

Value Education 1 : Group 12

Summary 3:

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The overall topic of the discussion was about the presence of a “Self”, within us. The discussion dealt with subtopics like the intention behind an action, the awareness of our thoughts and the limits of our perception.

The discussion first started out with the question of whether the good actions of a person without any memory of the past at any moment, that is, without any intentions, can be classified as good behavior or not. In the previous discussion, it was stated that the intention behind any action denotes whether the action was good or not. Therefore, if a person commits a good deed but without any intention of doing so, it was concluded in the discussion that the deed cannot really be considered good as it just happened by chance.

The discussion then moved to the notion of intentions and how they are formed. The thoughts that go behind an intention were analyzed and the differences between a conscious action with an intention and a subconscious action due to our reflexes, were analyzed. The effects of habits on our actions were also discussed about.

Then, the idea of a ‘self’ came into discussion, that is, whether human beings think they have something within them that is unique to them and is what defines them. The meaning of such a ‘self’ was analyzed and the factors that define us were thought upon. The existence of a unique ‘self’ was heavily debated upon, with people arguing that there is no clear definition of a ‘self’ and we cannot, by any means, fully know whether the person standing in front of us has such a ‘self’ or not.

The uniqueness of the ‘self’ that we possess also came into discussion. Thought experiments were conjured up to fully understand this point and the idea was heavily debated. The question “Can people with mental disabilities, with the same environmental conditions as an average person, develop the same ‘self’ that the average person develops?”, was brought into discussion. Another question that was brought into light was, “Can perfect clones of each other, isolated from each other but with identical environmental conditions, lose their sense of ‘self’ when they come in to contact with each other”.

The two questions brought forth two important properties of this ‘self’. One, is that our ‘self’ is defined by the way we perceive the world around us, and this perception depends on our mental conditioning and our way of thought. Therefore, a person with a mental illness cannot develop the same sense of ‘self’ that an average person will be

able to develop in those same conditions. Two, we can only know about our own 'self', not that of others. For all we know, the person in front of us may be an intelligent robot and there would be no practical way for us to know. Therefore, clones that grow up isolated in the same conditions, will still retain their 'self' after meeting each other, as they cannot conclusively know if the 'self' of the other matches their own, or even if the other has such a 'self'.

Then the topic of consciousness came about, with people trying to give a definite meaning to consciousness and what it means to have conscious and unconscious thoughts. The link between consciousness and free will was also explored, during the discussion of consciousness in Artificial Intelligence. All Artificial Intelligence machines follow some order written by the programmer. Therefore they do not have free will and so, cannot form independent thoughts.

All in all, the discussion gave us a deeper understanding of the human mind and the factors that separate us from non-living things and gave us a deeper understanding of life in general.

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