Reading Guide #11

Nozick, “Side Constraints” (in packet)
Nagel, “War and Massacre” (in packet)
Foot "Virtue and Vices" (in packet)

1) **Explain Nozick’s theory of side constraints. How is different from a "utilitarianism of rights"? (p. 136-138).**

2) Explain Nozick's claim that if there are constraints on the use of the tool, it is not "completely your tool" (page 139).

3) According to Nozick, utilitarians and others who believe that the rights of an individual can be violated for the sake of the greater good have a certain picture of society in which society is a social entity basically like a human body.
   a) Explain how this picture underlies their position that it is permissible to trade off one person’s rights for the sake of others.
   b) What is Nozick’s criticism of this picture of society as a social entity?

4) Nagel contrasts utilitarianism with absolutism.
   a) What is absolutism?
   b) Does Nagel think that absolutism is true and that utilitarianism is false? (Hint: no, he does not. His position is more nuanced than this—explain the nuance.)

5) Nagel gives examples of a politician running for office and someone in an altercation with a cab driver. Describe these examples. How do they “all derive from a single principle that hostility or aggression should be directed at the true object?”

6) Nagel’s claim that “whatever one does to another person intentionally must be aimed at him as a subject, with the intention that he receive it as a subject.” What do you think it means to aim your actions at a person’s *subject*? Give an example to illustrate your point.

7) Nagel’s introduces the principle that “hostile treatment of any person must be justified in terms of something about that person which makes the treatment appropriate” (62-63)
   a) Apply this principle to explain why Nagel thinks it is permissible to shoot at someone throwing a grenade but not at the grenade thrower’s wife or kids even though doing so (i.e. shooting the wife and kids) might be more effective in getting the grenade thrower to stop.
   b) How would Nagel respond to someone who claimed that there *was* something about that wife and kids which justified their treatment—viz. they are the only people in the whole world, the attacking of which will get their crazy husband/father to stop launching grenades?

8) According to Foot, strength and beauty are not virtues because they are not things that we can do anything about—they are not things that we can do intentionally. This might suggest that the virtuous person is the person with a perfect will, i.e. someone who always forms the correct intentions given the situation. Ultimately, however, Foot says that forming the correct intention is not always enough. Sometimes, you must also have the correct innermost desires as well as intentions and these innermost desires are not something that we can control. Give an example of a situation where someone forms the correct intention, but fails to be virtuous because their innermost desires are not correct.
9) **On page 323, Foot distinguishes between cleverness and wisdom. What is the distinction? Give an elaborated example of a situation in which wisdom, rather than cleverness, is required. Give an example of a situation in which cleverness rather than wisdom is required.**
10) On page 326, Foot argues that virtues are only necessary as correctives. That is to say, we only need to have virtue in a domain in which our desires are not "good guides to conduct throughout life." Can you think of an area where our desires ARE a good guide to life? Is Foot right that there is no virtue that governs this area?
11) Recall the example of Felicity from our discussion of Kant. (She was the person so kindly constituted that she always WANTED to help people). Now remember that Kant said that Felicity's behavior had no moral worth. Foot disagrees with this on page 329. Basically, her disagreement is that while difficulties of external circumstances can indeed make an action more virtuous, difficulties of internal motivations don't make the action more virtuous. Explain her point here and its relevance to Felicity.
12) According to Foot it is not possible for a villain to perform a courageous act while pursuing his villainous ends. Imagine, therefore, that a vengeful murderer must do many a bold act to get to her victim. Why does Foot say that although this act "took courage" it was not a courageous act? [Hint: use her analogy to poison that does not always act as a poison in certain situations.]