

College Writing II

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

1. Kant believes that the only thing truly good "in itself" is good will, because other things, such as intelligence, wealth, or even happiness, can be used for evil and immoral purposes. A good will, on the other hand, which is the will to do what is right simply because it is right, is always good, regardless of the outcome or circumstance.
2. Doing what is right simply because it is right, without regard for self-interest or natural inclination, is what Kant means by acting "from the motive of duty." It differs from acting in "conformity" with duty, which means doing what is right solely because it corresponds with our desires or interests. Kant defines true moral worth as acting out of a sense of duty, even if it contradicts our own interests.
3. For an action to have moral worth based on its principle rather than the end result, it must be motivated by duty and based on a principle that could be made into a universal law. In other words, the moral worth of an action is determined by the principle that motivated the action rather than the outcome.

4. The Categorical Imperative is expressed in two ways by Kant:

a) "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim become a universal law." This means that we should only act in ways that we can rationally expect everyone else to act in.

b) "Always act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, never simply as a means, but always as an end in and of itself." This means that we must always respect others' dignity and autonomy and never treat them as a means to an end.

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

1. According to Mill's "Greatest Happiness Principle," actions are right in proportion to how much they promote happiness and wrong in proportion to how much they produce the opposite of happiness. This means that the ultimate goal of morality is to maximize happiness while minimizing suffering for as many people as possible.

2. Mill means that it is better to be unhappy and intellectually fulfilled than happy and ignorant when he writes, "Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied." In other words, intellectual and moral pursuits are more valuable than purely recreational activities.

3. Mill discusses the quality and types of happiness rather than the quantity of happiness, stating that some pleasures are higher and more valuable than others. He contends that intellectual and moral pleasures are superior to physical pleasures, and that a life filled with these higher pleasures is more fulfilling than a life filled with lower pleasures.

4. According to Mill, all of human history and the experience of wise and competent people play a role in determining what will bring us the most happiness in our actions. We can learn what promotes happiness and what does not by studying the successes and failures of past societies and individuals. This knowledge can then be used to make more informed decisions that will lead to greater happiness for all.