The Moral Life An Introductory Reader in Ethics and Literature 7th edition Vaughn Test Bank

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Instructor's Manual & Test Bank

The Moral Life
An Introductory Reader in Ethics and Literature, Seventh Edition
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Chapter 2: Good and Evil

READING SUMMARIES

Herman Melville / *Billy Budd*

Herman Melville (1819–1891), the American novelist, wrote *Billy Budd* late in life. It was not published until Melville had been dead more than thirty years. The story takes place in 1797, a time when the British navy was threatened by mutinies, in which its very authority was at stake. It was the custom of naval ships to stop merchant vessels at sea and impress sailors into its service. Such occurred when men from the British man-of-war the HMS *Indomitable* went on board a merchant ship and impressed one sailor into His Majesty's service. The sailor was Billy Budd, a handsome and guileless twenty-one-year-old orphan, known for his affable nature and inability to speak clearly. He was illiterate and stammered, but nevertheless communicated such genuine good will that he was the darling of his mates. When informed by his new masters that he would not be returning home but out to sea, Billy changed his plans cheerfully and devoted himself to his duties as a good citizen and sailor. He soon became immensely popular on board the *Indomitable*.

One man, however, despised Billy. He was John Claggart, master-at-arms. Perhaps Claggart was jealous of Billy's good looks and popularity. We are not told the exact reasons, but Claggart loathed Billy to the point of concocting a fantastic story of mutiny, supposedly instigated by Billy. Claggart went to the captain of the *Indomitable*, Captain Vere, and reported an alleged meeting between Billy and another sailor discussing mutiny. There was such a meeting, but it was instigated by Claggart, and Billy renounced the suggestion of rebellion without hesitation.

Captain Vere was an honorable, fair-minded man of good will who liked Billy and suspected that Claggart was lying. He warned his master-at-arms that bearing false witness against a fellow sailor at sea merited the death penalty. Then he invited Billy into his office and instructed Claggart to face him with the charges. We enter as Billy is being accused of plotting to mutiny.

Fyodor Dostoevsky / *Why Is There Evil?*

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1822–1881), the great Russian novelist, was born in Moscow. His revolutionary sympathies and a penchant for gambling managed to keep him in constant danger. Among his famous novels are *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), from which our reading is taken. In this scene, the philosophical cynic Ivan Karamazov explains to his devoutly religious brother, Alyosha, a Christian monk, why the problem of evil prevents him from accepting God.

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William Styron / *Sophie's Choice*

William Styron, the well-known American novelist, received the Pulitzer Prize in 1967 for *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. In this *Sophie's Choice* excerpt, he describes a young Polish mother, Sophie, with her two small children, being transported in a crowded train by German soldiers during World War II to Auschwitz, the Nazi concentration camp. There, she is examined by a doctor, whom she calls *Jemand von Niemand* (literally, every man of no man), who first tries to seduce her but shortly after offers her a fateful choice. We enter the story with Sophie and her two children, Jan and Eva, on the train.

Philip Hallie / *From Cruelty to Goodness*

Philip Hallie grew up in Chicago and earned his degrees at Grinnell, Oxford, and Harvard. For many years he was professor of philosophy at Wesleyan University. Among his many works are *The Paradox of Cruelty* (1969) and *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* (1979).

In this essay, Hallie examines the reality of cruelty, especially institutional cruelty, such as that of slavery and the Nazi treatment of Jews during World War II. Institutionalized cruelty involves the undermining of dignity by perpetrating a false inequality of worth and power. By degrading the victim, the victimizer exalts his own perception of self-worth, but in reality, becomes evil. As an example of the kind of goodness necessary to defeat cruelty, Hallie describes the Protestant citizens, especially Pastor Trocmé, of the village of Le Chambon, who risked their lives to save six thousand Jews from the Nazis.

Philippa Foot / *Natural Goodness*

Philippa Foot (1920–2010) was a British moral philosopher who championed a form of naturalistic ethics and did influential work in virtue theory. In this article (excerpted from her book *Natural Goodness*), she contends that moral norms can be derived from what she calls "natural norms." Natural norms, which define what ought to be the case regarding plants, animals, and humans, can be derived from a study of the nature of these things. Inherent in a deer's nature is the capacity to run fast to escape predators, and this capacity constitutes a natural norm for deer. By this norm, we would have to judge a deer unfit if it could not run fast. Likewise, Foot argues, natural norms for humans—standards that tell humans how to live—can be derived from their nature. The nature of humans includes the "need to be industrious and tenacious of purpose not only so as to be able to house, clothe, and feed themselves, but also to pursue human ends having to do with love and friendship."

Richard Taylor / *On the Origin of Good and Evil*

Richard Taylor taught philosophy at Brown University, Rochester University, and Union College. In this essay, he argues that morality, especially good and evil, is not a transcendental but a naturalistic reality, something that originates in the fact that we are *conative* beings (having desires and felt needs). If we had no desires, no values would exist—no good and evil, which are functional terms, referring to our goals and interests. Right and wrong emerge in social situations as rules for behavior. They are based on common goals and interests. The rules and practices that either promote cooperation toward meeting our desires or resolve interpersonal conflict are *right* rules and practices, and those rules and practices that hinder cooperation and conflict resolution are *wrong* ones.

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WEB LINKS

Crash Course Philosophy: The Problem of Evil (video 10:03)

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: The Concept of Evil

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: The Problem of Evil

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QUESTIONS INCLUDED IN THE ONLINE STUDENT RESOURCES ARE MARKED WITH A *.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. The central question raised by Ivan Karamazov is:
a. Why is there something rather than nothing?
b. What is evil?
c. How could a good God permit evil?
d. What is religion for?
Answer: c

2. One of the three premises involved in the traditional formulation of the problem of evil is
a. God is evil.
b. God is finite.
c. evil does not exist.
d. God is perfectly good.
Answer: d

3. One of the three premises involved in the traditional formulation of the problem of evil is
a. God is not evil.
b. God is finite.
c. God is all-knowing.
d. God is not perfect.

4. Sophie's predicament in which she must choose among evils is an example of
a. utilitarian calculation.
b. a classic moral dilemma.
c. a simple choice.
d. game theory.
Answer: b

5. Hallie believes that institutionalized cruelty is
a. not as bad as personal cruelty.
b. unintentional.
c. the worst kind of cruelty.
d. excusable.
Answer: c

6. One of the three premises involved in the traditional formulation of the problem of evil is

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a. God is evil.
b. God is all-powerful.
c. God is not good.
d. God is not perfect.
Answer: b

7. According to Foot, moral values are derived from
a. selfishness.
b. the nature of things.
c. utilitarian considerations.
d. love.
Answer: b

8. According to Foot, the way things naturally are tells us
a. nothing about morality.
b. that the world is essentially evil.
c. the way things should be.
d. humans are unnatural.
Answer: c

9. Ivan Karamazov believes that the problem of evil
a. is resolved in an afterlife.
b. cannot be articulated.
c. is easily solved.
d. has no solution.
Answer: d

*10. According to Taylor, _____ rules and practices either promote cooperation toward meeting our desires or resolve interpersonal conflict.
a. deontological
b. transcendent
c. bad
d. right
Answer: d

*11. Ivan Karamazov explains that he cannot accept God because of
a. lack of evidence for the resurrection.
b. his brother's beliefs.
c. the problem of other minds.
d. the problem of evil.
Answer: d

*12. Philip Hallie writes that cruelty
a. cannot be defeated.
b. can be defeated.
c. can be defeated by evil.
d. is personal, not institutional.
Answer: b

*13. Hallie believes that institutional cruelty is

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a. not really cruelty.
b. a thing of the past.
c. the subtlest kind of cruelty.
d. the kindest kind of cruelty.
Answer: c

*14. Hallie says that kindness could be the ultimate
a. good.
b. victim.
c. love.
d. cruelty.
Answer: d

*15. For Hallie, the ultimate embodiment of goodness in opposition to cruelty is the people of
a. Warsaw
b. Massachusetts
c. Le Chambon
d. Paris
Answer: c

16. For Hallie,
a. there is only cruelty in the world.
b. cruelty is a pathway to goodness.
c. there is goodness in the world.
d. there is no fact of the matter regarding evil.
Answer: c

*17. Hallie states that one of the reasons institutional cruelty exists and persists is because people believe that
a. individuals count.
b. individuals can do nothing.
c. love conquers all.
d. victims are real people.
Answer: b

*18. Claggart hates Billy Budd because Billy is
a. hypocritical.
b. evil.
c. powerful.
d. noble.
Answer: d

*19. Plato and religious theories have a common thesis about the notion of good: that good is
a. transcendent.
b. concrete.
c. nonexistent.
d. rare.
Answer: a

20. To say that good is transcendent is to say that it has a source beyond the

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a. theoretical.
b. supernatural.
c. divine.
d. empirical.
Answer: d

*21. For transcendentalists, evil is
a. preternatural.
b. ordinary.
c. common.
d. to be expected.
Answer: a

22. The third-century Manicheans and Zoroastrians believed that good and evil were
a. to be expected.
b. always in conflict.
c. harmonizing.
d. in balance.
Answer: b

23. The hedonist tradition identifies the good with pleasure and evil with
a. the devil.
b. pain and suffering.
c. god.
d. conflict.
Answer: b

True/False Questions

24. Foot says that goodness is derived from God's commands.
a. True
b. False
Answer: a

25. In *Billy Budd*, Billy is a symbol of evil.
a. True
b. False
Answer: b

26. Foot believes that evil does not exist.
a. True
b. False
Answer: False

27. Richard Taylor argues that good and evil are transcendental realities.
a. True
b. False
Answer: b

28. Taylor thinks that if we had no desires, good and evil would not exist.

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a. True
b. False
Answer: a

29. Taylor claims that humans are basically rational beings.
a. True
b. False
Answer: b

*30. Billy Budd intended to kill Claggart
a. True
b. False
Answer: b

*31. Ivan Karamazov is almost as religious as his brother.
a. True
b. False
Answer: b

*32. Ivan Karamazov believes there is no problem of evil.
a. True
b. False
Answer: b

*33. The three premises in the argument regarding the problem of evil are mutually incompatible.
a. True
b. False
Answer: a

*34. In *Sophie's Choice*, Sophie is a symbol of evil.
a. True
b. False
Answer: b

*35. The people of Le Chambon saved thousands of Jews.
a. True
b. False
Answer: a

36. Richard Taylor believes that humans are basically conative beings.
a. True
b. False
Answer: a

37. The third-century Manicheans and Zoroastrians believed that good and evil were always in conflict.
a. True
b. False
Answer: a

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38. For many people, the hedonist account of good and evil lacks sufficient explanatory power.
a. True
b. False
Answer: a

39. For transcendentalists, evil is easy to explain.
a. True
b. False
Answer: b

40. In the hedonist account, evil is merely a problem of socializing human beings to take others into due consideration.
a. True
b. False
Answer: a

Essay Questions

41. Normally, we think that one must intend to kill a victim before they can be guilty of murder, as opposed to involuntary manslaughter. But Billy Budd never intended to kill Claggart. Should he have been charged with murder?

42. Why did Captain Vere take the stance he did against Billy? Was he concerned with the deterrent effect an execution would have at a time when mutiny was a serious problem, or did he think he was bound to carry out the letter of the law? What should he have done? Why?

43. Perhaps the most interesting thing about *Billy Budd* is the stark contrast between Claggart and Billy. What are some of the moral lessons we may learn from this contrast and how the two characters encounter one another?

*44. Do you think that the existence of enormous evil, such as Ivan portrays in *Why Is There Evil?*, counts against the existence of God? Explain why or why not.

45. *Sophie's Choice* presents a classic moral dilemma in which both options are bad: either actively condemn one of your children to death, or, by refusing to choose, have both killed. What should Sophie have done? What would you do? Why?

46. What does Hallie mean when he says that "philosophy is personal; it is closer to literature and history than it is to the exact sciences?"

47. How does Hallie characterize cruelty? Why does he think that institutionalized cruelty is the worst kind of cruelty?

48. Explain Hallie's notion of power relations and how they bear on the reality of cruelty.

*49. Reflect on the story of the people of Le Chambon. What were their motives? What lessons can we learn from them?

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50. How does Hallie use this story to illustrate the antidote to cruelty? Compare the letter from Massachusetts with the statement of the woman in Minneapolis: “The Holocaust was storm, lightning, thunder, wind, rain, yes. And Le Chambon was the rainbow.”

*51. What is Foot’s central point about the source of morality?

52. In Foot’s view, what does nature have to do with morality?

53. What do you make of the parable of God’s death? What is its significance for ethics?

*54. Examine Taylor’s theory of good and evil and right and wrong. First, note that he claims that humans are basically conative beings—moved by will and desire—rather than rational beings. Do you agree with this? What role does he think reason plays in life?

*55. Outline the four stages in Taylor’s thought process, from a universe without conscious beings to his final stage. Where do good and evil enter in? Where do right and wrong enter in? How are the two categories related to each other? Do you agree with Taylor’s analysis? Explain your answer.

56. What, according to Taylor, is the purpose of rules? Give an example of a rule to illustrate his point. Do you find his analysis convincing? Explain your answer.

57. Are some rules better than others?

58. Discuss the differences between hedonist and transcendentalist accounts of evil. Which do you find more convincing? Explain.

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