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PHI101

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Reading Questions- Plato & Aristotle
Plato, "Morality and Happiness" – pp. 487-492

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

Harmless pleasures and enjoyments is one thing Socrates considers good. It is a temporary good that will only satisfy us while we have it but not once it is gone. Once it is gone we will want another good to fulfill the need. Knowledge, sight, health, is also under the Justice category. It is desirable not only for themselves, but also for their results. This form of good is chased after for self-satisfaction and the satisfaction of others. Gymnastics, the care of the sick, and the physician's art; also the various ways of money-making is the third thing Socrates considers good. This does us good but it's controversial. People choose it mostly for the sake of some reward or result which flows from them. These are difficult tasks that most people would not choose to do but they do them because it is in the best interest of others.

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?

The "Ring of Gyges" is a story about a man who descended into a ravine of sorts only to find a dead body with nothing but a gold ring on their hand. So the man took the ring and later found out that the ring has the ability to make him invisible. What Glaucon brings to light is the idea that if there had been two rings, and one had gone to the just and the other to the unjust that

in the end, both men shall reach the same fate. This is because "... a man is just, not willingly or because he thinks that justice is any good to him individually, but of necessity, for wherever, anyone thinks that he can safely be unjust, there he is unjust." So if we take a look back at the story the man has the power of the ring and so he uses it to do things that are unjust because he has a place where he is safe to do so.

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 think that a man shouldn't live a just life. They want us to be unjust because the unjust man is "pursuing a reality; he does not live with a view to appearances." Glaucon and Adeimantus feel that the man who lives a just life is doing so for the appearances and rewards where the unjust man is simply living. I agree that in some way a just man is doing it for some reward but it doesn't mean the unjust man isn't living for some reward either. I agree that you should live your life in the moment but not at the expense of others. A just man should pursue a life that is rewarding to others first and themselves last. In the end, when blessing others or making people happy, that joy reciprocates onto ourselves.

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 the supreme good and is found in the function of a human being.

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

The function of a human being is to live well, do it according to the activity for the soul, and actions expressing the reason.

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

Dispositions are what makes us good or bad with respect to our feelings. If one of our feelings is on an extreme it may cause us to be in a good or bad way.

4. How do we gain virtue?

We gain virtue intellectually and ethically. Intellectual virtue originates through teaching, so it requires time and experience. Ethical virtues derive from habit. The ethical virtues cannot be changed from their natural behavior and so they do not come from nature but they don't not come from nature. They are made through habit.

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

There are two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency, and both are connected to a single emotion. Virtue is a mean or balance point between these two vices. Virtue is the ideal place for this emotion to be. Example: the feeling is shame: Excess: Shyness, Mean: Modesty, Deficiency: Shamelessness.