

### PAPER 1: QUESTIONS

Answer **one** complete question, drawing on readings, lectures and section discussions. Be sure to give reasons for your response.

1. Utilitarianism is often criticized as a moral theory because rights are conditional, i.e., they are respected only as long as doing so does not conflict with "the greatest good for the greatest number." Just for this reason, many expect utilitarians to be relatively permissive about access to abortion. Do you agree? Justify your answer by drawing on the views of Callahan, Sumner, and Wertheimer.

Based on what you have written above, indicate what position you think a utilitarian should take in any **two** of the following situations and explain why:

- a. a woman seeking a late abortion because the fetus has a major birth defect;
- b. a teenager seeking an early abortion due to an unintended pregnancy;
- c. a young woman seeking to terminate a pregnancy resulting from a rape.

2. According to Sidney Callahan, "The same...tradition which in our society guarantees the right to control one's own body firmly recognizes the wrongfulness of harming other bodies, however immature, dependent, different-looking, or powerless. The handicapped, the retarded, and newborns are legally protected from deliberate harm." Accordingly, she continues, since "the fetus is an immature, dependent form of human life which only needs time and protection to develop," it, too, should be legally protected from harm.

a) How would Michael Tooley and Judith Thomson respond to Callahan? With whom, if any, would you agree and why?

b) Based on your answer above, would an abortion be morally permissible if:

- a) a pregnancy had been caused by rape or incest;
- b) the pregnant female was a young teenager whose partner lied about using a contraceptive. (This fine fellow has now left town.)

Give reasons for your conclusions that are consistent with each other.

3. One can criticize deontological ethics, and Kant in particular, because in its emphasis on intentions, adherence to universal moral principles, and discounting of consequences, it usually cannot take into account the contexts in which we make moral choices. As applied to the controversy about abortion, one would thus expect a moral theorist to either prohibit abortion altogether or permit it under virtually any circumstance. Is this the case? Analyze the statements of Thomson, Noonan, and Tooley to determine if any of them can consistently accommodate a position that would allow some abortions and not others.

Can an individual adhering to a moral code prescribing him/her to universalize the principles of action make distinctions between the circumstances under which an abortion is desired? Discuss whether an individual committed to making moral judgments according to a categorical imperative can take a consistent position that permits abortion in one case but not the other in any **two** of the following situation:

- a. Abortions in pregnancies resulting from rape but not where the pregnancy was unintended and unwanted;
- b. Abortions in early pregnancies but not abortions occurring after 20 weeks of a pregnancy
- c. Abortions in the case of fetal indications but not where the birth of a child would be a serious and difficult burden for the mother or her family.

**Due date:** Friday, February 1. Your TA will tell you where to bring the paper. Be sure to use *turnitin.com* when submitting. Instructions on how to use *turnitin.com* are on the class web page (<http://weber.ucsd.edu/~ecomisso/Ethics&Society.html>)

**Length:** 6 pp. max., typed, double spaced. Please, no submissions by email. Please don't leave the paper in Professor Comisso's mailbox.

Please feel free to consult with Professor Comisso and/or your TA in the course of working out your arguments. We like to talk to the students in this class! You can also discuss the questions, ask for clarifications, etc. on the virtual section. If you use any of the remarks another student (or the prof) makes, be sure to cite that person, fake name and all (otherwise, it's plagiarism!). No other outside sources, please.

