

Chapter 2—Reasoning about Ethics

TRUE/FALSE

1. The statement "nearly all Americans believe that individual liberty should be respected" is a normative claim.

ANS: F

This is a statement about people's beliefs; hence, it's descriptive. "Individual liberty should be respected" is, however, a normative claim.

PTS: 1

2. If public opinion polls show that same-sex marriage is opposed by 70% of people born prior to 1950, but supported by 70% of people born since 1980, then we have good reason to believe that same-sex marriage is morally desirable.

ANS: F

All by itself, public opinion does not demonstrate anything about what is morally right or morally wrong. In order for this statistic to have any moral significance, we would need to know something about the *reasons* that are driving the change in public opinion.

PTS: 1

3. It is possible to be tolerant and open-minded while also believing that there are some universal moral principles that apply to everyone.

ANS: T PTS: 1

4. According to Immanuel Kant, the consequences of our actions are irrelevant in determining what is morally right and wrong.

ANS: T PTS: 1

5. Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill are both ethical objectivists.

ANS: T PTS: 1

6. It would be consistent for someone to accept both ethical relativism and ethical objectivism.

ANS: F

Ethical relativism is the view that there are no universally valid moral principles. Ethical objectivism is the view that there are at least some universally valid moral principles. These two views cannot both be true, so someone who believed both of them would clearly be inconsistent in her beliefs.

PTS: 1

7. Most philosophers agree: One of the principal strengths of utilitarianism is that it is always very easy to apply.

ANS: F

Utilitarianism can be very difficult to apply, since we do not always know what the effects of our actions will be, and since it can be very difficult to measure happiness and unhappiness.

PTS: 1

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Which of the following is *not* one of aspects of good moral reasoning identified in the textbook?
 - a. apply clarity, precision, and consistency
 - b. build premises and clarify assumptions
 - c. formulate an empirically testable hypothesis
 - d. draw logical conclusions and avoid fallacies

ANS: C PTS: 1

2. Facts are "____," that is, facts *describe* what exists, what "is", while values are "____," that is, they propose norms that should be adhered to.
 - a. descriptive, normative
 - b. normative, descriptive
 - c. utilitarian, Kantian
 - d. Kantian, utilitarian

ANS: A PTS: 1

3. *Loving v. Virginia* is an important Supreme Court case dealing with
 - a. same-sex marriage
 - b. private sexual conduct
 - c. interracial marriage
 - d. polygamous unions

ANS: C PTS: 1

4. Someone who is a(n) ____ would agree with the statement, "slavery is absolutely, always wrong; it can never be morally justified."
 - a. ethical relativist
 - b. Kantian
 - c. utilitarian
 - d. none of these; ethical relativists, Kantians, and utilitarians all believe that slavery is sometimes morally justifiable.

ANS: B

Kantians believe that a human being should never be treated as a mere thing, so they would reject slavery as being inherently immoral. Ethical relativists would disagree, because they believe that there are no moral principles that apply everywhere and always. Utilitarians would disagree, because there might be circumstances in which slavery would be a way of producing the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people.

PTS: 1

5. Natural law theory
 - a. is inherently theological
 - b. is inherently non-theological
 - c. can be developed in theological and non-theological ways
 - d. is a version of Kantianism

e. is a version of utilitarianism

ANS: C PTS: 1

6. Someone who believes that "we all enter into agreements, implicit or otherwise, for treating each other in ethical ways to improve the lot of all of us" would embrace a ____ approach to ethics.
- virtue-based
 - natural law
 - social contract
 - care-based

ANS: C PTS: 1

MULTIPLE RESPONSE

CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY.

1. According to Kant, we should
- only perform actions that we can accept everyone else performing too
 - focus on the intrinsic value of our actions when determining what is right and wrong
 - pay close attention to the consequences of our actions when determining what is right and wrong
 - always treat human beings as "ends in themselves" (i.e., never merely as things)

ANS: A, B, D PTS: 1

2. According to Mill, we should
- seek to maximize happiness
 - minimize unhappiness
 - always tell the truth
 - never cause pain

ANS: A, B

Mill is a utilitarian, believing that we should always act so as to produce the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. He would not say that we should *always* tell the truth, or that we should *never* cause pain, because lying and causing pain might (sometimes) be good ways for producing the greatest amount of overall happiness.

PTS: 1

3. Which of the following is/are *absolutist* (or *objectivist*) ethical theories?
- utilitarianism
 - Kantianism
 - natural law
 - ethical relativism
 - all of the above
 - none of the above

ANS: A, B, C PTS: 1

COMPLETION

1. Good reasoning emphasizes _____ and precision in the use of key terms and premises.

ANS: clarity

PTS: 1

2. _____ are unreliable ways of arguing, techniques that do not provide sound reasons for accepting a conclusion.

ANS: Fallacies

PTS: 1

3. "An effective way to challenge ethical relativism is to consider the unacceptable _____ of such a position."

ANS: consequences

PTS: 1

4. Kant's Categorical Imperative "is intended as a test for _____, i.e., for applying universally."

ANS: universalizing

PTS: 1

5. For Mill, "The rightness and wrongness of actions depends entirely on their _____."

ANS: consequences

PTS: 1

6. Aristotle's virtue-based approach to ethics "stressed the development of _____ in all persons."

ANS: character

PTS: 1

SHORT ANSWER

1. Explain (and illustrate) two ways in which ethical reasoning requires us to be *consistent*.

ANS:

One respect in which ethics requires us to be consistent is in the way we *apply moral principles*. If, in the context of debating health care policy, we maintain that society shouldn't spend scarce resources on care for the elderly, then we should be willing to make the same judgment when it is our loved one whose life is at stake.

A second respect in which ethics requires us to be consistent is in the way we *use terms*. We must not switch from one meaning to another, as might someone who uses "just" to mean both "lawful" and "fair."

PTS: 1

2. Give an example of a descriptive fact that might be relevant to our ethical reasoning, and explain its relevance.

ANS:

Examples from the textbook include:

1. Neurological discoveries which could indicate that people are not free to avoid making morally bad choices; this might undermine the idea that people are morally responsible for those choices.
2. Evidence that sexual orientation is determined or strongly influenced by genetics; this might give us reason to affirm the validity of same-sex romantic relationships.

PTS: 1

3. Explain the difference between "cultural relativism" and "ethical relativism."

ANS:

Cultural relativism is the descriptive thesis that ethical beliefs vary from one place to another. Ethical relativism is the normative thesis that there are no universally valid moral principles—that is, no moral principles that are applicable to everyone.

PTS: 1

4. Explain the difference between hypothetical and categorical imperatives.

ANS:

A hypothetical imperative is a requirement that must be followed if—and only if—we wish to achieve some outcome. "Go to medical school!" is a hypothetical imperative; it applies only to those who intend to become doctors. A categorical imperative is a requirement that all of us must follow, regardless of our goals. For Kant, the requirements of morality are categorical imperatives.

PTS: 1

5. State Mill's "principle of utility."

ANS:

Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.

PTS: 1

ESSAY

1. What is a hypothetical imperative? A categorical imperative? How, according to Kant, do categorical imperatives get their authority?

ANS:

Answers will vary

PTS: 1

2. What is Kant's "kingdom" or "realm" of ends? What role does that play in his ethics?

ANS:

Answers will vary

PTS: 1

3. How does Mill respond to the criticism that utilitarianism is "a doctrine worthy only of swine"? Is this an effective response?

ANS:

Answers will vary

PTS: 1

4. How do Mill's ethical proposals differ from Kant's? Do they have anything in common?

ANS:

Answers will vary

PTS: 1