

Reading Questions for January 23th

These questions cover parts of two different texts. The first is an encyclopedia article titled “Ethics” – this is by James Fieser. The second is a book chapter by Alan Wertheimer titled “Liberty, Coercion, and the Limits of the State.” The answers do not have to be turned in and you only have to read enough of the text to answer the questions. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

Background:

In the first two weeks of this course, we are doing a couple of different things. One of these is to briefly survey the field of ethics as a whole. The second is to discuss the question: should you be allowed to do what you want, so long as it doesn’t harm anyone? Today we’ll continue on both of these projects.

Questions:

1. In his first section, Fieser discusses meta-ethics. How does Fieser define “meta-ethics”? What are some examples of questions from meta-ethics? Which questions in meta-ethics interest you the most?
Note: for this question, you should try to get the main ideas, but it’s fine to skim a bit and you don’t have to know every little detail.
2. On page 45, Wertheimer raises a second issue connected with the question: what is *harm* to others, in the paragraph starting “If unpleasant ...” What is this issue and what do you think about it? Why?
3. On pages 45-6, Wertheimer raises a third issue connected with the question: what is *harm* to others. What is this issue and what do you think about it? Why?