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3/17/23

Reading Question Week 5

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

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

According to Socrates, we consider things to be good in three different ways. Firstly, things that are good in themselves, such as joy, knowledge, and sight. Secondly, things that are good for their consequences, such as physical exercise, medical treatment, and learning. And thirdly, things that are both good in themselves and for their consequences, such as justice, courage, and wisdom.

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?

Glaucon presents the story of the Ring of Gyges, which tells of a shepherd who finds a ring that makes him invisible. With this newfound power, he can do whatever he wants without fear of punishment or retribution. Glaucon argues that any man if given the opportunity, would act unjustly if he knew he could get away with it. He concludes that people behave justly only because they fear the consequences of being caught and punished, not because they believe it is inherently good. Therefore, justice is not intrinsically valuable but only valuable for the rewards it brings.

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 believe that the best life for a man is one of power and prestige. They argue that a man should pursue wealth and honor to gain respect and influence in society. They believe that justice is only valuable because it brings these rewards. However, they also acknowledge that living a just life is difficult and may require sacrificing personal gain for the

greater good. I disagree with their view, as I believe that living a just life is inherently valuable, regardless of any external rewards.

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

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

Aristotle thinks that the ultimate end of man's pursuits is eudaimonia, which is often translated as "happiness" but is more accurately translated as "flourishing." Eudaimonia is a state of being in which a person is living their best life and fulfilling their potential. It is not just a temporary feeling but a lifelong state of well-being.

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

Aristotle argues that the function of a human being is to reason. Humans have the ability to use their rationality to make choices and decisions that lead to their ultimate flourishing.

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

Aristotle means that virtue is a habit or disposition, not just a temporary feeling or capacity. Virtue is something that is ingrained in a person's character and is demonstrated through their actions.

4. How do we gain virtue?

We gain virtue through practice and habituation. By repeatedly practicing virtuous actions, we form habits that become part of our character.

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

Virtue is like a mean or balance point between extremes because it involves finding the right amount or balance of quality. For example, courage is a virtue that is a means between the

extremes of cowardice and recklessness. Courage involves being brave in the face of danger but not taking unnecessary risks.