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Philosophy

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.

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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?

- According to Kant, acting "from the motive of duty" involves behaving in accordance with the categorical imperative and the moral law rather than our natural inclinations or out of self-interest. Even though doing what is right may have positive results, doing what is right is not morally noble because it is not done out of a sense of obligation. A morally good action can be distinguished from a morally neutral or harmful one by the motive of duty.

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

- According to Kant, an action has moral value based on its principle rather than the goal it serves. This implies that an action's moral worth is defined by its motivation, not by its result. If something is done out of obligation, even if the results are bad, it might still have moral value. Morally speaking, a good principle-driven action is preferable to a bad principle-driven action, even if the latter results in favorable outcomes.

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

- Kant's 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 we should only act on principles that we can consistently will to be a universal law. In other words, we should act in a way that we would want everyone to act in the same situation. This ensures that our actions are based on rational principles, rather than subjective preferences.
- Kant's 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 never use other people merely as a means to our own ends, but always treat them as ends in themselves. We should respect the dignity and autonomy of every person and not treat them as objects to be used for our own purposes.

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, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. According to Mill, the ultimate goal of human action is to maximize happiness and minimize suffering, both for ourselves and for others. He believes that happiness is the foundation of morality and that the purpose of morality is to promote the general welfare of society.
2. What does Mill mean when he writes, "Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied"?
 - When Mill says, "Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied," he is referring to the idea that having a mind capable of appreciating higher pleasures, even if it leaves one occasionally unsatisfied, is preferable to constantly settling for lower pleasures. He contends that there are several types of joys, some of which are more priceless than others. Lower pleasures, like physical pleasures, are less valuable than higher pleasures, like intellectual and aesthetic 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 pleasure is more important than the quantity of pleasure.
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, we may learn from humanity's cumulative experience to determine what choices will bring us the most satisfaction. He claims that individuals have been seeking happiness continuously throughout history and have amassed a wealth of knowledge and understanding about what causes happiness and what does not. According to Mill, we may use this body of knowledge to direct our activities and make decisions that will result in the most happiness for the most people. Our understanding of the acts that would result in the most happiness can also benefit from the wisdom and expertise of wise and competent people, including philosophers, scientists, and other professionals.