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Philosophy 0080
Introduction to Philosophical Problems

Second Essay

Due date: Monday, April 22nd, 3pm

Write a 1000–1200 word essay answering ONE of the following three prompts. For guidance about the format of the essay — what to include in the header, etc. — and advice for how to compose your work, please again follow the essay writing guide distributed with the first essay.

Prompt 1

Why does Gideon Rosen (in “Culpability and Ignorance”) think that a person’s culture can serve to excuse her from being morally responsible for her actions (or some of their actions)? And in what way or on what grounds would Michelle Moody-Adams (in “Culture, Responsibility and Affected Ignorance”) disagree? After spelling out the seemingly opposed views of these two philosophers, try to adjudicate the dispute between them. Where, if anywhere, do Rosen and Moody-Adams disagree? After locating what you think is the most important philosophical disagreement between Rosen and Moody-Adams, say who you think is right, and offer an argument in support of your position. (If you think that Rosen and Moody-Adams in fact *don’t* disagree on any crucial premises, try to explain instead how they can reach such different verdicts concerning particular cases, such as that involving ancient slaveholders.)

Prompt 2

In “Skepticism about Moral Responsibility”, Gideon Rosen argues that confident positive judgements of moral responsibility are never justified. This conclusion seems incredible. What is Rosen’s argument for it? And where does the argument go wrong? After spelling out the structure of Rosen’s argument, explain in what way you think Rosen’s argument is unsound. In particular, either explain why you think the argument is invalid, or say which premise you think is false, and explain why it is false. (If you think more than one premise is false, focus on the one against which you think you can level your strongest objection.)

Prompt 3

You may develop your own question about any other topic or reading we’ve covered since the first essay. But your question must be approved by your TA no later than Friday 12th (i.e. next week).



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