

Unit 4 - Homework 2: "Symposium of the Seven Sages" by Plutarch

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In order to answer the following ten questions, read pages 13—19 in Unit 4.

1. According to Thales, if you complain about being given an assigned seat, you are insulting someone, and you will make yourself disliked by at least two people.

- (i) According to Thales, if you complain about being given an assigned seat, who are you insulting?

- (ii) OPINION: Why do you think that he thought so?

- (iii) According to Thales, if you complain about being given an assigned seat, who will dislike you?

- (iv) OPINION: Why do you think that he thought so?

2. Bias asked, "How can a ruler ever be a happy person?"

(i) How did Thales answer the question?

(ii) How did Anacharsis answer the question

(iii) How did Cleobulus answer the question

(iv) How did Pittacus answer the question?

(v) OPINION: Do you agree with any of the answers to the question? On the one hand, if you *agree* with one of the answers to the question, then *which* is it (and *why*)? On the other hand, if you *disagree* with all of the answers to the question, then how would you answer the question (and *why*)?

3. In a letter, Amasis asked an unnamed king nine questions, and Thales disagreed with each one of the unnamed king's answers to the questions.

(i) Amasis was king of which African country?

(ii) The unnamed king was king of which African country?

- (iii) FILL IN THE BLANKS: In the table below, the left-hand column lists each question that the unnamed king was asked by Amasis. In the middle column, write the unnamed king's answer to each question. Then in the right-hand column, write Thales' answer to each question. Fill out the following table.

<u>Amasis' Question:</u>	<u>Unnamed King's Answer:</u>	<u>Thales' Answer:</u>
<i>What is the oldest thing of all?</i>		
<i>What is the greatest thing of all?</i>		
<i>What is the wisest thing of all?</i>		
<i>What is the most beautiful thing of all?</i>		
<i>What is the most common thing of all?</i>		
<i>What is the most helpful thing of all?</i>		
<i>What is the most harmful thing of all?</i>		
<i>What is the strongest thing of all?</i>		
<i>What is the easiest thing of all?</i>		

4. Speaking to Periander, the Corinthian tyrant's guest Mnesiphilus said, "Rather than based on wealth or social rank, our conversation should be democratic. Hence beginning with our Athenian friend Solon, each of you should share a personal opinion about democracy." After that, opinions were shared by the Seven Sages (*i.e.* Solon, Bias, Thales, Anacharsis, Cleobulus, Pittacus, Chilon), and then their host Periander reacted to their answers.
 - (i) According to Solon, what is the best democratic government?
 - (ii) According to Bias, what is the best democratic government?
 - (iii) According to Thales, what is the best democratic government?
 - (iv) According to Anacharsis, what is the best democratic government?
 - (v) According to Cleobulus, what is the best democratic government?
 - (vi) According to Pittacus, what is the best democratic government?
 - (vii) According to Chilon, what is the best democratic government?
 - (viii) According to Periander, why was each sage's opinion about democracy *strange*?

5. Diocles asked the Seven Sages to share their opinions about what the best home is.

(i) After the Seven Sages were asked the question by Diocles, how did Aesop make fun of Anacharsis?

(ii) How did Anacharsis respond to Aesop's joke?

(iii) According to Anacharsis, what makes a home a good and happy home?

(iv) According to Solon, what is the best home?

(v) According to Bias, what is the best home?

(vi) According to Thales, what is the best home?

(vii) According to Cleobulus, what is the best home?

(viii) According to Pittacus, what is the best home?

(ix) According to Chilon, what is the best home?

(x) In your opinion, what's the best home? Explain.

6. According to Chilon, sages and fools have different relationships to private property.

- (i) According to Chilon, what's the difference between a sage and a fool?
(Hint: It has to do with ownership and private property.)

- (ii) Cleodorus asked, "If the law has determined how much property a sage should own, then why do the Seven Sages of Greece own an *unequal* amount of property?

- (i) How did the sage Cleobulus of Lindos answer the question?

- (ii) In his answer to the question, how did Cleobulus make an argument by *analogy*?

- (iii) Do you agree with Cleobulus? Why or why not? Explain.

- (iv) In your opinion, is *inequality* ever *fair*? Why or why not? Explain.

7. According to Solon, it's best for someone to require no food at all, and the next best thing is for someone to require as little food as possible, because eating food results in more pain than pleasure overall.
- (i) According to Cleodorus, why is it irrational for someone to *seek* every form of pleasure?
 - (ii) According to Cleodorus, why is it senseless for someone to *avoid* every form of pleasure?
 - (iii) According to Diocles, if someone doesn't need to eat food, then why don't they need their body?
 - (iv) According to Diocles, if someone doesn't need to eat food, then why don't they need their body?
 - (v) According to Diocles, if someone doesn't need their body, then why don't they need themselves?
8. According to Solon, eating food results in more pain than pleasure.
- (i) According to Solon, why does eating food result in more pain than pleasure? (Note: You need to explain how he understood food to be a cause of pleasure and pain.)
 - (ii) Do you agree with Solon's reasons for thinking that eating food is more painful than it is pleasant?

9. According to Solon, mortals must eat food to live, and food cannot exist unless some living thing is killed.

(i) According to Solon, how are humans and *some* beasts different?

(ii) According to Solon, if it's always unjust for a human being to kill for food, then why is vegetarianism only a small way of avoiding injustice?

(iii) According to Solon, if it's always unjust for a human being to kill for food, then what is a more effect way of avoiding injustice than vegetarianism?

(iv) Do you agree with Solon? Why or why not? Explain.

10. According to Aesop, whom did Chersias believe to be the author of the Delphic Maxims at the entrance to the Temple to Apollo in Delphi? According to Aesop, whom did Chersias believe to be the author of the three entrance maxims carved into the temples walls at the entrance to the Temple to Apollo in Delphi?