



OPGDI – BNU Philosophy Tutorial Programme 2021

Introduction to Ethics

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Dear Shi Nan and Shiyu Wang,

Welcome to the OPGDI – BNU Philosophy Tutorial Programme. Please find below some background information in preparation for your upcoming tutorials.

The structure of the programme is as follows:

Length: 9 weeks

Format: Week 0: Introduction to the Programme, Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Oxford Tutorials and a Session on Academic Writing.

Afterwards eight one-hour tutorials occurring online on a weekly basis.

Extra: 2 compulsory academic assistance sessions and 2 non-compulsory academic assistance sessions throughout the course to provide extra help and guidance on your learning journey.

Course Assignments:

Evaluations will consist equally of:

- 1) Two 2000-word essay: one submitted by Friday Week 4, the other submitted by Friday Week 8. Pick from the titles supplied below.
- 2) For each tutorial, each of you is to prepare a one-page summary of the core reading for that week. At least one of you will be asked to start the tutorial by readings yours out.
- 3) Participation in tutorial discussions.



Your course will start on Tuesday 2nd March

17:00 China Time: Introduction to the Programme

17:45 China Time: Introduction to Philosophy

19:00 China Time: Introduction to Oxford Tutorials

20:15 China Time: Academic Writing

Please follow this link for all the session of the day:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8356740108>

Course Topics:

Week 1: Freedom & Moral Responsibility – Friday 12th March

Essay Question: ‘Freedom of action requires the ability to do otherwise; for any action, we don’t have the ability to do otherwise; so, we cannot act freely’. Is this a sound argument? Explain your answer.

Brief description:

We generally hold mature human adults responsible for their actions: we treat them as apt for praise and blame, insofar as the act was right or wrong, good or bad, virtuous or vicious. But an agent is responsible for their action only if they perform their action freely, one might reasonably think, and acting freely requires an ability to do otherwise. However, we now end up having to face the following well-discussed problem: our actions are causally necessitated by prior events – this is known as the doctrine of Determinism. But Determinism seems to rule it out that, for any action, we could have done otherwise. How should we respond to this problem? This week, we will critically assess Compatibilism, the view that Determinism is compatible with the attribution of a capacity for free action to agents.

Background Reading:

- Timothy O’Connor and Christopher Franklin (2018). “Free Will”. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2018. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
- Michael McKenna and D. Justin Coates (2018). “Compatibilism”. In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2018. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

Core Reading:

- Peter Van Inwagen (1975). “The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism”. *Philosophical Studies*, 27 (3): 185–199. Reprinted as ‘An Argument for Incompatibilism’ in Watson (2003) and Tim Crane and Katalin Farkas (2004). *Metaphysics: A Guide and Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harry G. Frankfurt (1969). “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”. *Journal of Philosophy*, 66 (3): 829–839. Reprinted in Watson (2003) and Crane and Farkas (2004).

Additional Reading:

- J. Ayer (1954). “Freedom and Necessity”. In: *Philosophical Essays*. London: Palgrave Macmillan: 271–284. Reprinted in Gary Watson (2003). *Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harry G. Frankfurt (1971). “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”. *Journal of Philosophy*, 68 (1): 5–20. Reprinted in Frankfurt (1998):11-25. All page references are to the reprint. Reprinted in Watson (2003) and Crane and Farkas (2004).
- John Martin Fischer (2002). “Frankfurt-Style Compatibilism”. In: *Contours of Agency: Essays on Themes From Harry Frankfurt*. Ed. by Sarah Buss and Lee Overton. Cambridge Ma: MIT Press, Bradford Books. Reprinted in Watson (2003).
- David Lewis (1981). “Are We Free to Break the Laws?” *Theoria*, 47 (3): 113–21. Reprinted in Watson (2003).
- R.M. Chisholm (1964). “The Myth of the Given”. In: *Philosophy*. Ed. by Jeremy Fantl & Matthew McGrath Ernest Sosa Jaegwon Kim. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall: 80–93. Reprinted in Sosa and Kim (2000). All page references are to the reprint. Reprinted in Crane and Farkas (2004). This is an attempt to develop a distinctive sort of Libertarian response to the problem.

Week 2: Freedom & Moral Responsibility II – Friday 19th March

Essay Question: Am I morally responsible for my actions only if I am morally responsible for my character?

Brief description:

Last time, we focused our attention on Freedom of Action and we asked whether acting freely requires having a capacity to have done otherwise. This week, we’ll continue our

study of Freedom of Action, but we'll switch our attention to a different question: whether acting freely requires us to be responsible for our own characters. As we'll see, there's an influential line of argument to the effect that it does require such responsibility, but since we don't have responsibility for our own characters, we aren't able to act freely

Background Reading:

- Timothy O'Connor and Christopher Franklin (2018). "Free Will". In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2018. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
- John Martin Fischer (2004). "Free Will and Moral Responsibility". In: *Handbook on Ethical Theory*. Ed. by D. Copps. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Core Reading:

- P.F. Strawson (1962). "Freedom and Resentment". *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 48: 1–25. Reprinted in Watson (2003).
- Galen Strawson (1994). "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility". *Philosophical Studies*, 75 (1-2): 5–24. Reprinted in Watson (2003).

Note: the two Strawsons here are distinct! The second is the son of the first.

Additional Reading:

- John Martin Fischer (2005). "The Cards That Are Dealt You". *The Journal of Ethics*, 10 (1-2): 107–129.
- Aristotle (2009). *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Ed. by Lesley Brown. Trans. by David Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press: Book III, Chs. 1 & 5.
- J.L. Mackie (1977). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. London: Penguin: Ch.9.
- Randolph Clarke (2005). "On an Argument for the Impossibility of Moral Responsibility". *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 29 (1): 13–24.
- Robert J. Hartman (2018). "Constitutive Moral Luck and Strawson's Argument for the Impossibility of Moral Responsibility". *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, 4 (2): 165–183.

Week 3: Well-being – Friday 26th March

Essay Question: In what sense, if any, is the quality of one's life subjective?

Brief description: What is it for someone's life to go best? That is, what sorts of factors bear positively on one's own well-being? Answering these questions is key to answering further questions in moral philosophy, such as: how should one live? And what are our duties to other people? Should we identify wellbeing with experiences of pleasure? What

about the satisfaction of desires, perhaps of a certain kind? It might be objected that these two suggestions make well-being uncomfortably subjective in nature, and this might in turn prompt us to look for a more objective notion of well-being.

Background Reading:

Page | 5

- Guy Fletcher (2016). *The Philosophy of Well-Being: An Introduction*. London: Routledge: Chs.1-4
- Roger Crisp (2017). "Well-Being". In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. By Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2017. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University

Core Reading:

- Derek Parfit (1986). *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 493-502. Reprinted in Shafer-Landau (2012).
- Guy Fletcher (2013). "A Fresh Start for the Objective-List Theory of Well-Being". *Utilitas*, 25 (2): 206–220

Additional Reading:

- Roger Crisp (2006). "Hedonism Reconsidered". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 73 (3): 619–645
- Gwen Bradford (2017). "Problems for Perfectionism". *Utilitas*, 29 (3): 344–364
- Dale Dorsey (2010). "Three Arguments for Perfectionism". *Noûs*, 44 (1): 59–79
- Connie S. Rosati (1995). "Persons, Perspectives, and Full Information Accounts of the Good". *Ethics*, 105 (2): 296–325
- Chris Heathwood (2005). "The Problem of Defective Desires". *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 83 (4): 487–504
- Fred Feldman (2002). "The Good Life: A Defense of Attitudinal Hedonism". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 65 (3): 604–628. Reprinted in Shafer-Landau (2012).
- Serena Olsaretti (2007). "The Limits of Hedonism: Feldman on the Value of Attitudinal Pleasure". *Philosophical Studies*, 136 (3): 409–415

Week 4: Varieties of Utilitarianism – Friday 2nd April

Essay Question: What is the most plausible version of Utilitarianism? What kind of Utilitarian is Mill?

Brief description:

J.S. Mill is standardly ascribed a version of Utilitarianism called Act-Utilitarianism. That theory is subject to a battery of objections, and it might be thought that the correct way to respond to them is to opt for a different version of the theory: Rule-Utilitarianism. This week, we'll investigate the distinction between these two kinds of Utilitarianism; assess which is more plausible; and address the question of whether Mill is best interpreted as a Rule-Utilitarian after all.

Core Reading:

- John Stuart Mill ([1863] 1998). *Utilitarianism*. Ed. by Roger Crisp. Fourth Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press: Chs.2,3,5
- Roger Crisp (1997). *Mill on Utilitarianism*. London: Routledge: Ch.5

Additional Reading:

- J.O. Urmson (1953). "The Interpretation of the Moral Philosophy of J.S. Mill". *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 3: 33–39
- Brad Hooker (2013). "Rule-Consequentialism". In: *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*. Ed. by Hugh LaFollette and Ingmar Persson. Second Edition. London: Blackwell
- Julia Driver (2012). *Consequentialism*. London: Routledge: Chs.4 & 7
- Daniel Jacobson (2003). "J.S. Mill and the Diversity of Utilitarianism". *Philosophers' Imprint*, 3: 1–18
- Robert Merrihew Adams (1976). "Motive Utilitarianism". *Journal of Philosophy*, 73 (14): 467–481
- Roger Crisp (1992). "Utilitarianism and the Life of Virtue". *Philosophical Quarterly*, 42 (167): 139–160
- Mark Timmons (2012). *Moral Theory: An Introduction*. Second Edition. London: Rowman and Littlefield: Chs.5-6

Week 5: The Trolley Problem – Friday 9th April

Essay Question: Is it sometimes wrong to maximise the good? If so, how?

Brief description:

There are some actions which harm others, but which nevertheless bring about the greatest balance of good over bad, of all the actions available to us. Many have the

intuition that at least some acts of those kinds are morally wrong, even though they maximise the good. This has led many moral philosophers to suggest that there are certain deontic constraints on acting in certain ways, which an adequate conception of morality needs to take into account. These constraints in turn have been cashed-out in terms of prohibitions on harming, which is to be contrasted with merely allowing harm, and on intending to harm, which is to be contrasted with merely foreseeing harm. Is it plausible to suggest that there are such deontic constraints? If there are, should they be cashed out in the way just advertised? How must our conception of morality depart from Consequentialism if such constraints are accepted?

Background Reading:

- Timmons (2012: Chs.5-6)
- Frances M. Kamm (2013). "Nonconsequentialism". In: *The Blackwell Guide to Ethics Theory*. Ed. by Hugh LaFollette and Ingmar Persson. Second Edition. London: Routledge

Core Reading:

- Philippa Foot (1967). "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect". *Oxford Review*, 5: 5–15. Reprinted in Shafer-Landau (2012).
- Judith Jarvis Thomson (1985). "The Trolley Problem". *Yale Law Review*, 94: 1395-1415

Additional Reading:

- Samuel Scheffler (1994). *The Rejection of Consequentialism*. Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press: Ch.4
- Warren S. Quinn (1993). *Morality and Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Chs.7-8
- Philippa Foot (1985). "Utilitarianism and the Virtues". *Mind*, 94 (374): 196–209
- Samuel Scheffler (1985). "Agent-Centred Restrictions, Rationality, and the Virtues". *Mind*, 94 (375): 409–419
- Douglas W. Portmore (2005). "Combining Teleological Ethics with Evaluator Relativism: A Promising Result". *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 86 (1): 95-113
- T.M. Scanlon (2010). *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, and Blame*. Camb. Mass.: Harvard University Press: Ch.1

Week 6: Kant on Moral Motivation – Friday 16th April

Essay Question: Is it objectionable to act for the sake of duty?

Page | 8

Brief description:

In the first section of the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals Kant introduces the notion of acting for the sake of duty and provides us with an account of it which is aimed at uncovering the principle on the basis of which the agent who acts for the sake of duty decides to act. Kant's thought is that, whatever this principle is, it will give us the essence of morality. Kant also makes various claims about the value of acting for the sake of duty, however, and it is these claims that we'll be focusing our critical attention on this week: Is Kant right to think that acting for the sake of duty is morally valuable? Is he right to say that it is of supreme moral value – and what is meant by this anyway? Isn't there something objectionably officious or fetishistic about someone who acts out of the motive of duty?

Background Reading:

- Robert Johnson and Adam Cureton (2019). "Kant's Moral Philosophy". In: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Spring 2019. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University
- Timmons (2012: Ch.8)

Core Reading:

- Immanuel Kant (1996 [1785]). "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals". In: *Practical Philosophy*. Ed. and trans. by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: §1
- Barbara Herman (1993). *The Practice of Moral Judgement*. Camb. Mass.: Harvard University Press: Ch.1

Additional Reading:

- Marcia Baron (1984). "The Alleged Moral Repugnance of Acting From Duty". *Journal of Philosophy*, 81 (4): 197–220. doi: 10.2307/2026121
- Marcia Baron (1995). *Kantian Ethics (Almost) Without Apology*. Cornell University Press: Ch.5
- Philip Stratton-Lake (2000). *Kant, Duty and Moral Worth*. Routledge: Chs.1–4
- Christine M. Korsgaard (1996). *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. Cambridge University Press: Ch.2
- Bernard Williams (1981). *Moral Luck*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Michael Stocker (1976). "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories". *Journal of Philosophy*, 73 (14): 453–466

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- Susan Wolf (1982). “Moral Saints”. *Journal of Philosophy*, 79 (8): 419–439
 - Nomy Arpaly (2002). “Moral Worth”. *Journal of Philosophy*, 99 (5): 223. doi: 10.2307/3655647
 - Julia Markovits (2010). “Acting for the Right Reasons”. *Philosophical Review*, 2 (119): 201–242

Week 7: Kant’s Formula of Universal Law – Friday 23rd April

Essay Question: ‘Kant’s Formula of Universal Law is either too permissive or too restrictive.’ Discuss.

Brief description:

Kant offers three different formulations of the fundamental principle of morality – a principle he calls ‘the categorical imperative’ – which are all supposed to be equivalent. This week, we’re going to focus on one of those formulations: the formula of universal law – this says, roughly, that the wrongness of an action consists in its being motivated by a reason which one couldn’t coherently act on the basis of whilst also willing it to be a reason which everyone acts on the basis of in the same circumstances. Is it plausible to identify the fundamental principle of morality with this principle?

Background Reading:

- Robert Johnson and Adam Cureton (2019). “Kant’s Moral Philosophy”. In: *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Spring 2019. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University
- Timmons (2012: Ch.8)

Core Reading:

- Immanuel Kant (1996 [1785]). “Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals”. In: *Practical Philosophy*. Ed. and trans. by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: §1
- Christine M. Korsgaard (1985). “Kant’s Formula of Universal Law”. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 66 (1-2): 24–47

Additional Reading:

- Derek Parfit (2011). *On What Matters*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press: Ch.12
- Barbara Herman (1993). *The Practice of Moral Judgement*. Camb. Mass.: Harvard University Press: Ch.7
- Onora O’Neill (1989). *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant’s Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: Chs.5,7

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- Patricia Kitcher (2004). “Kant’s Argument for the Categorical Imperative”. *Noûs*, 38 (4): 555–584. doi: 10.1111/j.0029-4624.2004.00484.x

Week 8: Contractualism – Friday 30th April

Page | 10

Essay Question: ‘If an action is prohibited by a principle that no one could reasonably reject, then there are independent moral reasons not to perform the action anyway. The Contractualist’s talk of reasonable rejection is therefore redundant.’ Do you agree?

Brief description:

According to T.M. Scanlon’s Contractualism: an act is wrong if, and only if, it is prohibited by a principle which no person could reasonably reject. Scanlon believes his theory captures the essence of wrongness better than competing Consequentialist and Kantian views, and that it captures the essence of why we’re motivated to avoid doing wrong things in the first place. There are a number of ways of objecting to Scanlon’s theory, but this week we’ll be focusing our critical attention on one: the Redundancy Objection.

Background Reading:

- Elizabeth Ashford and Tim Mulgan (2018). “Contractualism”. In: *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Ed. by Edward N. Zalta. Summer 2018. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University
- Driver (2006: Ch.6)

Core Reading:

- T.M. Scanlon (1998). *What We Owe to Each Other*. Camb. Mass.: Harvard University Press: Ch.5.
- Michael Ridge (2001). “Saving Scanlon: Contractualism and Agent-Relativity”. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 9 (4): 472–481. doi: 10.1111/1467-9760.00137

Additional Reading:

- Philip Stratton-Lake (2003). “Scanlon’s Contractualism and the Redundancy Objection”. *Analysis*, 63 (1): 70–76. doi: 10.1093/analys/63.1.70
- M. Ridge (2003). “Contractualism and the New and Improved Redundancy Objection”. *Analysis*, 63 (4): 337–342. doi: 10.1093/analys/63.4.337
- David McNaughton and Piers Rawling (2003). “Can Scanlon Avoid Redundancy by Passing the Buck?” *Analysis*, 63 (4): 328–331. doi: 10.1111/1467-8284.00448
- Philip Stratton-Lake (2003). “Scanlon, Permissions, and Redundancy: Response to McNaughton and Rawling”. *Analysis*, 63 (4): 332–337. doi: 10.1111/1467-8284.00449

- Pamela Hieronymi (2011). “Reasons for Action”. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 111 (3): 407–427
- Elizabeth Ashford (2003). “The Demandingness of Scanlon’s Contractualism”. *Ethics*, 113 (2): 273–302. doi: 10.1086/342853
- Johann Frick (2015). “Contractualism and Social Risk”. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 43 (3): 175–223. doi: 10.1111/papa.12058

Tutorial schedule:

Date	Time	China Time	Zoom Link
Fri 12 th Mar	11:00-12:00	19:00	https://zoom.us/j/97979355171
Fri 19 th Mar	11:00-12:00	19:00	https://zoom.us/j/97979355171
Fri 26 th Mar	11:00-12:00	19:00	https://zoom.us/j/97979355171
Fri 2 nd Apr	11:00-12:00	18:00	https://zoom.us/j/97979355171
Fri 9 th Apr	11:00-12:00	18:00	https://zoom.us/j/97979355171
Fri 16 th Apr	11:00-12:00	18:00	https://zoom.us/j/97979355171
Fri 23 rd Apr	11:00-12:00	18:00	https://zoom.us/j/97979355171
Fri 30 th Apr	11:00-12:00	18:00	https://zoom.us/j/97979355171

Please make sure that your internet connection is of adequate speed. Be on time, in a place where you can listen and talk freely.

Also, please have your **video camera and microphone on** as you will need to actively participate and discuss in the tutorial sessions.

If you have any queries please contact the OPGDI via WeChat or Ms Georgina Thomas at opp@regents.oxa.ac.uk.

We wish you every success! Enjoy the Tutorial Programme!

OPGDI Team
Regent’s Park College, Oxford