

Midterm Paper Assignment, GAM/IT/FILM 228

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September 30, 2019

You should select ONE of the following question prompts and write a 5 page paper (double-spaced) that addresses the tasks of the question

1. Consider the “**Case of the Inquiring Murderer**” (as discussed in Rachels, Chapter 9).

Describe, in detail, how each of the ethical theories we have learned about thus far—Utilitarianism, Deontology (specifically, Kant’s insistence on absolute rules through the *categorical imperative*), Ethical Egoism—would approach the above situation.¹

2. Develop and discuss what you think is the most important criticism that can be made of **Utilitarianism**. In presenting this criticism, be sure to first clearly define (and accurately represent) the Utilitarian position (and the specific *version* you will be criticizing), present your criticism in the form of an *argument*, and support your argument with discussion of particular examples/situations. Then present at least 2 counter-arguments that would “save” the theory from this criticism you presented. Finally, evaluate the merits of the counter-arguments themselves.

3. (Challenging!) Suppose you were **designing a game** with the express purpose of learning about what sorts of moral “rules” or “imperatives” were most important to people (suppose that the data of the players’ inputs was collected in real-time, analyzed, and the game-play adjusted accordingly). What might such a game look like?

For instance, in attempting to learn not just *what* values a player holds, but trying to decipher *why* they held that belief and *under which circumstances* they accepted those reasons as applicable, how might you effectively glean this information?²

¹In answering this question, you should devote at least 1 page, for EACH of the three theories, to accurately and carefully describing how that theory would analyze the dilemma presented in the situation, what it would likely counsel one to do, and what reasoning/arguments it would give in support of that counsel.

Finally, you should devote 2 pages to presenting a careful *argument* for the superiority of one of these theories—in addressing this situation in particular, as well as others like it—over its rivals. Through your defense of that particular theory, be sure to also discuss the particular deficiencies of the rival theories.

²In answering this question, be sure to describe at least 3 distinct situations you might

4. Suppose someone says the following

Morality should be based on **self-interest**.

Give the *best* possible defense of this claim. This should involve, of course, (i) describing self-interest; (ii) presenting arguments for the claim, and considering initial counter-arguments to those arguments; (iii) strengthening the claim by presenting at least 1 strong counter-argument to the claim; and (iv) refuting that counter-argument (either directly, or by modifying/qualifying the theory in a certain respect in order to overcome that objection).³

§This assignment is due by MIDNIGHT on Sunday 10/13, submitted to me through the Midterm Submission Folder on D2L.

code into the game, and how each of these would effectively test and extract how a person “reasoned” through the rightness/wrongness of a particular action. Furthermore, suppose it emerged that one player valued two “imperatives” but there seemed to be a conflict between these. Describe how this might be “detected” by the game, and then for at least one of these situations, describe a situation in which you could determine *which* of the two (possibly conflicting) values the player held to be more binding, how you would know this, or what it would look like (gameplay-wise) if in fact the player had simply been inconsistent (i.e., ultimately, those two values were incompatible, but the player was not aware of that).

As a rough idea of what I mean in this last sentence: suppose that it emerged that the player believed “It is always wrong to lie,” but also that “It is always wrong to take a life.” You could design/describe a situation that would serve as a *test* determining which of these two values the player actually believed subordinated the other, or whether they were simply inconsistent, and how the game might communicate this to the player.

³In answering this question, you should be guided by, at least in part, some of the material from Rachel’s chapter on Ethical Egoism as well as the reading on Spinoza.