Exploring Moral Problems An Introductory Anthology 1st edition Cahn Test Bank

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About the Book

Exploring Moral Problems covers both standard issues and such often-neglected topics as prostitution, organ sales, pornography, drug legalization, gun control, immigration, reparations, racism, sexism, sex and consent, sexual harassment, and climate change. The readings have been carefully edited to make them understandable to students with no prior exposure to philosophy.

Features of the Instructor's Manual

This instructor's manual contains:

1. A summary for each entry
2. 3 essay questions on each entry, accompanied by bulleted criteria for a "good" answer.
3. 10 multiple-choice questions per entry
4. 2–5 suggested web links for each topic
5. PowerPoint lecture notes (2 slides for each entry)

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Mary Midgley: Moral Isolationism

Summary

Midgley argues against a view she calls *moral isolationism*, which holds that we cannot understand cultures other than our own well enough to make moral judgments about them. Many people, Midgley notes, accept moral isolationism on grounds of respect and tolerance. But, according to Midgley, this is deeply misguided.

To challenge moral isolationism, Midgley introduces a custom from ancient Japanese culture. To test whether their newly crafted swords could cut through a person in a single blow, samurai would slice wayfarers in half. The moral isolationist is committed to holding that, given our lack of understanding of ancient Japanese culture, respect and tolerance demand we refrain from judging the samurai's testing practices.

But this verdict is, Midgley argues, mistaken on a number of fronts. First, to respect people we have to know enough about them to make a favorable judgment. Hence, Midgley maintains, the moral isolationist cannot ground her isolationism on both a lack of understanding *and* respect. Moreover, understanding occurs gradually; it is not all or nothing. Second, moral isolationism would undercut moral reasoning as such, for if we cannot judge other cultures, we cannot judge our own. Other societies provide the range of relevant comparison. Our moral reasoning is made possible by looking to the practices of others. Accordingly, moral isolationism leads to mental suicide.

Abandoning moral isolationism, however, comes at little cost. We already try to justify the behavior of those we only barely understand. For example, many people's initial reaction is to try to *justify* the samurai's behavior. But attempting this kind of justification is an implicit denial of moral isolationism. In addition, nearly every culture is a hodgepodge of different influences, and we nonetheless engage with our own culture. In short, Midgley concludes that moral isolationism is untenable and the costs of giving it up are not high.

Essay Questions

1. Midgley invokes the Japanese verb *tsujigiri*. Explain the example and how it is supposed to demonstrate her central claim. Do you think the example accomplishes what Midgley intends for it to accomplish?
   - It's is a foreign cultural practice in which new swords are tested on innocent wayfarers.
   - This is a practice that we do not understand, but which we do not think is morally assessable. We try to justify it.

2. Midgley claims moral reasoning requires the possibility of judging the practices of other societies. What argument does Midgley supply to justify this claim? Do you find her argument plausible? Defend your answer.

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- To morally evaluate something requires understanding of it.
- We lack understanding of much of our own culture. We learn about the moral status of practices in our own cultures by comparison to others.

3. Midgley suggests anthropologists' emphasis on remote and isolated communities obscures something important. What is missing from this emphasis?
   - Most communities are the product of many cultures mixing. Most people have had to make sense of the practices of others.
   - Isolated communities are the exceptional in this regard. They do not provide the universal insight sometimes claimed.
   - Even in these isolated cases, moral judgment is possible.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Midgley defines "moral isolationism" as the view that
   a. denies that we can ever understand any culture except our own well enough to make judgments about it.
   b. respect and tolerance forbid us ever to take up a critical position to any other culture.
   c. moral judgment is a kind of coinage valid only in its country of origin.
   *d. all of the above

*2. Midgley claims that to respect people, we
   *a. have to know enough about them to make a favorable judgment.
   b. have to be able to tolerate them within our own culture.
   c. have to know what it is like for them to live in our world.
   d. need to have experienced their "way of life."

3. The word "tsujigiri" literally means
   a. diagonal-slice.
   *b. crossroads-cut.
   c. wayfarer-slice.
   d. shoulder-to-shoulder-chop.

*4. According to Midgley, if the warrior bungled his stroke, it could
   a. injure his honor.
   b. offend his ancestors.
   c. let down his emperor.
   *d. all of the above.

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5. Midgley argues that it is impossible to praise or blame others if we cannot in principle _____ them.
   a. criticize
   b. understand
   *c. both a and b
   d. neither a nor b

*6. Midgley holds that "judging" means
   a. sentencing people.
   *b. forming an opinion.
   c. condemning people.
   a. praising people.

7. According to Midgley, if we can't judge other cultures we cannot judge our own because
   *a. other societies provide the range of comparison.
   b. we rely on the judgments of other societies.
   c. both a and b
   d. neither a nor b

*8. Midgley maintains that moral isolationism would lay down a general ban on
   *a. moral reasoning.
   b. moral communication.
   c. moral disagreement.
   d. moral agreement.

9. Midgley claims that when we judge something to be bad or good, better or worse than something else,
   a. we are taking it as something to promote or preserve.
   *b. we are taking it as an example to aim at or avoid.
   c. we are making a moral mistake.
   d. our statements are meaningless.

*10. Midgley holds that we are rightly angry with those who _____ other cultures.
   a. despise
   b. oppress
   c. steamroll
   *d. all of the above

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James Rachels: Egoism and Moral Skepticism

Summary

Psychological egoism states an empirical fact, namely, that persons ultimately aim at their own good. Ethical egoism, by contrast, makes a normative claim: the right act is the act that produces the most good for the agent. Rachels examines psychological and ethical egoism and finds both untenable.

Rachels argues that psychological egoism rests on a number of confusions. Psychological egoists often point out that we only act in ways that seem to serve our own self-interest. Rachels argues, however, that this mistakes the obvious claim that voluntary acts are mine, with the controversial claim that the object of my acts (i.e., what ends my actions aim at) is myself. Selfishness should not be confused with self-interest. Psychological egoists also attempt to support their view by claiming that unselfish-looking actions always produce a sense of self-satisfaction in the agent. But this, Rachels argues, confuses feeling good after doing an action with doing the action because it feels good. Once these confusions are cleared up, psychological egoism is easy to resist.

Rachels notes that ethical egoism, properly interpreted, is a coherent position. Nevertheless, he argues, the rationale ethical egoism supplies to reach moral verdicts is implausible. Is it really the case that the explanation for why I shouldn't set fire to the local department store is my own self-interest? Isn't the more reasonable answer that I shouldn't start the fire because people will be burned to death? Given that most of us intrinsically value other persons' welfare and this is incompatible with ethical egoism, ethical egoism should be abandoned.

Essay Questions

1. What, according to Rachels, is ethical egoism? A common objection to the view holds that it is inconsistent. What's the argument to this conclusion? How does Rachels respond?
   - Ethical egoism is the view that one ought to act only to promote her own interests.
   - The common objection holds that ethical egoism cannot be universalized and so is false.
   - Rachels holds that it is universalizable but it is not public.

2. What's psychological egoism? What reasons does Rachels offer to reject it? Can the view be amended in any way to escape Rachels' critique?
   - Psychological egoism holds that, as a descriptive matter, we can only act to promote our own interests.
   - It confuses self-interest with selfishness, assumes that all acts are performed either from the motive of self-interest or other-regarding interest, and assumes that concern for one's own welfare is incompatible with concern for others.

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3. What is the legend of Gyges? How does this highlight the problems presented by psychological and ethical egoism? How would you behave if you had the ring? Does reflection on this thought experiment reveal anything about either form of egoism?
   - Gyges finds a ring that make him invisible.
   - This prompts the questions:
     1. If a virtuous and a vicious person are given the ring, will they behave differently?
     2. Should they behave differently?

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Psychological egoism is the view that
   a. all people ought to be selfish in everything they do.
   *b. all people are selfish in everything they do.
   c. both a and b
   d. neither a nor b

*2. Rachels claims that moral skeptics attack the claim that
   a. we have an obligation to consider the welfare of other people when we act.
   b. we must respect others' rights and interests as well as our own.
   c. people are not wholly selfish
   *d. all of the above

3. According to Glaucon, the virtuous man who possessed Gyges's ring would
   *a. behave no better than the rogue.
   b. behave slightly better than the rogue.
   c. behave significantly better than the rogue.
   d. continue to act fully virtuously.

*4. Ethical egoism is the view that
   *a. all people ought to be selfish in everything they do.
   b. all people are selfish in everything they do.
   c. both a and b.
   d. neither a nor b.

5. Rachels argues that the following is an exception to the claim that people never voluntarily do anything except what they want to do:
   a. actions that we may not want to do but that we do anyway as a means to an end that we want to achieve.
   b. actions that we do because we feel ourselves under an obligation to do them.

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*c. both a and b
d. neither a nor b

*6. According to Rachels, if Smith wants to do something that will help his friend, even when it means forgoing his own enjoyments, he
a. acts selfishly.
*b. acts unselfishly.
c. does what he ought to do.
d. acts impermissibly.

7. Rachels argues that if we have a positive attitude toward the attainment of some goal,
a. we may derive satisfaction from attaining that goal.
b. the *object* of our attitude is *the attainment of that goal.*
c. we must want to attain the goal *before* we can find any satisfaction in it.
*d. all of the above

*8. Rachels calls ethical egoism a _____ doctrine.
a. plausible
b. strange
*c. radical
d. dangerous

9. Rachels claims the egoist's worry that decent society will collapse if she does not honor the rules is unfounded because the vast majority of people
a. are not egoists.
b. will not be converted to egoism by her example.
*c. both a and b
d. neither a nor b

*10. According to Rachels, the rational egoist
*a. cannot advocate that egoism be universally adopted by everyone.
b. can advocate that egoism be universally adopted by everyone.
c. cannot live by his own doctrine.
d. can live by his own doctrine.

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Steven M. Cahn: God and Morality

Summary

Cahn asks us to assume that God exists. What implications would this assumption have for morality? Many believe that the implications would be significant. Some believe that God's existence alone yields particular moral obligations. For example, murder is immoral because it destroys what God created. Cahn argues, however, that this is mistaken: God also created germs, and we would not conclude on that basis that germs should not be destroyed.

Others believe that if God exists, then we should hold the view that an act is right if and only if God wills it to be right and wrong if and only if God wills it to be wrong. This view is known as the divine command theory. Cahn argues that, even on the assumption that God exists, the divine command theory faces an old dilemma: Is, say, murder wrong because God says so, or does God say so because it *is* wrong? Cahn concludes that we should opt for the latter. An act is not rendered right because God commands it; rather, if God commands it, God does so because the action is right. If this is correct, the existence of God makes no difference to morality, for we could act rightly without believing in God.

Essay Questions

1. What is the dilemma that Socrates raises in the *Euthyphro*? Do you think this dilemma poses a damning problem for the divine command theorist? Explain your answer.
   - Does God command an act because it is right, or is an act right because God commands it?
   - Either God's commands are superfluous (acts are right independent of what God commands) or God's commands are arbitrary (there is no reason God commands them).

2. Many hold that murder is wrong because it destroys what God created. How does Cahn reply? What's the point of the examples? How might an opponent respond?
   - God created germs and disease, but we think it's permissible to destroy them. God arranged for us to live and to die. When we murder others, are we doing God's work? God gave us the capacity to murder. Should we exercise it?
   - From the claim that God exists, no moral precepts follow.

3. Cahn invokes the Buddha and the monk of Torquemada. What's the purposes of contrasting these lives?
   - If acts are right independent of God's will, then one can act rightly without believing in God.
   - One can be moral and not believe in God (the Buddha) or be immoral and believe in God (the monk of Torquemada).

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Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Cahn maintains that, on the assumption God exists,
   a. some would feel secure knowing that the world had been planned by an all-good being.
   b. some would feel insecure, realizing that their existence depended on this being.
   c. most would wish to act in accord with God's will.
   *d. all of the above

*2. According to Cahn, the idea that God implanted the correct moral standards in our minds is
   a. justified.
   b. sensible.
   *c. doubtful.
   d. foolish.

3. Cahn asserts that the moral prescriptions in holy books
   a. converge.
   *b. conflict.
   c. reveal the will of God.
   d. do not reveal the will of God.

*4. Cahn notes that, if the good is whatever God commands, to say that God's commands are good amounts to saying
   *a. God's commands are God's commands.
   b. God's commands are reasonable.
   c. God's commands reflect what is best for us.
   d. none of the above

5. Cahn claims that how one ought to act is not dependent on
   a. natural facts.
   b. relational properties.
   *c. anyone's power.
   d. all of the above

*6. Cahn asserts that we could act in accord with the correct moral standard
   a. only if we believe in God.
   b. only if we have read the Bible.
   *c. regardless of whether we believe in God.
   d. regardless of whether we have read the Bible.

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7. If we were certain of God's existence, we
   *a. would still not know what acts to perform.
   b. would not be motivated to act morally.
   c. could resolve longstanding moral disputes.
   d. could perform only those acts deemed permissible by God.

*8. Some hold that murder is wrong because it destroys what God created. Cahn claims this is a weak position because God
   a. also created germs and viruses. Ought we preserve them?
   b. arranged for us to live and to die. Does murder amount to assisting the work of God?
   c. provided us with the capacity for murder. Does God wish us to fulfill this potential?
   *d. all of the above

9. Some people may be convinced of God's existence and believe that God commands that murder is wrong. They still must answer this question, first posed by Euthyphro:
   a. How can one know God's mind?
   b. How can one resolve disagreements about God's commandments?
   c. If different prophets make contradictory claims, how can we know which is true?
   *d. Is it wrong to murder because God says so, or does God say so because it *is* wrong?

*10. Cahn's discussion assumes an understanding of God as
   a. all-powerful.
   b. all-knowing.
   c. all-good.
   *d. all of the above

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Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan

Summary

Hobbes begins with a bleak picture of human nature: Humans are governed by their selfish desires. Because humans are roughly equal in bodily strength and mental faculties, each is roughly equal in his expectation of attaining what he desires. This leads, in the absence of a power to keep all in awe, to competition for scarce goods, which in turn leads to distrust and eventually violence. The natural result is a war of every man against every man, and a situation in which life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." In this state of nature, there is no such thing as property and nothing is right or wrong, just or unjust. People are simply at liberty to do whatever they deem necessary for their own preservation.

Fortunately, we can, by reason, discover certain *laws of nature*, general principles that keep us from doing what is destructive of our lives. The first of these tells us that we ought to seek peace insofar as it is available and otherwise use whatever means we have to defend ourselves. From this principle, there follows a second: each of us should be willing to forfeit our right to all things and content ourselves with as much liberty against others as we are willing to allow them against us. These laws lead to a social *contract*—the mutual transferring of rights—which promises to be beneficial to all parties by securing each from the harm threatened by others. But enforcing this contract requires the authorization of a coercive power: the sovereign. In authorizing the sovereign, people give up the right to govern themselves, thereby relinquishing the right to perform actions afforded by the possession of the right.

In short, to escape the state of nature, Hobbes holds that we make a contract, each with each, to authorize the sovereign to govern us—that is, replace our private reason with the will of the sovereign. This is how we eliminate the conflict that sustains the threat of war. But this means relinquishing to the sovereign, as a free gift, nearly all our natural rights. However, by giving up these rights, we create the conditions under which acts can be found right or wrong, just or unjust. Accordingly, injustice and wrongness, on Hobbes's view, amount to acting in ways that violate the social contract.

Essay Questions

1. Hobbes claims that the natural state of human beings is a war of all against all, in which life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Why does Hobbes think that this is the case, and what measures does he recommend that we take to escape from this state of nature? Do you agree?
    - All persons are roughly equal. Their differences, taken together, are slight. There is then always the opportunity for some to take from others.
    - There is competition for scarce resources, people are easily threatened by others, and people have a desire for glory.

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- People should forfeit some right to a sovereign to secure other rights.

2. What, on Hobbes's view, is justice? What does this imply about acts prior to establishing a sovereign? How does this view of justice cohere with your own sense of what justice is?
   - Just and unjust are understood as simply amounting to violations of the covenant, the social contract.
   - Prior to the contract, no act is unjust.

3. What is distinctive about Hobbes's character of "the fool." What does the fool deny, and how does Hobbes argue against his position? Do you think Hobbes succeeds in refuting the fool? Why or why not?
   - The fool only keeps promises when it benefits the fool.
   - Thus, the fool denies that there is justice.
   - The fool will eventually be found out and suffer more than she would have if she had accepted the social contract.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. According to Hobbes we are at *war* when
   a. armies clash.
   *b. the will to go to battle is sufficiently known.
   c. we engage in battle.
   d. none of the above

*2. Hobbes notes that human beings are roughly equal in
   a. strength of body.
   b. faculties of mind.
   c. hopes of attaining their ends.
   *d. all of the above

3. According to Hobbes, without a common power to keep them in awe, humans would exist in a state of
   a. peace and harmony.
   b. mutual indifference.
   c. cautious mistrust.
   *d. war of every man against every man.

*4. Hobbes claims that there can be no injustice
   *a. in the absence of a common power to hold people in awe.
   b. if God does not exist.

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c. in any case in which no one is physically harmed.
d. in any circumstances, for the idea of justice is merely a fiction.

5. In Hobbes's view, a law of nature is a
a. command of God.
b. principle of duty, known by intuition.
*c. principle, known by reason, which forbids one from doing something destructive of one's life.
d. none of the above

*6. Hobbes claims that the first law of nature is
a. do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
*b. seek peace, and follow it.
c. never treat another human being as a means to your ends.
d. always do what brings the greatest amount of good.

7. Hobbes asserts that quarrels are caused by
a. competition.
b. diffidence.
c. glory.
*d. all of the above

*8. The "fool" that Hobbes considers claims that there is no such thing as
*a. justice.
b. reason.
c. the state.
d. a covenant.

9. Hobbes claims that *liberty* is
a. self-mastery.
b. non-domination.
*c. the absence of external impediments.
d. self-realization.

*10. According to Hobbes, the *right of nature* is
a. an entitlement to the fruits of one's labors.
b. a claim not to be harmed by others.
c. the right of the king to rule his subjects.
*d. the liberty to use one's powers to preserve one's life.

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Immanuel Kant: Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals

Summary

Kant argues that moral philosophy should proceed in an a priori fashion, without consulting experience. Accordingly, Kant begins by examining the moral concepts at the heart of ordinary moral thought. According to Kant, the only thing that can be said to be good without qualification—that is, good in all circumstances—is the *good will.* To have a good will requires that one act not in *conformity* with one's duty but *for the sake of* duty. Only when actions are performed for the sake of duty do they have moral worth.

But what is our moral duty? Kant maintains that for a requirement to be genuinely moral, it must be a *categorical imperative.* Whereas *hypothetical imperatives* are simply claims about which means are suitable to satisfying our desires, Kant asserts that moral requirements apply to us independently of any end we happen to endorse. Furthermore, according to Kant, all of our moral duties derive from one single categorical imperative, which is the supreme principle of morality.

Kant formulates this principle in several ways. According to the formula of universal law, we must "act only on that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." A maxim, in Kant's sense, is the subjective principle on which one acts in a given circumstance. According to the formula of universal law, we test the permissibility of our actions by asking whether we could consistently will that everyone act on our maxim. The second formulation of the categorical imperative is known as the formula of humanity. It states, "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in any other person, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means." This formulation captures the idea that every human being has *dignity* and hence must be treated with respect.

Kant insists that both formulations of the categorical imperative are equivalent. By focusing on the *formal constraints* of reason, the formula of universal law captures the intuitive thought: How would you feel if everyone did that? By focusing on the *value* of reason, the formula of humanity captures the thought that rational agency must respect, by preserving or promoting, the free exercise of everyone's rational agency.

Essay Questions

1. What is a "maxim," for Kant? What role do maxims play in Kant's ethics? Provide an example of a maxim and explain how it would figure in the moral assessment of an action, on Kant's view.
   - A maxim is a subjective principle of action. It's a rule or policy one adopts.
   - One's maxim determines the mora worth of one's action. Acting on maxims that are universalizable are permissible.
   - For example, I will tell a false promise to secure money. This isn't universalizable. It

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doesn't pass the categorical imperative.

2. What is a good will? How does it differ from other things that may seem good such as courage, wit, and intelligence?
   - A good will is *unconditionally* valuable. It is good in every context, regardless of what it brings about.
   - A good will is prerequisite for being worthy of happiness.
   - Other things of value may make someone happy but lack moral value.

3. Kant claims that there is a single fundamental principle of morality, but he states the principle in a number of ways. State two of Kant's formulations and explain each one. Do you think the two formulations are equivalent? Defend your answer.
   - Formula of Universal Law: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."
   - Formula of Humanity: "Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. According to Kant, laws of nature are laws according to which everything _____, and laws of freedom are laws according to which everything _____.
   a. will happen; will happen
   *b. will happen; ought to happen
   c. ought to happen; will happen
   d. ought to happen; ought to happen

2. Kant claims respect is a(n)
   *a. feeling
   b. desire.
   c. inclination.
   d. all of the above

3. According to Kant, moral laws are
   *a. necessary and apply to all rational beings.
   b. contingent and apply only to human beings.
   c. culturally relative.
   d. grounded in God's commands.

4. Kant claims that an action is morally good only if it
   a. conforms to the moral law.

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