# Philosophy Faculty Reading List and Course Outline 2018-2019

## PART IB PAPER 03: ETHICS

### COURSE OUTLINE

This paper covers a wide range of topics in moral philosophy, including metaethics, normative ethics, and moral psychology. These topics are approached from both historical and contemporary perspectives.

The first section, **Helping and Harming**, is concerned with normative questions about the nature and scope of our moral obligations. How demanding are our obligations to help people in need? When helping people, are we required to help more people rather than fewer? Can contractualism ground our moral obligations? What principles govern our moral practices of making promises and giving consent?

The second section, **Early Modern Moral Philosophy**, concerns a critical metaethical debate in the history of ethics. We look at three positions in this debate. Very roughly, voluntarists held that moral obligations are grounded in the commands of a superior, moral rationalists held that moral judgment is analogous to belief about mathematics, while moral sentimentalists held that our faculty of moral judgment is analogous to our aesthetic sense.

The third section of the paper, **Moral Psychology**, focuses on motivation, character and practical reasoning. Does moral motivation require that we deliberate about what reasons we have? Is being virtuous a matter of having certain character traits and dispositions? What does psychology tell us about character traits and how we acquire them? Are our reasons for action grounded in our desires and motivations? What is practical reasoning?

### SYLLABUS

- **Helping and harming**: beneficence I: demands; beneficence II: aggregation; normative powers I: consent; normative powers II: promise; contractualism
- **Early modern moral philosophy**: voluntarism; rationalism; sentimentalism
- **Moral psychology**: moral motivation; virtues, vices and moral learning; practical reasoning

### PRELIMINARY READING

- **SCANLON, T.M.**, 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism', in A. Sen and B. Williams, eds., *Utilitarianism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 103-29. Also available online at: [http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611964.007](http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611964.007)

### READING LIST

*Material marked with an asterisk* is important

## HELPING AND HARMING

### Beneficence I: Demands and Limits

How demanding are our obligations to others? This topic explores questions as to how demanding morality is, whether we are required to do more than our fair share and whether our personal projects can place limits on how much morality can require of us.

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UNGER, Peter, Living High and Letting Die (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), chs. 1 & 2. Also available online: http://doi.org/10.1093/0195108590.001.0001


Beneficience II: Aggregation

Some moral choices involve trade-offs between the claims of many and the claims of few. This section looks at different approaches to how we should resolve such trade-offs.


*SCANLON, T.M., 'Aggregation', in his What We Owe to Each Other (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1998), pp. 229-41. Also available online: Moodle


VELLEMAN, J. David, 'Well-Being and Time', in his The Possibility of Practical Reason (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 56-84. Also available on Moodle


Normative Powers I: Consent

By consenting to an action, we make it permissible for another party to perform it. This section examines which conditions must be met for consent to be "informed".


DWORKIN, Gerald, The Theory and Practice of Autonomy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chs. 6 & 7. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511625206

MANSON, Neil, and Onora O’NEILL, Rethinking Informed Consent in Bioethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 4 'How to rethink informed consent'. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511618460.005


WERTHEIMER, Alan, Consent to Sexual Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chs. 6 & 7. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511610011
Normative Powers II: Promise

Promising is an important part of our moral practice. But why are we morally obligated to keep promises? According to one influential approach, it's because promises raise the other party's expectations. According to another one, it's because promising is a practice that is beneficial to us. A third influential account, locates promissory obligations in our normative powers.


**Contractualism**

According to contractualism, whether an act is permissible depends on whether it is compatible with a set of principles that no one could reasonably reject. Thus, contractualists try to derive the content of morality from the notion of an agreement of those who are part of the moral domain. The following provides an introduction to Scanlon's contractualism and its most important criticisms.


*SCANLON, T.M., *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), Introduction & ch. 5 'The structure of contractualism'.


HAMILTON, Jean, 'Feminist Contractarianism', in her *The Intrinsic Worth of Persons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1-38. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511618239.003


**EARLY MODERN MORAL PHILOSOPHY**

**General and Background**

The following works will help to get an overview of early modern metaethics, and in particular to survey the debate between the rationalists and sentimentalists.


Voluntarism

Voluntarists explained moral obligations in terms of the will of a superior. It was criticised by rationalist opponents and fell out of favour as a result of these criticisms. It is an important part of the historical and intellectual context for the debate between the voluntarists and sentimentalists.


SCHNEEWIND, J. B., *Invention of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chs. 4, 5 & 7. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511818288

Sentimentalism

Sentimentalists typically claim that moral distinctions rely on our faculty of moral sentiment, which does not represent a mind-independent moral reality. Many construe morality as analogous to beauty. A key motivation for their view was their claim that desire or emotion was necessary for motivation.

*HUME, David, Selections from an Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals. Available on Moodle

*HUTCHESON, Francis, Selections from an Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue. Available on Moodle

BUTLER, Joseph, *Selection from a Dissertation on Virtue*. Available on Moodle


DARWALL, Stephen, *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought' 1640 - 1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 10 'Hume: norms and the obligation to be just'. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511609957.011


SCHNEEWIND, J.B., *Invention of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), ch. 16 'The limits of love: Hutcheson and Butler'. Also available online at: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511818288.017

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**MORAL PSYCHOLOGY**

**Moral Motivation**

What is it to act from a moral motive? The central disagreement here is between judgment internalists and externalists on whether moral judgments are intrinsically motivating. Judgment internalists say yes. Externalists say no: to be motivated to do what's right also takes the right kind of desire.
A central moral concept is virtue. This section examines the nature of virtue. One central
debate concerns how best to understand Aristotle's influential account of virtue as
consisting in a 'mean' between extremes. Another, also originating in Aristotle, concerns
the question to what extent virtues are unified. Another one concerns whether recent
work in social psychology shows that there are no virtues in agents like us, as there are
no stable character traits.

*ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, edited by R. Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2000), bk. 2, chs. 1-7; bk. 6, chs. 9-11.

Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199228782.001.0001


http://www.jstor.org/stable/2671873


SCHROEDER, Mark, Slaves of the Passions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199299508.001.0001


We welcome your suggestions for further readings that will improve and diversify our reading lists, to reflect the best recent research, and important work by members of under-represented groups. Please email your suggestions to phillib@hermes.cam.ac.uk including the relevant part and paper number. For information on how we handle your personal data when you submit a suggestion please see https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/general-data.