

## SECOND ASSIGNMENT

Respond to one of the following in 1700 words (around five pages). Papers are due by 3pm on Monday, 22 May. Please turn your paper in to my box in the Philosophy Department Office, Stuart 202. Late papers will be accepted for any reason with a penalty of .125 (out of 4) points *per* day; if you are turning in your paper late, please note when you are doing so and ask the secretary to initialize it. Good luck!

1. Suppose someone said this about utilitarianism. "Utilitarianism is a bad moral theory because it is profoundly unjust; for example, it would allow public officials to torture the innocent in order to prevent crime." Why might someone think that? How might a utilitarian respond to this objection? Which side is correct, in your opinion: is utilitarianism objectionable because it is unjust?
2. Thomson's violinist example is supposed to show that there is something wrong with an argument against abortion. What is that argument and how does Thomson use the violinist example to reply to it? What, in your opinion, is the strongest reason for thinking that pregnancy and Thomson's violinist case are dissimilar? What is the best way for Thomson to respond to this alleged dissimilarity? Would that reply succeed?
3. Warren claims that an important argument against abortion fails to distinguish between what she calls the moral sense of 'human' and what she calls the genetic sense of 'human.' What is the argument that Warren criticizes and why does she think it is mistaken? What, in your opinion, is the best way of defending the argument against Warren's criticism? How might Warren respond? What is your opinion: does Warren's objection succeed?
4. Suppose we were to become convinced of the truth of moral relativism. Would it make sense to change our beliefs about what is morally permitted, forbidden, or required as a result? What is the best reason for thinking that accepting the truth of moral relativism would mean that we should change our beliefs? What is the best reason for thinking that we should not? What do you think?

5. The American Anthropological Association's "Statement on Human Rights" was controversial among anthropologists. For example, Julian Steward wrote a letter to the Association's journal in which he claimed to find a flaw in the Statement's reasoning.

As "respect for cultural differences" certainly does not advocate tolerance of the values in Nazi Germany, where the "individual ... [realized] his personality" through the Youth movement, a qualification is introduced (p. 543) that seems to contradict the basic premise and to be incompatible with anthropological thinking. "Even where political systems exist that deny citizens the right of participation in their government, or seek to conquer weaker peoples, underlying cultural values may be called on to bring the peoples of such states to a realization of the consequences of the acts of their governments, and thus enforce a brake upon discrimination and conquest." This may have been a loophole to exclude Germany from the advocated tolerance, but it looks to me like the fatal breach in the dyke. Either we tolerate everything, and keep hands off, or we fight intolerance and conquest — political and economic as well as military — in all their forms. Where shall the line be drawn? As human beings we unanimously opposed the brutal treatment of Jews in Hitler Germany, but what stand shall be taken on the thousands of other kinds of racial and cultural discrimination, unfair practices, and inconsiderate attitudes found throughout the world?<sup>1</sup>

What were the authors of the Statement trying to accomplish by introducing the qualification that Steward criticized? Explain Steward's criticism of the qualification. How might the authors of the Statement defend their position? Which side is right?

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<sup>1</sup> Steward, Julian H. "Comments on the Statement on Human Rights." *American Anthropologist* 50, no. 2 (1948): 351-52. The quoted passages are from the American Anthropological Association's "Statement on Human Rights." *American Anthropologist* 49, no. 4, Part 1 (1947): 539-43. Both Steward's letter and the Statement are on reserve in the Regenstein library.