Study guide PHI 101 Fall 2008 Mid-term Exam

**I. Be familiar with the following concepts**.

-a priori knowledge: knowledge not gained through experience (non-empirically)

-a posteriori knowledge: knowledge gained through experience (empirically)

-analytic statements: predicate is contained in the subject; truth conditions do not require empirical investigation; cannot change

-synthetic statements: predicate is not contained in the subject; truth conditions require empirical investigation; can change

-The Laws (or Principles) of Thought:

-nomological possibility:

-logical possibility:

-ontology metaphysics: the study of the nature of existence or reality

-epistemology: the study of knowledge, its nature, scope and limitations

-ethics:

-normative: relating to standards

-descriptive: serving to label, describe or classify

-deontology: the study of what is morally obligatory, permissible, right or wrong

-utility: greatest good for the greatest number of people

-virtue ethics: character is the essence of virtue and is the basis behind morality, rather than consequences and rules

-social contract theory:

-republic: representative government based on citizenry electing representatives

**II. Be able to answer or discuss the following:**

1. Explain Plato’s critique of the Divine Command Theory in the *Euthyphro*. Explain what the Divine Command Theory is; reference how Socrates shows that Euthyphro’s explanation regarding the nature of piety (in relation to Euthyphro’s action) violates the Principle of Noncontradiction and why this is a problem for Euthyphro’s justifications for his actions; and show how the mere fact that an act might be loved by the gods does not provide us an indication of whether the act is moral.

-The Divine Command Theory states that what God has supreme jurisdiction on what is moral and ethical; Plato critiques it saying…

2. Explain the problem of evil, and how the argument is generally deployed to refute claims regarding god’s existence.

-The problem of evil is that God cannot have traditional properties like being all-good, and omnipotent without the existence of evil

The ideas of being all-good and omnipotent already create a contradiction

There are two types of evil: natural (hurricanes, tornadoes, disease) and moral (rape, murder)

How can these exist when God is all-good and all-powerful

Therefore God is flawed

-Raises the question if an act is good because God deems it so or because it is intrinsically so?

Former – good is arbitrary and can change

Latter – God is irrelevant

3. Know the general features of Mill’s normative theory, including whether motive is relevant to the moral content of an act, whether consequences are relevant to the moral content of an act, the two types of happiness, and what the moral calculus is. Finally, be able to offer one criticism leveled against Mill’s normative theory.

-Mill’s normative theory is a branch off of utilitarianism which states the people will do what will cause the most people happiness

-Mill’s is an empiricist and a consequentialist that believes that only the consequences of an action determine its morality

-The two types of happiness are lower (physical pleasures, goods) and higher (mental, learning)

-Those people who experience both will choose the mental happiness over the physical happiness

-A criticism is that people will not act in this way and are, pragmatically, more likely to think and act in the interest of themselves rather than that of a group

4. Know the general features of Kant’s normative theory, including why motive is the only relevant feature to the moral content of an act, what the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative is, and to what the Categorical Imperative refers. Finally, be able to offer one criticism of Kant’s normative theory.

5. Explain existentialist ethics (per Camus and Sartre). Be sure to reference and explain the concepts of “authenticity”, “the absolute”, “contingency” and how human choice plays a role in existentialist ethics. Finally, be familiar with how Merleau-Ponty systematized an existentialist ethics for assigning moral blame.

-Camus wrote the Myth of Sisyphus that questioned our existence claiming it to be futile and absurd

6. In the *Politics*, Aristotle discusses six types of government. Be able to specify the 6 types, to identify the principle by which Aristotle subdivides the 6 types into 2 general categories, to explain why monarchy is not the best practical political system, and to provide Aristotle’s explanation regarding the best practical political system.

-Forms of government:

Monarchy, Aristocracy, Constitutional – Interest of State

Tyranny, Oligarchy, Democracy – Interest of Ruler

-The latter forms are perversions of the former

-Aristotle believes that monarchy is the ideal form of government but that it is not practical because Kings are also human and therefore corruptible

-Aristotle believes that a Constitutional government is the most practical form of government because it creates a supreme law by which rulers must also abide

7. Be able to provide a summary account of John Rawls’ theory of justice. Be able to reference and explain his notions of “the original position”, “veil of ignorance”, “reflective equilibrium”, and the two principles of justice that he thinks are derivative of the concept of justice as fairness.

-Rawl’s essentially believes that all people do not deserve who they are and what they have; this is all chosen by chance

-He believes all people are equal and that without their material gains and personality they are in the original position

-The original position is the state of being that is behind the “veil of ignorance”; the “veil” takes away all personal knowledge of one’s self that can skew one’s idea of justice

Lacking specific personal knowledge allows one to be unbiased and fair to all creating reflective equilibrium

-Rawl’s first principle of justice states that all people are entitled to basic liberties (political rights)

-Rawl’s second principle of justice states that there is to be just distribution of wealth and goods among all people, and that there should be equality of opportunity for all

8. Provide a summary account of Nozick’s theory of justice. Be sure to reference his two principles of justice, his distinction between “current time-slice” theories of justice versus “historical” theories of justice, and his use of the Wilt Chamberlin example.

9. What is the “appearance vs. reality” distinction, and what has it to do with philosophy?

-This is a primary question in philosophy because philosophy is meant to present a complete and comprehensible view of reality; it also helps you describe what you see and experience for what it is

-Plato discusses the theory of duality that states that there is both an empirical and a “real” meaning behind the things we see and experience

-Empiricists believe that what we experience is reality and that anything beyond that experience does not exist; Plato is NOT an empiricist; Aristotle was an empiricist

-Monism: the mind or physical

-Dualism: existence of reality beyond the mind

10. Why does Plato insist that the products of poets and musicians should be censored by the state? What is the Myth of the Metals, and to what use does Plato have Socrates put the myth in Republic?

-Plato believed that certain poetry and music should be censored because it can portray negativity (depressing poetry, refuting gods, minor chords in music) and can corrupt people

-The Myth of Metals is a way to categorize human nature based on peoples place in society:

Gold: Rulers, “Philosopher Kings” governed by reason; do what is in the best interest of state (state censorship, paternalism); represent truth and intelligence

Silver: Auxiliaries, military trained in the art of war; highly educated; represent spiritedness, courage, and action

Bronze/Iron: Workers, craftsmen, merchants, “laborers”; the appetite in society governed by desire; need to be controlled by rulers

11. Be familiar with the conditions under which Aristotle says we can describe a human being as *eudaimon* (internal and external conditions). Your familiarity should include knowing his definition of *eudaimonia*, and being able to coherently explain his analysis of the parts of the ‘soul’, as well as his analysis of the two types of virtue.

-Aristotle indentifies happiness as the highest good and that there are internal and external conditions to this good:

Consequences and actions are the external conditions

Intentions are the internal conditions (responsibility to one’s self to cultivate virtue)

-Eudaimonia = happiness = the “soul” acting virtuously

It cannot be taken away from you

Is separate from pleasures and wealth and civic duty

Contemplative life is the truly good life but is impractical

The soul is the force of a personality and has both rational and irrational parts; the irrational parts being desires

The two types of virtue are moral (habitual) and intellectual (learned) and for every virtue there are two vices

12. What are the general features of the feminist critique of the three traditional normative theories? What, in general terms, is the Ethic of Care?

-The traditional normative theories contain three levels of moral development:

Pre-conventional – obedience and punishment

Conventional – social, order-maintaining

Post-conventional – universal ethical principles

-The Theory of Ethics of Care refutes these levels and replaces them stating that they are biased towards men

Pre-conventional – goal is individual survival

Conventional – self-sacrifice to goodness

Post-conventional – principle of nonviolence

-The Ethics of Care was started by Carol Gilligan and essentially states that securing solid relationships filled with care is the most important in establishing morality

13. Be able to describe Thompson’s use of the Violinist analogy.

-An analogy to abortion

-A woman is kidnapped by the Society of Music Lovers and connected to a very famous violinist whose kidneys are failing

-The doctor tells her that it was unfortunate that it happened but now that it has, she can either stay connected to the violinist for 9 months or leave and let him die

-She has no obligation to stay, but what if she had to stay for her entire life?

-This brings up the controversy of abortion and the case in which a woman is raped and has no choice over her pregnancy