

Shem Downes

3/17/23

Reading Question Week 6

Kant, "Duty and Reason as the Ultimate Principle" - pp. 506-512

1. Explain why Kant thinks the only thing truly good "in itself" is a good will.

Kant believes that the only thing truly good "in itself" is a good will. A good will is one that acts out of duty, not self-interest or inclination. A good will is one that follows the moral law, which is universal and necessary, and is based on reason. A good will does not pursue happiness or any other end but simply seeks to do what is right.

2. What does Kant mean by doing our actions "from the motive of duty"? How is this different from acting out of self-interest, or out of natural inclination, or even just in "conformity" with duty?

Doing our actions "from the motive of duty" means acting out of respect for the moral law and the categorical imperative, rather than out of self-interest, natural inclination, or conformity to duty. Acting out of duty means recognizing that certain actions are objectively right or wrong, regardless of personal preferences or desires. It involves following the moral law because it is the right thing to do, rather than because of any external reward or punishment.

3. What does it mean for an action to have moral worth based on its principle, not based on the end it achieves?

An action has moral worth based on its principle, not based on the end it achieves, because the moral value of an action is determined by the motive behind it, not the consequence. An action is morally right if it is done out of respect for the moral law and the categorical imperative, regardless of the outcome. A good will is one that acts according to duty, and is not swayed by the potential benefits or consequences of an action.

4. Explain in your own words Kant's two formulations of the Categorical Imperative, on 510 and 511-512:

a) The first formulation of the Categorical Imperative is: "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law." This means that an action is morally permissible only if it can be universalized without contradiction. In other words, an action is morally right only if everyone could follow the same maxim without creating a contradiction. This is the principle of universalizability.

b) The second formulation of the Categorical Imperative is: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end." This means that we should always respect the dignity and autonomy of other human beings, and not use them merely as a means to our own ends. We should recognize that other people have inherent value and should be treated accordingly.

Mill, "Happiness as the Foundation of Morality" pp. 512-517

1. Write out and explain Mill's "Greatest Happiness Principle".

Mill's "Greatest Happiness Principle" states that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, and wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. According to Mill, happiness is the ultimate goal of human action, and morality is based on the principle of utility, which aims to maximize happiness for the greatest number of people.

2. What does Mill mean when he writes, "Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied"?

When Mill writes, "Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied," he means that it is better to be a wise person who is aware of their own dissatisfaction than a foolish person who is ignorant of their own unhappiness. This suggests that there are different kinds of happiness, and that some kinds are more valuable than others. For Mill, intellectual and moral pleasures are higher and more valuable than physical pleasures.

3. How does Mill discuss quality and kinds of happiness in contrast to calculating the quantity of happiness?

Mill discusses the quality and kinds of happiness in contrast to calculating the quantity of happiness. He argues that some kinds of happiness are more valuable than others, and that the quality of happiness is more important than the quantity. Intellectual and moral pleasures, such as the satisfaction of doing good or pursuing knowledge, are of higher quality and more valuable than physical pleasures, such as sensual pleasures.

4. What role does all of previous human history and the experience of wise and competent people play in figuring out what will bring the most happiness in our actions?

According to Mill, the experience of wise and competent people and the lessons of previous human history play an important role in figuring out what will bring the most happiness in