

Reading Guide #3: Religion and Egoism

This reading guide is provided to assist you in your reading. I encourage you to read the material through, first, then go back to answer the questions. You are not expected to submit written answers. You are expected to have responses ready for class discussion. Only the boldfaced questions will appear on exams. Page numbers refer to Louis Pojman, *Moral Philosophy*, 3rd ed., Hackett.

Plato, "The Euthyphro Problem," pp 311-312.

- 1. How do Socrates and Euthyphro define piety?**
 - 2. "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods." (311) Explain the difference.**
 - 3. Why do the gods love pious things? What does this tell us about the natures of pious things?**
 4. What distinguishes the pious from the god-beloved?
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Kai Nielsen, "Ethics without Religion," pp 327-333.

- 1. What is ethical conventionalism? Why do religious apologists claim that secular morality leads to conventionalism?**
- 2. What does secular morality lack? How does a religious morality provide what secular morality lacks?**
- 3. "There is much that we humans prize and would continue to prize even in a Godless world." (328) Explain.**
4. Can we define happiness? What does this mean for our knowledge of happiness?
- 5. What are the sources of human happiness? Are these available in a Godless world?**
6. To what kind of person is human happiness unavailable?
- 7. How is the nihilist a spoiled child?**
8. How is the factual explanation of human suffering easy?
9. What do people really want in an explanation of human suffering? Does religion provide this explanation?
- 10. Why does the secular moralist have a greater problem with egoism than the religious moralist?**
- 11. How does morality demand justice? Why is the religious moralist in a better position to justify principles of justice?**
- 12. How does the religious moralist dogmatically accept one simple principle? How does the secular moralist dogmatically accept two principles? How does Nielsen argue that the secular moralist's dogma is preferable?**
13. Describe Nielsen's hypothetical presocial state. What sort of community would the egoist in this state try to form?
14. How does the hypothetical example of a presocial state apply to the real world?
15. How is the fear of God supposed to provide motivation to be moral? Does it?
- 16. How is fear of God evidence of egoism, rather than morality?**
- 17. "Even if God is dead, it doesn't really matter." (332) Explain.**

Thomas Hobbes, "Egoism as the Beginning of Morality," pp 62-71.

- 1. In what ways are all men equal? How does equality lead to fear?**
 2. From what does war arise?
 - 3. For Hobbes, what is war? What is life like, in a state of war?**
 - 4. Why, according to Hobbes, is nothing unjust in a state of war?**
 - 5. To what do we have rights, in a state of nature?**
 - 6. How is seeking peace a first law of nature?**
 - 7. Why are people content with limited liberty, according to the second law of nature?**
 8. Why are some rights inalienable? Be specific.
 - 9. Why are contracts made in the state of nature void? What makes a contract valid?**
 - 10. What are justice and injustice? What needs to exist, before these terms can be used?**
 - 11. What is the purpose of a government (commonwealth)?**
 12. What is an arbitrator? Why must people submit to arbitrators?
 13. Are the laws of nature always binding? Explain.
 - 14. What are good and evil?**
 - 15. How do people enter a commonwealth? How is a commonwealth defined?**
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Plato, "Why Should I Be Moral?" pp 53-61.

- 1. Of what does Socrates want to convince his audience?**
2. What are the three different kinds of goods, with respect to why we desire them? According to Socrates, which kind of good is justice? What is the general opinion?
3. How will Glaucon proceed to praise the unjust life?
4. What, according to Glaucon, is the source of laws and covenants?
- 5. Why, according to Glaucon, do people act justly?**
- 6. How, according to Glaucon, would some one who possessed the ring of Gyges act? What does he think this shows?**
- 7. Describe the unjust man and the just man, as Glaucon depicts them. Which life is preferable?**
- 8. What are the three parts of the soul, according to Socrates? What is a just man?**
- 9. What is an unjust man, according to Socrates?**
10. Why does Glaucon call the comparison between Socrates's just and unjust men ridiculous?
- 11. What effects, according to Socrates, does behaving unjustly have on a person?**
12. Is it better, according to Socrates, to be caught while behaving unjustly, or not to get caught?