Exercise walk-through

2.4
The prescribed text: reading a classic text

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Philosophy · HL

Ethics

- **The trolley cases three ways.** A utilitarian pulls the lever *and* pushes the man: five lives outweigh one.
- A Kantian may pull the lever (the death is a side effect) but not push (that uses the man only as a means).
- A virtue ethicist asks what a good person could live with, and may say that pushing someone to his death is something a decent person would not do.
- An essay that compares all three, and then judges which explains our intuitions best, shows the analysis examiners reward.

Paper 2 questions

- (a) The best ruler acts through **non-action** : he interferes as little as possible, so that people hardly notice him (chapter 17). More laws create more crime (chapter 57), and governing a large state is like cooking a small fish: stir it too much and it falls apart (chapter 60).
- (b) For the claim: the text seems to trust that people left alone will live simply and peacefully; Hobbes, who thought life without a strong state would be "nasty, brutish, and short", would disagree. Against the claim: the text does not say people are good, only that heavy government creates the desires and conflicts it then tries to control. Judgement: the view is less naive than it looks, but it fits small, simple communities better than large modern states.

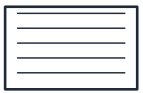
Sources for this lesson

- International Baccalaureate, *Philosophy guide* (first assessment 2024) and the prescribed text list.
- P. Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect", *Oxford Review* 5 (1967); J. J. Thomson, "The Trolley Problem", *Yale Law Journal* (1985).
- E. Gettier, "Is **Justified True Belief Knowledge**?", *Analysis* 23 (1963).

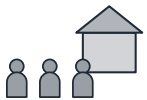
Exercises 2.1·2.2

2.1 State Mill's **harm principle** in your own words. [2]

2.2 Explain Mill's **corn-dealer** example, and what it shows about the limits of free speech. [3]



newspaper



mob at the house

Exercises 2.1·2.2

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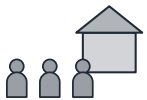
2.1

the state or society may limit a person's liberty only to prevent harm to others; not for the person's own good

2.2 Explain Mill's **corn-dealer** example, and what it shows about the limits of free speech. [3]



newspaper



mob at the house

2.2

the claim "corn-dealers starve the poor" may be printed in a newspaper; but it may be punished when shouted to an angry mob outside a corn-dealer's house; so speech may be limited when it directly incites harm to others; context matters

Exercises 2.3·2.4

2.3 Explain **two** of Mill's reasons for freedom of discussion. [4]

2.4 Evaluate Mill's distinction between **self-regarding** and **other-regarding** actions. [6]

Exercises 2.3·2.4

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2.3

any two, explained: the silenced opinion may be true, and to silence it assumes we cannot be wrong; it may contain part of the truth, and the full truth comes from the clash of views; a true opinion that is never challenged becomes "dead dogma", held without understanding the reasons

2.4 Evaluate Mill's distinction between **self-regarding** and **other-regarding** actions. [6]

2.4

explains the distinction with an example; strength: protects individuality and private life; objection: almost every action affects others, e.g. a person who harms their own health affects their family and public health care; Mill's reply: only a definite damage or risk to others counts; objection: paternalism may help people, e.g. seat-belt laws; a reasoned judgement

Exercise 3.1

3.1 *(Prescribed text style.)* Evaluate Mill's claim that silencing an opinion is always wrong. In your answer, refer to the text and to **one** modern case. [15]



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3.1

Mark with the markbands: [13-15] clearly focused on the question, clear explanation of the philosophical issue, relevant philosophers and arguments used accurately, counter-arguments evaluated, well-developed critical analysis, different perspectives evaluated, a reasoned conclusion; [10-12] focused, mostly accurate knowledge, analysis with some evaluation; [7-9] some focus, relevant knowledge, mostly narrative or description with limited analysis; [4-6] little focus, limited knowledge, mostly narrative; [1-3] little understanding of the question. Points that may be included: accurately explains Mill's claim and its place in On Liberty; reason 1: fallibility; reason 2: partial truth; reasons 3 and 4: dead dogma and loss of meaning; the harm principle and the corn-dealer limit; a modern case, e.g. platform moderation, hate speech laws, health misinformation; objection: some speech harms by its content, e.g. hate speech that silences minorities; objection: in the internet age false claims spread faster than replies; a reply Mill might give; a reasoned conclusion