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Enduring Questions

Paper 4 Abstract

Morality

Does the intent to do good the only thing that classifies a person as moral? Or do the actions take precedence over this? People can do evil things for good reasons, so which is a stronger indicator of morality, intention or action? This is not an easy question to answer, and more than often there seems to be grey areas. It seems that most say that morality can only be determined by analysis of a person's intentions, yet some others say only by their action can decide one's morality, no matter what they want or wish.

In "The Power and the Glory", the priest is not a perfect man. He drinks, thinks selfishly, and even has an illegitimate child. Yet he is always seen by people as a moral man, because he risks his life every day to help the believers. His reputation by the readers gives credit to the argument that people can still be moral if they have moral intentions but sometimes immoral things. But the lieutenant, who always does whatever is needed for his people, is almost always seen as immoral. Yes, he does kill and threatens people, but he always does it with the future in mind. He strives to make the future free of corruption and deceit filled by religion and politics. Is this no more righteous than the priest's cause? Yet, his actions speak much louder than his intention, giving evidence that action is the judge of morality.

In "Watchmen", all the heroes seem to have some flaw. Some are indifferent to the people, some are stubborn, and some simply do not really care what happens. Rorschach is considered the

protagonist, always the guy who will do the right thing for the people. But, he will harm and kill criminals to get what is needed to be done. His uncompromising attitude for attaining good seems to overlook his brutal actions, and his character gives support to the argument that people can maintain their morality while doing harm to others. But on the other hand, the Comedian does heroic things too, is praised by the government, and is seen as a national hero. Yet he only does his job because he enjoys harming others, so he only does the good things for the wrong reasons. But still, he is still considered a hero, even by some of the people who knew his darkest secrets. So does his malicious intention of becoming a hero outdo his heroic actions?

In "The Trial and Death of Socrates", Socrates always preaches that people should try to never do anything wrong, to never offend someone or cause them harm. Only by this can someone be a good person. According to Socrates, when people do wrong, it harms all under the law. He states quite clearly, anyone who does something wrong is being selfish in some way, not taking others into account. Socrates offers the simplest solution to the issue, that if wrong actions are committed for good reasons, overall that person is not truly good. For him, there is always a solution where no one needs to be harmed or offended. And if there is not a solution, then non-action is a better solution than harming someone else. The intention of someone who does something wrong is always selfish.