

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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## Comparison between Aristotle's Virtue and Machiavelli's Virtú

One of the most controversial topics in the modern philosophy regards Aristotle's notion of virtue and Machiavelli's concept of virtú. In an overview of these terms, the notion of virtue was pioneered by Aristotle, and it is concerned with the role of a person's character. Virtue comes in a person naturally. He says, "the virtues come about in us neither by nature nor apart from nature" (Sachs, n.d.). According to him, the virtue of a person or a creature is found when it fulfils its natural function. For instance, a bird may be perceived as virtuous when flying while a fish may be perceived as virtuous when swimming. On the other hand, the concept of virtú was theorized by Machiavelli after deriving from the Italian word *virtus*. The concept describes the qualities that are expected of a desirable prince. When this word is typically translated, it means the moral good. However, according to Machiavelli, it refers to the necessary qualities that a prince must have so as to run his state accordingly. In reference to his ideas, a prince must be a highly virtuous person. This concept is not the same as virtue in the conventional definition. Virtú is perceived to encompass such qualities as strength, bravery, pride, and ruthlessness. A prince must have a flexible disposition in order to be fit for office. In addition, a prince should have capability of varying from good to evil in his conduct depending on the fortune and circumstances. He must be a pro of the knowledge on the strategies and techniques to attend to certain circumstances. He says that the best holder of office is the one who is capable of varying her/his conduct from good to evil and back again "as fortune and circumstances dictate" (Nederman, 2005).

The Aristotle's notion of virtue and Machiavelli's concept of virtú are different. Aristotle believes in the power of thought while Machiavelli believes in abiding by the will of the creator. Aristotle suggests that when a human being thinks, he can make inventions that allow him to achieve longer life, communicate between continents, explore the space, distinguish the species found within the environment, and develop superior weapons. This shows how a man can be successful through thought. In contrast, Machiavelli suggests that the virtú is what is expected of a prince to rule the state well. He should have a flexible disposition in order to adapt to the changing situations accordingly.

## **Antigone and Socrates as “Gadflies”**

Gadfly has numerous appearances in the *Apology of the Socrates*. Conventionally, a gadfly is a fly that constantly bites horses and other livestock so that they cannot sleep. In this context, Socrates compares himself to a gadfly while the community is perceived as a horse. He says that all the Athenians are asleep and that they are allowing injustices to prevail around them. Antigone and the Socrates both display heroism in the commitments to defy the cultural expectations and to go against the commands of the authority. They have a strong adherence to the social norms. In the *Apology*, Socrates defines himself as “the gadfly on the rump of the Athenian state” (as cited in Brickhouse & Smith, 2004). By this, he means that his role in life, the shape and the meaning of life are influenced by his irritating activity of the elenchus. Socrates describes himself as a God's gift for the society. The entire community would suffer upon his death. He says, “I am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by God, and the state is a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions ...” (as cited in Brickhouse & Smith, 2004). He presents himself as a good democrat from Athens.

Although Antigone and Socrates show differences in their commitments to cultural norms, they stick to this commitment in the face of cultural scorn. In a similar way, Antigone is a gadfly. She perceives herself to be following the norms that have a special status. Her status can be distinguished from the specific dictates of particular social norms. There is one instance when she finds herself in a dilemma of whether to obey Creon, to bury Polyneices, or become disobedient by leaving Polyneices unburied. Eventually, she is obedient to the gods and loyal to her dead brother. She agrees to bury him. She turns to be a distinct member of the society who is disrespectful to the gods.

## **Dialogue between Locke and Hobbes on Natural Law and Revolution**

Among the most famous theorists on natural law and social contracts were Locke and Hobbes. However, Hobbes differs from other theorists on natural law and revolution. While others argue that all human beings are social by nature, Hobbes holds a different opinion. Below is a dialogue where Locke argues positively while Hobbes argues negatively in regard to the natural law and revolution.

Locke: Hello, Hobbes, I want to discuss something with you.

Hobbes: Yes Locke, I am here. What is the issue?

Locke: I wanted us to converse on the topic of natural law and revolution.

Hobbes: What is your idea?

Locke: We live in a state governed by liberty whereby every person has a right to dispose what they own, but has no liberty to destroy himself. All human beings observe the law of the nature that all people are equal, and that no one should harm another person's life, liberty, or

possession. This is because they are all made equally by an omnipotent and wise creator. As such, the law of nature allows a person to own possession appropriately by being exposed to equal facilities. People ought to preserve themselves, and when a person's preservation comes to an end, they should not offend and take away the preservation of other mankind (Locke, 1690).

Hobbes: Oh! I like that you have a brilliant idea. Can I tell you my idea?

Locke: No, just a moment. I have one more thing. In a state of nature, people know what is theirs and what belongs to someone else. As such, all the property exists by the will of the state. For this reason, men may find themselves in a continuous conflict because of their ever wanting nature. When there is no superior authority to govern men, they will always want what belongs to others. This is what results in conflicts as men grab from others. As such, a person may retaliate to a thief who comes in to steal (Locke, 1690).

Hobbes: I beg to differ from your points.

Locke: Why?

Hobbes: I believe that the natural law is about how human beings seek to survive. People are under control of the commands of the sovereign. The sovereign promotes equality of the people and discourages people from defying the individual rights of others. People are able to make decisions in regard to the right and the wrong. They seek to solve disputes among themselves in the fear of consequences of the law (Gobetti & Bobbio, 1993). Also, human beings differentiate the right and the wrong. As such, they distinguish the lawful from the unlawful, and this is why they can be able to solve conflicts among themselves. I beg to differ from you because I believe that human beings differentiate what belongs to them and what belongs to others. However, they fail to

react according to this knowledge. What do you think?

Locke: Your ideas about the natural law and revolution are wrong.

Hobbes: Really? I also tend to think that your ideas are vague. We may not fight for this, but I beg you to stick to your ideas, and I stick to mine.

Locke: Oh! That's fine. There is no need to conflict. However, I beg to leave. I want to do some studies. I will challenge you tomorrow.

## **Locke and Kant Views on Enlightenment and Religion**

Locke and Kant are among the famous philosophers who have studied the concept of enlightenment. According to Kant, a person is enlightened when a man emerges from his self-imposed nonage. When enlightened, he can make his decisions without relying on the directions of others. Indecision and lack of courage are influential, and a person may remain in such a nonage unless they get enlightened. Kant is of the opinion that people use their understanding. He says, "have the courage to use your own understanding" (Kant, 1784). In the same way, a sound understanding of religion requires one to have a proper self-understanding and courage rather than reliance on the decisions of others.

Locke, on the other hand, defines enlightenment as the defiance from the tradition and other pre-established thoughts. They search for knowledge as a practical and useful power to control the nature. In religion, people leave their traditions and look for the new knowledge on religion.

### **Immanuel Kant's Views on the Role of Religion**

Kant is of the opinion that a person is enlightened when he is able to decide



on himself without the influence of others. Too often, Kant is perceived to be highly reductionist in regard to the issues of religion. Kant's theories regarding religion emerge directly from his political, ethics, and epistemology theory. According to him, religion is highly influential in political and ethical projects (Halsall, 1997). It helps to restructure institutions and modify the political attitudes towards a greater autonomy. Kant's views on the role of religion in politics are consistent with the views in a modern contemporary world. He is of the opinion that there is a great connection between ethics, religion, and politics. The main question that Kant tries to answer is whether political reasons lead to God and religion. Kant suggests that the presence of God is necessary in politics (Halsall, 1997). However, the influence that religion impacts on politics is minimal because politics hold a rational principle of the right, which performs political functions adequately and sufficiently. Without the ideas of Immanuel Kant, there would probably be no existence of the discipline of the philosophy of religion. Kant addresses religious questions by focusing on arguments for and against the existence of God, the concept of immorality, the compatibility of transcendent goodness and human evil, and the relationship between divine and morality.

### **John Locke's Views on the Role of Religion on Politics**

John Locke in his political philosophy suggested that there is a less stable relation and degree of importance between religion and politics. Locke suggests that there is no compatibility between religious and governmental institutions, and that their functioning cannot be collaborated. In his work entitled *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, his idea is that the government and the church should be separated. In reference to the political context, Locke uses the word *state* to symbolize the magistrate as the supreme legislative power. According to him, the role of the magistrate, which represents politics, is a guaranteed relief from what he describes as the inconveniences to the state of nature. The supremacy of the politics is

unconditional. In the contrast, the church advocates a society of free men joined by the worship of God (Chappell, 1994). For this reason, the church has no place in politics as suggested by Locke. He says, politics has an undisputable supremacy, which is against the church's subscription under the free will. Moreover, the church is perceived to be in a constant pursuit for personal and internal interests, which represents salvation. On the other hand, the state, which represents politics, is in accord to security and preservation of all people generally. As such, Locke is of the opinion that there is a crucial distinction between the state and the interests of theological institutions.

### **Kant's Vs. Locke's Views on the Place of Religion in Politics**

Kant and Locke hold two different views regarding the place of religion in politics. Kant holds the opinion that religions helps to shape the political and ethical projects. Through this, he means that religion helps to restructure institutions and modify the political attitudes towards a greater autonomy. Kant's views on the role of religion on politics are consistent with the views in a modern contemporary world. On the other hand, Locke disregards the opinions that religion has a place in politics. He perceives religion and politics as having two differing interests that cannot match. He suggests that religious and political institutions should not be joined.