

Wednesday 10 March 2010

1. What factors led to the successful transition of computers from research machines to commercial products? (10 points)

The development of high-level programming languages, which made computers easier to program. The development of time sharing, which gave more people easier access. The invention of transistors and later integrated circuits, which reduced the size and cost of the computers. Backing by large companies like IBM with established sales and support divisions.

2. One of the first ethical theories examined by Quinn is Cultural Realism.

a. What are the arguments against Cultural Realism? (10 points)

From Quinn's slides: Because two societies do have different moral views doesn't mean they ought to have different views. Doesn't explain how moral guidelines are determined. Doesn't explain how guidelines evolve. Provides no way out for cultures in conflict. Because many practices are acceptable does not mean any cultural practice is acceptable (many/any fallacy). Societies do, in fact, share certain core values. Only indirectly based on reason.

b. What are the arguments in favor of Cultural Realism? (5 points)

From Quinn's slides: Different social contexts demand different moral guidelines. It is arrogant for one society to judge another. Morality is reflected in actual behavior.

3. Kantianism starts with one thing that is always good without qualification, and then uses that thing to derive moral laws, which we are then duty bound to follow. What is that one thing that Kant said was always good? (5 points)

Kant felt the only thing that is good without qualification is good will (good intentions).

4. Act Utilitarianism considers the total benefit or harm to "all affected beings". What are some of the challenges in computing this total? (10 points)

In general, the computations are simply too complex, especially if Bentham's 8 weights are applied to consider intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity, and extent.

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Furthermore, it is hard to reduce all of these considerations to numerical values in the same system of units.

From Quinn's slides: Unclear whom to include in calculations. Too much work. Ignores our innate sense of duty. Susceptible to the problem of moral luck.

5. Under Social Contract Theory, give an example of a Positive Right. (5 points)

A Positive Right is a right that obligates others to do something on your behalf, such as free public education to a certain level or police / fire protection – all of which require others to pay their taxes to provide you with these rights.

6. Why does email spam have the potential to be much more profitable for the spammer than sending junk mail through the postal system? (5 points)

Sending junk mail to thousands of people through the post system is very expensive, but sending email spam to large numbers of people is very inexpensive. Quinn quotes figures of \$500-\$2000 for spam email to a million people versus \$230,000 for postal mail. The low cost of sending spam email gives it the potential to be much more profitable.

7. Give 2 examples of a country's government trying to control or limit information obtained via the Internet. (10 points)

Quinn mentions examples involving Saudi Arabia, the People's Republic of China, Germany, and the United States. Any 2 of these would suffice to answer this question, though other examples would be acceptable as well.

8. Why did the U.S. Supreme Court rule against the broadcast of George Carlin's "Seven Words" instead of considering that broadcast to be free speech? (10 points)

It said that broadcasting receives First Amendment protection but in a limited form. This is because broadcasting is uniquely pervasive in that it goes into people's homes, and they can encounter that broadcasting without warning as they change channels. Further, children are exposed to the broadcast even before they know how to read. It emphasized that this was a very narrow ruling, and that the time of day (middle of the afternoon) was an important consideration.

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- 9. Article I of the U.S. Constitution allows writings and discoveries to be protected for limited time to “promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts”. How does protecting these things promote this progress? (10 points)**

It provides incentive to the author or inventor to create those items, since he or she may be able to benefit financially for doing so. However, the items are then later placed into the public domain, which benefits even more people.

- 10. Give several examples of a Trademark or Service Mark. (10 points)**

Many examples, including words, symbols, pictures, sounds, colors, or smells. See text for some examples.

- 11. Over the years, the length of time for copyright protection has grown from 28 years to 95 years. What are some of the reasons for this increase? (10 points)**

New forms of media have been given copyright protecting, leading to re-evaluation of copyright policy, including length of protection. Lobbying by copyright holders to extend the length of copyrights, such as the 1976 extension that some say was intended to protect certain Walt Disney characters. Increases in 1998 to bring US copyright law into compliance with agreements signed with Europe.