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Don Demetriades

Philosophy 110: Intro Ethics: Good and Evil

Johnny Gaddis

Take Home Quiz #2

- 1) The “prediction problem” with utilitarianism states that we can never really know whether an act is right or wrong when we’re doing it. Meaning that you can’t know the moral status of an action until after it has happened. This is known as “*a posteriori*”. The “mistakes objection” to ethical egoism states that you can’t really know what the person you are in twenty years will want. Meaning that you can’t always do what’s in your best interest to yourself because that interest constantly changes. The similarity here is that these are both “*a posteriori*” issues. In both cases you will not know what the right action to take is until after you have done it. Everybody makes mistakes and nobody can predict what will happen perfectly.
- 2) The difference between ethical and psychological egoism is one discusses what is morally right or wrong and the other discusses the basic psychology of humans. Psychological egoism states that humans are driven only by their own self-interest, even in seemingly altruistic acts. Ethical egoism is not saying this, but rather stating that humans see their moral status of an action based on what best promotes their self-interest. These are two different ideas that should not be intertwined. If they are grouped together, one can’t accurately discuss either one.
- 3) Sartre states that “Existence Precedes Essence”. He is speaking to the idea of a human existing on this earth. If your essence precedes your existence then someone (a god) must have had the idea for us before we came into existence. More specifically, god had the idea for our personal identity before he brought us into existence. If existence precedes essence, then we make up what our personal identity is based on our actions. This is a main existentialist view that has taken hold through Sartre’s teaching.
- 4) The market value analogy to Sartre’s views reinforces that moral value is established by what a person does. If one decides that stealing is morally wrong, but then steals, then they have falsified their moral stance. However, one can then make this moral stance true again by choosing to not steal in the future. This is an argument for Sartre’s view because it shows that people choose moral value by their own actions. This is analogous to a market because the value of an item (moral value) is determined by what someone will actually pay for it.