rightness and wrongness? What does her theory tell us about the moral rightness and wrongness of the various types of euthanasia? Do these theories deliver the same moral prescriptions, or do they deliver different moral prescriptions, on the subject of euthanasia? If they deliver the same moral prescriptions, explain *why* they do. If they deliver different moral prescriptions, explain *why* they do. As you see it, which of these two approaches to the morality of euthanasia is superior to the other? Defend your answer.
3. What is act-utilitarianism? What is rule-utilitarianism? How do these two moral theories differ? What reasons are there for adopting act-utilitarianism rather than rule-utilitarianism? What reasons are there for adopting rule-utilitarianism rather than act-utilitarianism? Do you think either one of these theories is preferable to the other? Explain.
4. What is the doctrine of doing and allowing (DDA)? Is the DDA preferable to act-utilitarianism? If so, why? If not, why not? Is the DDA preferable to rule-utilitarianism? If so, why? If not, why not?
5. What is Rachels' main argument for the claim that there is no morally relevant difference between active and passive euthanasia? What is Foot's reply to Rachels' argument? In light of Foot's reply, do you find Rachels' argument persuasive? If so, why? If not, why not? Explain your answer.
6. What is Marquis's argument for the moral impermissibility of abortion? What is Sinnott-Armstrong's criticism of Marquis's argument? In light of Sinnott-Armstrong's criticism, do you find Marquis's argument persuasive? If so, why? If not, why not? Explain your answer.
6. What is the right to life? Is it the right to be given the bare minimum one needs for continued life? If so, why? If not, why not? Is it the right to not be killed unjustly? If so, why? If not, why not? Is it the right to not be killed? Thomson thinks not. Why? Do you agree with her? If so, why? If not, why not? Assuming that a human fetus has a

right to life from the moment of conception, does abortion always violate its right to life? Defend your answer.

7. Is aborting a pregnancy in its ninth month morally permissible? Identify an author who argues that it is always morally permissible, and explain the author's reasons for thinking this. Then identify an author who argues that it is never morally permissible, and explain that author's reasons for thinking this. Do you agree with either of these authors? If so, why? If not, why not? If you agree with neither of these authors, explain and defend your own answer to the question.

8. What, according to Mary Anne Warren, are the conditions under which an organism possesses a right to life? Does the human fetus meet these conditions at any stage of its development? If so, when? If not, why not? What conclusions, if any, does Warren draw about the morality of abortion from her investigation into the nature of the right to life? Does it follow from Warren's position that infanticide is permissible? Does it follow from Warren's position that it is permissible to kill patients in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's disease? If so, why? If not, why not? Explain your answer.

9. What is the main holding of *Roe v. Wade*? How does Blackmun argue for this holding? Do you agree with this argument, or do you find it flawed? If you find it flawed, where are the flaws? If you agree with it, defend it against at least two reasons for thinking that it is flawed. If Blackmun's argument for the main holding is flawed, does it follow that the main holding itself is false? Defend your answer.

10. What is the principle of non-combatant immunity? (Make sure you define "non-combatant" and "supreme emergency".) What reason is there to accept the principle? Are there any reasons to reject the principle? Explain.

11. What is the classical version of the doctrine of double effect (DDE), as discussed by Walzer? What is Foot's objection to this version of the DDE? Do you think Foot's is a good objection or a bad objection? Explain. What is the revised version of the DDE? Does the revised version of the DDE withstand Foot's objection to the classical version of the DDE? Defend your answer.

12. What is the revised version of the doctrine of double effect (DDE)? How does this doctrine differ from the doctrine of doing and allowing (DDA)? Do these two doctrines make the same recommendations in all actual and hypothetical cases? What is the Occam's Razor challenge to the revised version of the DDE? Can the revised version of the DDE meet this challenge? Explain.

13. What is the revised version of the doctrine of double effect (DDE)? What is the arbitrariness objection to this version of the DDE? Describe two different ways of answering the arbitrariness objection. Which of the two do you find more convincing? Explain and justify your answer.

14. Peter Singer argues that we ought to prevent suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care. What is his argument for this conclusion? To which moral intuitions does Singer appeal in support of the premises of this argument? Describe Murphy's main objection to Singer's argument. What is Murphy's way of reconciling all the moral intuitions that are relevant to the evaluation of Singer's argument? Do you agree with Murphy's conclusions? If so, why? If not, why not?

15. Peter Singer argues that we ought to give to aid agencies up to the point of marginal utility. What is the point of marginal utility? What is Singer's argument for this conclusion? Describe two of Cullity's objections to this argument. Do you agree with these objections? If so, why? If not, why not? Explain.

16. Thomas Pogge proposes three different ways of arguing for the conclusion that we are morally required to eliminate radical inequality. What is radical inequality? What are the three different arguments that lead Pogge to the conclusion that we are morally required to eliminate it? Do you find these arguments convincing? If so, why? If not, why not? Explain.

### **HELPFUL HINTS ON PREPARING FOR AN ESSAY EXAM**

1. Read each of the study questions carefully. Think about how you are going to answer it, then briefly map out the general structure of your answer before you start writing.
2. If you use special terminology that was defined in the course, explain what it means.
3. Make sure that your answer is well organized. It should always be clear what you are arguing for. You also need to justify what you say, especially if it is in any way controversial.
4. You need to consider how an opponent might respond to your position. If we have discussed objections to your position in lecture, you need to explain what is wrong with them.
5. You need to refer to the course readings that are relevant to the question at hand.
6. Do not treat what looks like an open-ended question as an invitation to share your personal feelings about the issue at hand. Always ground your answers in the course material, even if your own position differs from every position defended in the readings.
7. If the question asks *you* to take a position, don't retreat behind the views of the authors you've read. Go ahead and take a position. Be bold. But *always* defend whatever position you take.
8. Your exam will be graded according to how well you have understood the course material and how well you argue for the position(s) you take.