

Human and Moral Agency (101)

Examination Feedback: Jan. 2001

Overall

- In general you showed a good grip on the main theories and issues covered in the course. And most of you sensibly chose the questions you were best prepared for.

Q1

- The material on consequentialism read as if it was pre-prepared. That was fine except that many of you must have read 'utilitarianism' instead of 'consequentialism' in the title. The script marks were awarded accordingly, making allowance for the fact that utilitarianism is the best-known form of consequentialism (and also for the popularity of the slip!). In general, although it was clear that you had a firm understanding of the basics, the reader often had to read between the lines. Responses to this question did not score very high.

Qs 2&3

- Most scripts here fell into one of two categories: those that reflected the main reading, and those that did not but still showed a basic understanding gleaned from lectures and tutorials.
- Something to avoid is a parading examples illustrating the same point. For example, you do not need to discuss the craniotomy case *and* the runaway trolley *and* the pot-holder example in order to spell out the Doctrine of Double Effect. It is of no extra theoretical benefit to either yourself or the reader: you have illustrated the point with one example, and the reader is aware that you have done so -- if have done it appropriately. A mere list of examples uses up time you could be spending more efficiently.
- Some essays spent a lot of time on exposition, spelling out deontology, the Doctrine of Double Effect, and Ross's view. The stronger essays were focused more narrowly on Ross's view as a way of sorting out conflicts between duties. The best scripts not only offered the necessary exposition but also discussed Ross's solution critically and in some detail.
- A few of you began answering the question by comparing deontology to utilitarianism or consequentialism, even though you were not asked to. Remember to stop and think before you start writing. The question did not ask for a comparison. It was irrelevant!
- On Q3 some of you seemed confused at the outset between 'rules' and 'virtues', but as the essays progressed it became clear that you understood the difference.

Q4

- The last question on sociobiology was the least popular choice, attracting less than a dozen answers. However, the question was neither tricky nor theoretically demanding. My hunch is that you were not prepared in the area. Those who did attempt it gave minimal answers. A couple of you

offered no exposition of any kind and got on to the discussion straightaway, while another a script consisted simply in an elaboration of the quotation given in the title. In general, responses to this question did not get high marks, but most of you did OK.

Maria Kasmirli

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