

Week 5 Reading Questions

Plato, "Morality and Happiness" – pp. 487-492

1. Explain the three different ways Socrates believes we consider things to be good.

Socrates overall goal was to explain that the just person was happier than one who was unjust

- 1) He gives analogy of health in the body and justice in the soul. Health is nothing but the harmony in the different parts of the body maintain different functions while justice is similar kind of harmony but in different parts of the soul.
- 2) A virtuous life brings more pleasure than life without virtue. Emphasized higher pleasures of life such as knowledge other than a simple peace of mind.
- 3) Most pleasures aren't pleasuring but exist from the absent of pain (relatively of pleasure argument). If I get sick and then get better, I may call it pleasurable but in fact it's just a relief from sickness.

2. Present in your own words the "Ring of Gyges" story that Plato's brother Glaucon discusses. What is the ultimate point Glaucon is trying to make about why we behave justly?

Socrates and Glaucon are debating on the topic of justice. Socrates believes that justice is not only desirable, but it only belongs in the highest class of desirable things (desired for own's sake and their own consequences). However, Glaucon believes all good comes from three classes: things that we desire only for their consequences, such as physical training and medical treatment; things that we desire only for their own sake, such as joy; and, the highest class, things we desire both for their own sake and for what we get from them, such as knowledge, sight, and health. Someone would practice justice out of fear and weakness than honor and strength. To summarize, Glaucon gave an example from the ring of Gyges. If a man received this ring, he would become invisible and can act unjustly with no fear of consequences. Glaucon agrees that even the most just man wouldn't deny the ring and overcome all materialistic, power-hungry and lustful urges. Glaucon summarizes explaining that people are only just because they are afraid of punishment for their injustice.

3. What do Glaucon and Adeimantus ultimately think is the best life for a man, and how should we pursue it? Do you agree or disagree, and if so, then why?

Glaucon ultimately states that not only do people prefer to be unjust, it's smarter for them to be. The unjust life is more pleasant and one who's unjust is honored and rewarded with wealth. We only practice justice because of the rewards it may bring such as an afterlife. I agree with this statement because Christians wouldn't remain in the law if they found out that God didn't exist. Why act moral if you weren't rewarded for your faith in heaven?

Since there aren't any rewards what then is the purpose of being right in the eyes of the Lord or even society?

Aristotle, "Ethical Virtue" – pp. 492-495

1. Characterize the "happiness" (Greek: eudaimonia) that Aristotle thinks is the ultimate end for man's pursuits.

Aristotle believes that happiness is a final goal that summarizes the totality of one's life. Unlike pleasurable sensations (ex: drugs), happiness is not something that can be gained or lost in a few hours. It's how you evaluate your life at the end to see if you lived to your potential. One can't measure their happiness until they have completed that life.

2. What does Aristotle argue is the function of a human being?

Reasoning is the function of a human being that sets us apart from any other species of animal. Humans can and should act according to principles and take responsibility for their actions.

3. What does Aristotle mean by saying virtue is a disposition, and not just a feeling or a capacity?

Virtue is not a feeling. Feelings are not praise or blame, such as virtues and vices are. Feelings make humans act in a specific way and virtues make us to act in a certain way. Our faults determine our capacity for feelings, and virtue is no more a capacity for feeling than it is a feeling itself. Instead, it's a disposition to behave in the right way.

4. How do we gain virtue?

We gain virtue in two ways intellectually and morally. We learn intellectual by instruction and moral by habit and consistent practice. Every human is born with potential to be virtuous but by behavior is how we train ourselves to be virtuous in our lives.

5. Explain how virtue is like a mean, or balance point between extremes. Present an example of such a virtue.

Some actions like murder have no mean or balance point in between them. Let's use the word RASH: displaying or proceeding from a lack of careful consideration of the possible consequences of an action. The word rash seems closer to courage than to cowardice. Most people are more likely to be cowardice than rash so therefore there is a state of deficiency in courage.

Used for a reference:

<https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/aristotle/>