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Justice and Human Flourishing

1. How does the ancient concept of shalom change your view of the aims of peace?

After reading Justice and Human Flourishing, I have a more complex understanding of the idea of peace. Before, I recognized peace as a sort of unattainable utopia that sought to eliminate conflict from our lives. I recognized that conflict is a part of our world that can never really be extinguished, and thus concluded that peace could not be achieved. Now, I have an understanding that shalom is not the absence of evil, but rather the idea of a holistic harmony that works to restore overall balance when conflict arises. Rather than seeking punishment, shalom seeks restoration and forgiveness.

1. Is the distinction between revenge, retribution, and restoration as paradigms of justice a new concept for you? If so, what aspects of each appeal to you? Why? What aspects of each concern you? Why?

I think that I knew about each of these paradigms of justice, but I never drew connections between them. Revenge as a means of justice is appealing because it gives you complete control over the punishment of the perpetrator. It allows you to not risk an undesirable court ruling or something of the like and essentially puts their fate in your hands. On the other hand, this just adds more evil to the society. The perpetrator of revenge becomes as bad as the one who committed the original crime. Retribution could be a good solution because it removes criminals from society and makes them pay for their actions, but the system is flawed. Sometimes guilty criminals are released and sometimes innocent people go to prison. Restoration promotes peace and healing, but doesn’t always force the perpetrator of violence to pay for their actions.

1. Who are the weakest members of your community? Are there ways that you could help seek justice in your community by caring for their needs? Does your understanding of justice include the flourishing of the weak?

The weakest members of society are those who cannot fend for themselves, like children and the elderly. I think in order to seek justice and care for their needs; we just need to capture any person that ever commits a crime against one of them. My understanding of justice doesn’t necessarily include the flourishing of the weak, but rather the strengthening and growth of the weak. I believe that ideally, the weak would have a community that would allow them to grow into a citizen that is no longer weak.

1. What do you naturally gravitate toward in a conflict situation: escape responses or attack responses?

Personally, if I’m not trying to mediate and resolve a conflict situation, I tend to shy away from attack responses. In the choice between fight and flight, my natural inclination is towards flight. Confrontation brings out my natural instincts towards avoiding conflict and trouble. I am a naturally cautious person, and will do anything I can to avoid getting hurt.

1. How could an end goal of restoration change the way you look at a shattered peace in your own life and relationships?

Restoration would make me look at my life and the future with a positive outlook. Because restoration is focused on healing, forgiveness, and other things of that nature, it would make me find something good in the situation, no matter how bad it was. I would be intent on new beginnings and restoring peace in my life and the lives of those close to me.