Ethical Theory

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Moral Excellence

As you read the material for the next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?

2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently to these issues in the next class meeting.

Readings

- *Nicomachean Ethics*, book II, entire & book III.6–III.12 (pp. 33–51 & 68–82).

Questions

1. The majority of book II is a slow burn to Aristotle's final definition of moral virtue or excellence, which appears in chapter 6, right around line 1107ᴀ. This definition has, roughly, five or six parts to it. What are these parts? How does the preceding discussion in chapters 1–6 of book II attempt to justify these parts?

2. In chapter 7 of book II, and then chapters 6–12 of book III, Aristotle talks about different moral virtues. Explain these virtues, being sure to clearly state: (ᴀ) the name of the virtue, (ʙ) the substrate(s) or continuum(s) of emotion and/or activity connected to that virtue, and (ᴄ) the nature of the twin vices for that virtue.

3. In several parts of book II (especially chapters 1–4 & 8), Aristotle discusses moral development, or how we can acquire moral virtue. How do we do it? What problems does this account seem to raise and how does Aristotle try to address them?