

PHIL 1200: Philosophy and Society
Spring 2007, Section 010
Chris Heathwood, Stephen Emedi, Tom Metcalf, Kacey Warren

First Paper
Due Monday, February 19 in your recitation section

Instructions: Write a 3-4 page (800-1200 word) paper on one of the topics below. Your paper must:

- be typewritten, double-spaced, 12-point font, with one-inch margins
- be printed out and handed in at the beginning of recitation on Monday, February 19. Do not submit your paper by email.
- contain your name *on each page*
- contain page numbers on each page
- be stapled together.

Failure to conform to these rules will hurt your grade.

We will grade your answers on both content and style. As regards style, aim for clarity, precision, succinctness, and directness. Avoid flowery language, polysyllabic words, and long, winding sentences. Instead, just make it completely clear to us exactly what you are trying to say. Also, we have a very low tolerance for spelling and grammatical mistakes. Use a spell checker and get a good style manual.

As regards content, be sure you address each part of the question you choose, but do not include any content not relevant to your answer. Especially avoid padding your answers with “fluff” and other BS. This will only hurt your grade. Do not assume in your writing that we already know about the issues you discuss. Pretend you are writing for a reader who is ignorant of the topic.

The paper is worth 20 points (which is 20% of your grade for the course).

Cheating: You are encouraged to discuss the material with others in the class; however, the paper you turn in must be your own work. Students turning in duplicate or near-duplicate papers will receive an F for the entire course and may be subject to expulsion from the university. We take cheating very seriously.

Do not quote much or at all in your papers. We want to hear these ideas *in your own words*. But if you must use the words of others, put them in quotation marks and cite

the source. Otherwise, you are plagiarizing. Plagiarism will earn you an F for the whole course and possible expulsion from the university.

Late Paper Policy: Your score will go down one point for every day your paper is late. Late papers may be submitted (to your TA) by email. Be sure to save and/or print a copy of any such emails, so you can prove you sent it if your TA never gets it.

Extra Assistance: We are more than happy to provide assistance to you as you work on your paper. Feel free to email us with questions or to meet with us to discuss your paper. Feel free to show us a draft of your paper some time before it is due. But if you want to show us a draft, you cannot wait until the weekend before the paper is due. If you wait that long, we won't be able to look at your paper.

The Topics

ABORTION

1. Marquis. Write an essay in which you do the following things:

(a) State and explain Marquis' view concerning the morality of abortion (including the notion of "prima facie" wrongness). Is Marquis committed to saying that absolutely *all* abortions are wrong? Explain.

(b) Explain Marquis' argument for his view on abortion (this will require explaining Marquis theory about the wrongness of killing). Explain one or two features of Marquis' account of the wrongness of killing that he thinks makes it an attractive account.

(c) Explain an alternative theory of the wrongness of killing (e.g., one Marquis discusses, or the one defended by Paske), and why Marquis thinks his own theory is better.

(d) Explain what you take to be the strongest objection to Marquis' position on abortion. This could be your own objection or an objection discussed in class or in one of the readings. Finally, say whether, in your own view, you think this objection is ultimately successful.

2. Thomson. Write an essay in which you do the following things:

(a) Explain the standard sort of anti-abortion argument that Thomson discusses at the beginning of her paper. Then present the thought experiment Thomson uses to show that something must be wrong with this standard argument. Be sure to make it clear

exactly how the thought experiment is supposed to make trouble for the standard anti-abortion argument.

(b) In your view, is the case of the violinist morally on a par with a standard case of unwanted pregnancy (i.e., one that did not arise as a result of rape)?

If you say No, then be sure to identify exactly what you take to be the *morally relevant* difference between the cases. Explain why you think this feature is morally relevant. (One of the best ways to do this would be to modify the violinist example with respect to this feature in an attempt to elicit the judgment that it would, in the modified case, be wrong to unplug yourself from the violinist.)

If you say Yes, then explain what we called the “responsibility objection” to the idea that the case of the violinist is morally on a par with a standard case of unwanted pregnancy (this objection was discussed in lecture and is also discussed in Thomson’s paper). Explain exactly how this objection is supposed to work. Then explain why you think this objection fails. (The best way to try to show that this objection fails is either (i) to explain why you don’t think the violinist case and the case of standard unwanted pregnancy differ with respect to the allegedly morally relevant feature in question, or (ii) to explain why you think the allegedly morally relevant feature in question is in fact not morally relevant here.)

PROSTITUTION

3. Ericsson. Write an essay in which you do the following things:

- (a) Explain Ericsson’s view concerning the morality of prostitution.
- (b) Explain one of the objections from “sentimentalism” that Ericsson discusses. In explaining the objection, put yourself in the shoes of the objector so that you do as good a job as you can of making the objection persuasive. Then explain Ericsson’s reply to this objection. Then evaluate his reply; here, you are being asked to give, and explain, your own view as to whether Ericsson has adequately responded to the objection.
- (c) Explain what you take to be the main objection to prostitution raised by either Pateman, Shrage, or Green. Then explain how you think Ericsson might reply to this objection. Then evaluate this reply; here, you are being asked to give, and explain, your own view as to whether this reply has adequately responded to the objection.
- (d) Finally, suppose you were to learn that some woman you care about (e.g., a sister, a niece, even your mother) was considering working as a prostitute to earn some extra money. Assuming that you would have a negative reaction to this news, do you think your reaction would be justified? If so, explain why you think it would be justified. If you can, bring into your discussion the theme in Ericsson’s paper indicated in the

following quotation: “Most of the ... problems that ... afflict prostitutes can be traced back to the social stigma that we attach to their way of life” (268a).

ANIMAL RIGHTS

4. Regan. According the moral code of our society, it is morally permissible to buy a piglet, to care for it until it becomes an adult pig, and then to kill it and eat it; but according to that same moral code, it would be wrong to buy a puppy, to care for it until it becomes an adult dog, and then to kill it and eat it. It would also be wrong, according to the moral code of our society, for the parents of a mentally disabled baby to care for him until he became a little bigger, and then to kill him and eat him.

(a) Regan disagrees with this feature of our moral code. Explain what feature he thinks pigs have in common with both dogs and mentally disabled babies that makes it wrong to kill them and eat them.

(b) Explain the sort of view Regan calls “indirect duty views.” What do you think an indirect duty view would imply about each of the three cases above (the pig, the dog, and the mentally disabled baby). Explain. (If you think you need to know more information about the cases above to decide what indirect duty views imply about them, then explain what sorts of ways of filling in the details about the cases would yield what sorts of verdicts by indirect duty views.)

(c) Do you personally think that this feature of our moral code is correct? That is, do you agree that whereas it would be wrong to kill and eat a dog or a mentally disabled human child, it is morally ok to do this to a pig?

If you answer Yes, then defend this part of our moral code. You will need to explain clearly and thoroughly what you take to be the morally relevant difference between a pig, on the one hand, and a dog or a mentally disabled human baby, on the other. Explain why you think this difference justifies the different ways we treat these groups of creatures. (Be sure to have reflected on your answer. Don’t give an answer that is open to obvious objections (or, at least, respond to such objections if it is). For example, suppose you say that what distinguishes dogs and human babies from pigs is that the former have higher *social statuses*. You would then seem to be committed to saying that the lower social status of slaves in 19th-century America justified treating the slaves in the despicable ways in which they were treated.)

If you answer No, then explain why you think this part of our moral code is mistaken. Explain what feature pigs have in common with both dogs and mentally disabled babies that makes it wrong to kill them and eat them. If you have room, consider one proposal for morally distinguishing dogs or mentally disabled babies from pigs, and explain why you think this proposals fail.