

Kristen Davis

Professor Louis Sanchez

Philosophy

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### 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.

**Despite all of the other goals we may have in our lives, Kant believed that goodness is an essential virtue since it prioritizes fulfilling our moral duties over our other plans. As a result of this commitment to morality, we are driven by our own will, which is given to us by our "practical power of reason," which enables us to fulfill our moral responsibilities.**

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?

**Preemptively, Kant acknowledged that we are driven to defend our existence but emphasized the necessity of applying moral principles. Consequently, some individuals behave in a way that aligns with their satisfaction instead of merely performing tasks out of obligation. Pursuing self-interest is synonymous with conformity; it is disguised as morally justified behavior.**

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

**In Kant's view, acts of moral worth cannot be performed without consequence. As part of fulfilling a duty, it is essential to act in a way that aligns with being a good person, regardless of the difficulty and necessity it may bring.**

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

a) I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law

b) 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

**In Kant's view, we should not engage in actions designed to portray ourselves as tremendous or resembling the best. It is essential instead to set an example based on what is right and just that others can follow. There should be a sense of alignment between our actions and who we indeed are rather than what we perceive to be advantageous for ourselves. According to Mill, happiness is the foundation of morality, as discussed in his work "Happiness is the Foundation of Morality" on pages 512-517.**

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

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

**Mill argues that commitments that lead to happiness are relevant and fair, but opinions that don't lead to happiness should not be considered. According to the principle, happiness eliminates pain. Mill's "Greatest Happiness Principle" is "Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness." (Mill 484 )It's saying that, therefore, right actions are those that increase happiness, and wrong actions are those that increase unhappiness.**

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

**According to Mill, the message he is trying to convey is that it's better to be a person who seeks truth through encountering diverse perspectives, despite the frustration they might experience than a narrow-minded individual who readily accepts any viewpoint that leads them forward and clings to their own beliefs.**

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

**According to Mill, the attributes of happiness that are most desirable are those that are substantial and rooted in noble living. Contrary to shallow pleasures, these offer a sustainable form of satisfaction. One can achieve lasting contentment through virtuous conduct, for instance, since it aligns with their values and identity.**

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?

**Understanding what truly matters to us in our own lives can be gained by examining the experiences and lives of others. The idea that having all the flaws in life, like a lovely house**

**and a high-paying job, will make me happy may seem appealing to me. However, seeing someone who possesses all these things and is unhappy gives me a chance to reconsider my priorities and seek clarity.**