



## **Ethics: historical perspectives [PY 1095]**

### **Introductory reading**

Macintyre, A. *A Short History of Ethics*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

### **Sample examination questions**

1. Assess Plato's claim that justice is to the soul what health is to the body.
2. Does Socrates give good reason for believing that doing wrong is worse than suffering it?
3. 'The good is the final end of all actions and for its sake everything else should be done.' Are Socrates' reasons for believing this good ones?
4. What does Aristotle believe the characteristic function of man is? Does his account of this provide a satisfactory basis for ethics?
5. How well does justice fit Aristotle's doctrine of the Mean?
6. Why does Aristotle believe that excellence of character and practical wisdom are interdependent?
7. Should Hobbes be described as an ethical egoist?
8. Does Hume offer a convincing account of convergence in moral judgments?
9. 'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger.' What was Hume's point in making this remark?
10. 'No action can be virtuous or morally good unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it distinct from the sense of its morality.' Explain and evaluate Hume's claim.
11. Discuss Hume's account of obligation.
12. Discuss Kant's view that a free will and will under moral law are one and the same.
13. 'Treat humanity in yourself and in others never as a means only but always as an end in itself.' What does Kant mean by this? How convincing is his argument for it?
14. Evaluate Kant's claim that it is morally necessary to believe in the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.
15. Could Hume account satisfactorily for the kind of obligation which Kant describes as categorical?
16. Does Mill explain satisfactorily what moves us to act for the sake of happiness in others?
17. What did J.S. Mill think a moral requirement is?
18. Critically discuss the main claims in Mill's utilitarianism.