

Reading Guide #7: Virtue Ethics

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.

Aristotle, "Virtue Ethics," pp 249-259.

1. What makes some end better than another end? What will the best good be like?
- 2. Why is happiness the highest good?**
3. How does the good of something depend on its function?
- 4. What is man's particular function? What is human good?**
- 5. "For one swallow does not make a spring..." (252) Explain. Be specific about the use that Aristotle makes of this statement.**
6. What are the two kinds of virtues? Describe them.
- 7. How do we acquire virtue? What does this mean about how we should live our lives?**
8. How must an action be done, in order for it to be done virtuously?
9. Is virtue a feeling? Explain.
- 10. In what way is virtue a mean state? What lie at the extremes from this mean?**
- 11. How are bravery and temperance virtues? Between which extremes do they lie?**
- 12. How are generosity and magnanimity virtues? Between which extremes do they lie?**
13. How are mildness, truthfulness, wit, and friendliness virtues? Between which extremes do they lie?
14. How are some vices more opposed to the mean than others? Provide examples.
15. Why is it hard to be good, according to Aristotle?

Bernard Mayo, "Virtue and the Moral Life," pp 260- 263.

- 1. How does Aristotle's approach to ethics differ from that of Kant and Mill?**
- 2. Does an ethics of being involve doing? Does an ethics of doing involve being? Explain.**
3. How do utilitarians complicate explanations of motives?
- 4. How do Kant and Mill proceed to answer questions of what we should do? How is the Aristotelian answer different?**
5. "Why should we expect that all rules of conduct should be ultimately reducible to a few?" (262) Explain.
- 6. Are heroes and saints morally relevant? What does this mean for ethics?**
7. How do Kant and Mill leave no room for ideals?

William Frankena, "A Critique of Virtue-Based Ethics," pp 264-270.

- 1. For the virtue ethicist, what is the relationship between judgments of actions and judgments of character (aretaic judgments)?**
2. Distinguish trait-egoism, trait-utilitarianism, and trait deontology.
3. As Frankena uses the terms, what is the difference between benevolence and beneficence?
- 4. What are cardinal virtues?**
- 5. How are moral principles and virtues complementary?**
- 6. What role might virtues play in our moral lives, even if principles are more basic?**
7. Can we require strict adherence to principles, for moral agents? What role do excuses and exceptions play in a morality of principles?
8. How is the role of the virtues in a morality of principles different from their role in virtue ethics?
9. What is a moral ideal? How does the distinction between moral ideals and personal ideals support Frankena's contention that principles are more basic than virtues?
- 10. What are first-order virtues? How are second-order traits different from first-order virtues?**
- 11. How is respect for other persons a second-order trait? How is it a moral principle?**
12. How does Frankena distinguish between right acts and good acts? What does a person need to do, in addition to right acts, in order to be good?