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Intro to Philosophy

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

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

1. Pleasantness: This means that we consider something to be good because it gives us pleasure or makes us feel good. For example, we might consider ice cream to be good because it tastes good and gives us pleasure when we eat it.

2. Usefulness: This means that we consider something to be good because it is useful or helpful to us. For example, we might consider a computer to be good because it helps us work or stay connected with others.

3. Goodness in itself: This means that we consider something to be good because it is good in and of itself, regardless of whether it gives us pleasure or is useful to us. For example, we might consider honesty to be good because it is a virtue that is inherently valuable and important, even if it does not directly benefit us.

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?

In the "Ring of Gyges" story, Glaucon tells the tale of a shepherd named Gyges who discovers a ring that has the power to make him invisible when he wears it. With this power, Gyges can do whatever he wants without fear of punishment or consequences. He can steal, commit adultery, and even kill without anyone knowing. Ultimately, Glaucon is trying to make the point that people are not inherently good or just, but rather act in their own self-interest. He believes that it is only through the fear of punishment and desire for rewards that we are able to maintain a just

society. However, he also suggests that there may be a higher form of morality that is motivated by a genuine concern for the well-being of others, rather than just self-interest.

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 and Adeimantus argue that the best life for a man is to be just, not for the sake of appearing just, but because being just is inherently good. They believe that by being just, a person can cultivate virtues like wisdom, courage, and moderation, which will lead to a harmonious and fulfilling life. They also argue that being just is not always easy, and that it requires sacrifice and self-discipline.

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, or eudaimonia, is the ultimate end for man's pursuits. However, he doesn't define happiness as mere pleasure or satisfaction of desires. Rather, Aristotle sees happiness as a state of being that comes from living a virtuous life. He argues that true happiness is achieved when a person develops and exercises their intellectual and moral virtues, such as wisdom, courage, justice, and self-control. Aristotle believes that these virtues are not innate but can be acquired through practice and habituation. Thus, for Aristotle, the pursuit of happiness involves developing one's character and living in accordance with reason and moral principles. He also emphasizes that happiness is not something that can be achieved overnight or through external goods, but rather it is a lifelong pursuit that requires continual effort and reflection.

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

Aristotle argues that the function of a human being is to live a life of rational activity in accordance with reason. He believes that human beings have a unique capacity for reason, which distinguishes them from all other living beings. Therefore, he believes that the ultimate goal of human life is to cultivate and exercise this capacity for reason in order to live a virtuous life.

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

Aristotle believed that virtues are habits or dispositions that we develop over time, through practice and repetition. When Aristotle says that virtue is a disposition, he means that it is a settled or fixed tendency to act in a certain way. Virtues are not just feelings or emotions that we experience temporarily or sporadically, nor are they simply innate capacities or talents that we possess naturally.

4. How do we gain virtue?

According to Aristotle, virtues are developed through practice and repetition. He believed that we can gain virtue by engaging in virtuous actions, which gradually form the habits and dispositions that make up our character.

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

Aristotle believed that virtues are a mean, or balance point, between extremes. This means that virtues are the middle ground between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency. Virtue is achieved when we find the balance between these two extremes and act in the right way at the right time, in the right amount. For example, consider the virtue of courage. Courage is the mean between the excess of rashness and the deficiency of cowardice. Rashness is the vice of excess, where someone acts recklessly without regard for danger, while cowardice is the vice of deficiency, where someone avoids all danger out of fear. Courage is the balance point between these two extremes. A courageous person will act bravely when faced with danger, but not recklessly. They will also not be so afraid of danger that they fail to act when necessary. Instead, they will find the right balance of bravery and caution.