

## Reading Guide Virtue and Habit II

Readings for 10 February 2011

### READINGS (REQUIRED)

- [A] Julia Annas, “The Phenomenology of Virtue” (2008), pp. 21-34 (V\*2)
- [B] John Doris, “Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics” (1998), pp. 197-209 (V\*2)

### READINGS (RECOMMENDED)

- [C] Re-read the Aristotle selections that we read for 02/08/11. If you did not read them for that date, be sure to read them now.
- [D] Walter Mischel, Yuichi Shoda and Monica Rodriguez, “Delay of Gratification in Children” (2003), pp.202-211 (V\*2)
- [E] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s TED talk, “Flow” at [http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/mihaly\\_csikszentmihalyi\\_on\\_flow.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow.html) (if you did not watch it for January 25)

### READINGS (SUPPLEMENTARY – ONLY IF YOU ARE VERY INTERESTED IN THE TOPIC)

- [F] Rachana Kamtekar, “Situationism and Virtue Ethics and the Content of Our Character” (2004), pp. 458-491 (V\*2)

### [A] Julia Annas, “The Phenomenology of Virtue” (2008), pp. 21-34

#### Background

Julia Annas is a Professor of Philosophy whose expertise lies in Ancient Greek Philosophy. She has taught for many years at the University of Arizona; previously, she taught at St. Hugh's College, Oxford. Annas has written books and articles about a range of topics in Ancient philosophy, including, Aristotle's metaphysics, Plato's *Republic*, Hellenistic philosophy of mind, and virtue theory.

Both this paper and the paper by John Doris that we are reading for today exemplify an important strand in recent academic philosophical writing: namely, an effort on the part of philosophers to identify areas of research in the social sciences literature that may provide insight into traditional philosophical questions.

In this essay, Annas examines the question of whether Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow can help illuminate Aristotle's notion of virtue.

## Passages to focus on/passages to skim

Please read the article in full.

## Reading Questions:

As you read through the selection, keep in mind the following questions:

- (1) What question does Annas set out to answer? How does she refine this question over the course of her paper?
- (2) What possible answers does she consider and reject?
- (3) In offering her answer, how does Annas employ the analogy of cultivating expertise in a practical skill?
- (4) Why is the phenomenology of virtue so hard to describe, according to Annas?
- (5) What are two features of the "flow experience" Annas describes?

## **[B] John Doris, "Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics" (1998), pp. 197-209**

### Background

John Doris is a Professor in the Philosophy-Neuroscience-Psychology program at Washington University in St. Louis. His research lies at the intersection of psychology, cognitive science, and philosophical ethics. Doris' current work involves both theoretical and empirical research on moral responsibility, evaluative diversity, psychopathology, and the self.

In this article, Doris evaluates various versions of virtue ethics in light of contemporary situationist social psychology.

### Passages to focus on/passages to skim

The selection we are reading here is excerpted from a longer article; please read the text in full.

### Reading Questions

- (1) What is Doris's primary criticism of Aristotelian moral psychology? What alternative does he suggest is better confirmed by the empirical evidence?
- (2) What distinguishes the intellectualist virtue theorist from the dispositionalist neo-Aristotelian virtue theorist?
- (3) Describe the intellectualist's response to Doris's empirical challenge. How does Doris respond to the intellectualist?

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- (4) Doris assumes throughout his discussion that whether virtue theory is true depends on whether there are any virtuous people at all. What reasons does Doris have for this assumption? Do you think this is assumption correct? Why or why not?
- (5) What does Doris suggest are the practical benefits of embracing situationism?
- (6) What is the distinction between emulating an ideal virtuous agent and following her advice? Can you think of an example where the two diverge?

[Posted 02/03/11]