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Phi101:Introduction to Philosophy

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Reading Questions Lesson 5

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

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

Pleasant things, Useful things, Good things in themselves:

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" tale thus emphasizes the notion that people only act justly out of fear of punishment or a desire for rewards, rather than because they genuinely believe in the intrinsic worth of justice. According to Glaucon, people act justly out of fear of punishment or reward rather than because they think that justice has intrinsic value.

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 a man's ideal life is one in which he leads a good and honorable life. They contend that because it results in greater happiness and wellbeing, leading a life of justice and virtue is preferable to leading any other kind of life.

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

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

According to Aristotle, pleasure is a condition of being attained by a life of virtue, which includes developing positive habits and behaving rationally.

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

According to Aristotle, reason is the key to realizing and achieving our goal of eudaimonia, which is our purpose in life. We can cultivate moral character and the virtues that lead to eudaimonia by using our intellectual abilities.

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

?Virtue is not merely a momentary feeling or emotion, but rather a persistent quality of character or a pattern of behavior. It is learned over time by repetition and practice, eventually being ingrained in a person's character.

4. How do we gain virtue?

Aristotle believed that virtue was acquired by habit and practice. Virtue is not something we inherit from our parents, nor is it something we can learn about and then automatically develop. Instead, it is a behavior that needs to be reinforced over time by making consistent decisions and acts.

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

According to Aristotle, virtue is a balance between two extremes of action, and the goal of the virtuous person is to achieve this equilibrium.

