

Keon Watson

Professor Louis Sanchez

Introduction to Philosophy

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Reading Question Week 6

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

1. Kant believes that even though an individual might have good morals or a good character they may not be classified as someone who is truly good or has goodwill in themselves if they possess inclinations. For example, Kant states, " Only if someone acts without any inclination, from the sake of duty alone, does his action for the first time have genuine moral worth." He also states, "...it is good through its willing alone- that is, good in itself." (Kant)
2. Kant is basically saying that if someone acts with good morals because of their duties or protocols then they are not classified to have goodwill. Therefore some individuals display good morals because they were told to do so by someone that is in a higher position than they are. This is different from a person who displays good morals based on self-interest because they are not being told or forced to act that way with another individual. Therefore they are a perfect example of 'goodwill in itself.'
3. In order for an action to have moral worth based on its principle is that whoever carries out this action has to have good principles within their self-interest for it to be classified as an action with moral worth. This action therefore cannot be carried out because you were instructed to do so or because it will bring great achievements in the end. 'Always try to do the right thing regardless if someone is watching or not.'

4. A. This means I should never do anything unless I can also wish that my rule of conduct be accepted as the law of the universe.
B. We should constantly treat people as ends in and of themselves, never just as a means to an end.

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

1. Mill's 'Greatest Happiness Principle': "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness." He defines 'Happiness' "...as pleasure and the absence of pain." His principle of happiness in a person has to do with the actions of that person whether they be negative or positive. Based on a person's activity will either give the result of happiness or the opposite.
2. Mill is suggesting that it is better to be dissatisfied with the belief of Socrates than to be a satisfied fool. This can also mean that we as human beings should have an open mind toward the truth of something.
3. Based on Mill's explanation of quality and quantity of happiness; the most crucial is that the preferred pleasure is greater in quality which outweighs quantity to the point where it is unimportant.
4. This will decide the happiest acts and is based on the constructive deeds of human history. Human history will bring forth the truth because it is intelligent, capable, and knowledgeable.