

Philosophy Notes Thursday 24th March 2016

Subject: - Kant – Intentions and the categorical imperative

The subject was taken from the next chapter of “The Philosopher’s Book of Questions and Answers” by D E Wittkower, PhD and the following questions, from the book, were used to aid discussion: -

Have you ever told a white lie?

What good outcomes did you achieve by lying?

Under what circumstances is lying justified?

We discussed the reasons that we tell white lies and what constitutes a white lie. It was thought that we choose sometimes to lie, or avoid the whole truth when seeking a good outcome. It is about intentions and justification. It was suggested that sometimes a white lie might be told more to protect oneself than to spare the feelings of the other person.

The consequences of everyone always telling the truth, or conversely everyone always lying were discussed. Neither was thought to be desirable.

Kant’s murderer at the door scenario was discussed. Most felt unable to tell the truth in such a situation, falling more into Mills more common sense acting for the greatest good theory.

Christopher recommended the following books: -

Kant: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions) by Roger Scruton

The Story of Philosophy by Bryan Magee