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Intro to Philosophy

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Lesson 6 questions

Kant Duty and Reason

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

Kant says the only truly good thing is a good will because even if one has intelligence or wit, they are still driven by will and if one's will is bad, these good things can be steered towards the wrong motives. Only when one's will is good will these things be able to be used justly.

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? What Kant means when he speaks of doing something from the motive of duty is to do something because we are compelled to do so by outside forces. One example of this would be to pay for a fare on the train or bus. We do not do so out of our own inclination but because it is our duty to pay for our trip.
3. What does it mean for an action to have moral worth based on its principle, not based on the end it achieves? It means to do something simply for the sake of it being good and not for a reward such as helping someone pick up their dropped

items simply for the sake of helping another person as opposed to doing so in hopes for a reward.

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

One should never act in a way that they know for certain could not be applied to everyone else or that they know everyone else could act. Or don't do anything you wouldn't want everyone else to follow as well.

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.

One should not do anything out of motive but rather, simply for the good of it to make it into a lifestyle and to continually follow it always and not when it might seem convenient to do it no matter the circumstances.

Mill and Morality's Foundation

1. Write out and explain Mill's "Greatest Happiness Principle". Mill's greatest happiness principle is that actions that promote happiness are right and those that promote the opposite of happiness must be right. I find this to be flawed in that there are some actions or events we must take in order to grow and experience more happiness or rather, savor happiness so as to attain a higher quality of happiness. An example of this would be experiencing the loss of a loved one or friend. It is an unpleasant affair but through this, we can reflect on the time we spent with them and treasure those who we still have with us on this earth.

2. What does Mill mean when he writes, "Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied"? He means it is better to be dissatisfied in searching for happiness with a higher mental faculty in mind as compared to finding it when it takes very little to make said person happy. A different way of saying this would be to say better a gourmand be starving than a glutton full.
3. How does Mill discuss quality and kinds of happiness in contrast to calculating the quantity of happiness? He says that if there are two kinds of happiness one of which, once we have experienced it, we seek it out regardless of any moral obligation, that must obviously be the better one as opposed to the former.
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? It's role is that all for all of human history, humans have experimented with our tendencies to do right and wrong and from these experiences, we can deduce that mankind still has a lot to learn in regards to figuring ourselves out and that the code of ethics we currently follow must not be from God. I disagree since some of our laws match with the laws given in the Bible but that is beside the point.