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Ancient Greek Philosophers

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**Philosophical Reflection Essay**

**Part I: Philosophical Thinking**

Definition of Philosophy

Philosophy is the pursuit of truths that cannot be wholly determined empirically (Introduction to Philosophy & The Pre-Socratics). It aims to deepen our understanding of human knowledge, the essence of existence, and ethical behavior. Philosophy is not merely about collecting facts; it involves questioning the meaning and purpose behind those facts and considering how they affect our thoughts and actions. This discipline provides profound insights by abstractly and critically analyzing issues.

The Three Main Areas of Philosophy and the Approaches of Philosophers

1. Epistemology: What is knowledge?

Epistemology is the field of study that explores what knowledge is and how it is acquired. It questions the essence and limits of our 'knowing'.

Socrates argued that the pursuit of knowledge should begin by acknowledging one's own ignorance, and the path to true knowledge lies in self-reflection and questioning.

Plato, in epistemology, stated that true knowledge is not sensory but rational understanding obtained through the soul's interaction with Forms.

2. Metaphysics: What is reality made of?

Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that questions what reality is and what constitutes existence. It explores the essence of a deeper reality beyond our visible physical world.

Plato proposed the 'Theory of Forms' in this field, suggesting that the sensory reality is an imperfect manifestation, and the true reality consists of unchanging and universal Forms.

Aristotle, in metaphysics, believed that everything that exists is composed of 'form' and 'matter', which together determine the essence of objects.

3. Ethics: What is the good life and how ought I to live it?

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that explores how we should live and what actions are good. It evaluates the moral value of human actions.

Plato believed in ethics that true 'justice' is achieved when the three parts of an individual's inner self—reason, passion, and desire—harmonize.

Aristotle focused on the 'doctrine of the mean' in ethics, arguing that virtue is formed through actions that are neither excessive nor deficient.

**Part II: Reflection**

From the philosophical questions explored in the first part, I have chosen to delve deeply into "What is the good life and how ought I to live it?" Modern society offers a multitude of ways to live, and the development of the internet allows us to experience various lifestyles around the world. I believe that by seriously contemplating this question, I can make my life more fulfilling through my own choices.

Philosophical thinking is a process that goes beyond everyday events to understand how they impact our values and lifestyle. For example, when encountering differing opinions with a friend, philosophical thinking probes the underlying assumptions and values, encouraging deeper dialogue and understanding. Additionally, contemplating which option to choose among various alternatives involves reflecting on each option and giving oneself a sense of conviction. This approach deepens self-awareness, respects different perspectives, and assists in making more conscious and considered choices.

Aristotle's concept of the "golden mean" has influenced how I balance my life. Aristotle believed that virtue is formed through actions that are neither excessive nor deficient, and this is key to living a good life. This philosophy guides me to avoid extremes and focus on balance when making daily decisions.

Furthermore, one of the principal tenets of Stoic philosophy, "The most important tenet of Stoicism is to focus on what we can control and to not be upset by things that are beyond our control." ("Philosophy as a Way of Life", n.d.), has a significant impact on my daily life. I believe that a good life involves properly assessing what I can control and expanding that range through personal growth. This includes striving for personal growth, valuing supportive relationships, and practicing ethical behavior. For instance, when faced with uncontrollable issues at work, focusing on what I can do instead of being swayed by emotions can ultimately lead to significant outcomes.

Through such philosophical reflection, I have learned to adopt a calm and rational approach when facing uncertainty. These thoughts provide a solid foundation for personal growth and active contribution to society in the future.

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References

Sophia. (n.d.). *Ancient Greek Philosophers.* Retrieved from https://app.sophia.org/spcc/ancient-greek-philosophers-2