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A Guide to Happiness: Conversation with Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics)

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A Guide to Happiness:
Conversation with Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics)

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2024

Yo dedico este proyecto a mi amada madre, Doris Yvette Almodóvar Rosado, quien quizás nunca llegará a leer este proyecto pero quien estuvo conmigo en cada paso del camino. Te amo, Belleza Tropical.

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To my family, I thank you for everything that you gave up to allow me to be here writing this today.

To my siblings, I hope you know that you are all my inspiration and my daily motivation.

To basketball, I thank you for being the break I needed to clear my head during this year's long journey.

To my parents, I wish to say only one thing, "Forever and Always"

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Introduction:

Before we begin to talk about this project, it is important for the sake of this paper to understand who Aristotle was during his time. Currently, Aristotle stands as one of, if not, the most influential figure in Western philosophy. Having lived between 384 and 322 BCE in a Greek colony in Macedonia, Aristotle was sent to Athens at about the age of seventeen to study in Plato's academy. From here Aristotle developed a strong curiosity in fields such as politics, biology, physics, logic, metaphysics, and ethics. His work in these fields became of great importance and some of his works, such as "Nicomachean Ethics" remain foundational in the realm of philosophy.

Aristotle's philosophical approach emphasized the importance of observation and empirical evidence. Meaning that he was focused on understanding the world through its physical form and was less concerned with abstract ideas of the world such as the ones proposed by Plato at the time despite having learned from Plato at the academy. He believed that every human had a natural desire to understand the world through observation and reason.

From this desire to understand the world, Aristotle began to tackle the topics of ethics within his own philosophical world. Aristotle took a liking to ethics because he was interested in the practical concerns of the individual. He wished to understand how humans could live well and practically in the world, and ethics provided him with a framework to answer this question. It is also important to note that at the time of Aristotle, there was a lot of social change in ancient Greece; this could have motivated Aristotle with his desire and his approach to ethics. He also believed that everything has a purpose or what he called "telos" meaning function. Thus, he aimed to discover what the telos of the individual is.

His research led him to label human flourishing as the ultimate goal of human life. This was as he called it, “eudaimonia” which will be translated as happiness for the sake of this paper. He viewed his work in the field of ethics as the study of how individuals could achieve this state of happiness. His research and thinking led him to determine that happiness is achieved through the acquisition of virtues that would lead the individual to moral excellence and thus, the highest good of life, i.e. happiness. Aristotle as a thinker was approaching ethics differently from other philosophers who focused more on the abstract thought of the world. He was approaching ethics through reason and logic. This is one of the reasons why he saw happiness as the acquisition of virtues for the individual which would, in turn, lead to social and relational development.

Overall, Aristotle's legacy remains profound, particularly in the field of philosophy, and many of his works are still revised, critiqued, and discussed to this day. His emphasis on observation, reason, and the pursuit of happiness continues to create philosophical discourse cementing Aristotle as one of history's greatest thinkers. His approach to answering the question of what happiness is and how it impacts and affects the individual is one of the things that first attracted me to this project. I was inspired by his work to look for an answer myself to what happiness is and what it looks like for the individual. My work looks to answer the same questions that Aristotle was trying to answer while at the same time using Aristotle and his work as a springboard to develop new ideas within the world of philosophy.

Very much like Aristotle, I, too, focus on the observation, reasoning, and logical questioning of the world. I became interested in philosophy because it allowed me to question the world around me in ways that others do not dare to. This expanded my understanding of the purpose of the human being and what it is that we are here to do. From here, I began to wander in the field of epistemology, looking for knowledge and making sense of our reality.

Having always been curious about the world, I can also say that I never intended to study philosophy. In fact, I was undecided about what I wanted to study in college during my time in high school. One day, during our history class we were given a handout on Plato and his works and many of my peers shrugged it off, saying how it was a waste of time and they could not apply it to today's world. Meanwhile, as I read the handout, I began to become genuinely curious about some of the things he had to say, wishing to share my thoughts and ideas with the class, or with those who care to listen I shall say.

From this moment, I began spending more time with my high school teacher and having a conversation about many of the readings and discussions we were having. My teacher gave me a book to read that he thought would spark genuine curiosity, this book was called "The Alchemist" a book that to this day I recommend to many. This book helped me realize that I wanted to interact with philosophy in the modern world and pursue it beyond high school. Thus, I decided to pursue a degree in Philosophy and begin interacting with more great works such as the ones from Aristotle, as well as more contemporary philosophers like Du Bois, Marx, and others. Out of all of the great philosophers that I've read, however, I found myself more attracted to Aristotle's work because of the similarities in thought that we shared. I believed a lot of Aristotle's work to be right in thought but failed in execution, meaning I differ in the means he proposed but would agree with why he saw this as important. Having been intrigued and curious by his works, I, then, decided to take a class focused primarily on Aristotle.

Back in my sophomore year, I took a course titled "Ethics with Aristotle". Based on the course description I knew I would be intrigued enough for the academic year but never did I imagine that the conversations and discussions that were had in that class would linger enough afterward to inspire my senior thesis on the topic. Yet, here we are. I am intrigued not only by the

topic of happiness but specifically by how Aristotle viewed and presented his theory of happiness. Aristotle stands instrumental in the philosophical world because of many of his ideals, one of them being the path towards what he called "Eudaimonia " which has been translated to represent happiness. I was intrigued by this because happiness has always been monumental to the average person; everyone wishes to have a happy life. Yet, to determine what makes for a happy life, we must first determine what happiness is.

Happiness has been an area of study for many scholars and even among the general public there has been some discourse about what happiness is. Some believe that happiness is only an act, and others believe it is a feeling. Others believe it can come after specific actions or feelings. For some, happiness can be found in the family. Others consider happiness to come from a life of honor. That is to say, if one leads a life filled with honor, then one must find happiness at the end of it. Because if not, then one may wonder what such honor was worth. Yet before we elaborate further on happiness and its means, it serves well to talk about why happiness is so important for the self. Can the individual live a life without happiness and still find success? Can one not wake up the very same whether they are happy or not, if this is the case then why are we so worried about achieving happiness throughout our life? The answer comes not from what we do every day but from how we feel about what we do every day. We can indeed do the same actions whether we are happy or not, but it is just as true that that action will not fulfill the individual the same if they are not happy. Thus, the importance of happiness comes from giving meaning to the world in which we partake every day. It becomes the highest good for which we shall aim for.

This meaning to the world is the same reason why the pursuit of happiness has been found as one of humanity's goals since the dawn of time and will continue to be talked about

well beyond our years. The pursuit of happiness is the ultimate end to our lives and gives purpose to the individual to continue to strive for what they believe makes them happy. Happiness becomes one of the key components of not just the individual but the society as well. They begin to live life not for the mundane but for the achievement of happiness.

During my time in this course, I had an instance in which I could not agree with what Aristotle was putting forward as the path to happiness, and it made me begin to question what my path to happiness looks like. Aristotle did not make clear the connection between virtues and happiness. It did not feel like virtue was the utmost and only requirement for happiness, I argue that if we understand the virtues as a means to happiness then the relationship between virtues and happiness is not necessary and identical. Thus, this creates new avenues for happiness. From this point forward I have begun to question the path that Aristotle wishes for us to follow and look to introduce a new approach, a modern guide to happiness. This paper looks to engage in conversation with Aristotle to further understand, criticize, and dissect his theory of happiness. This shall be done in 2 sections, each section looking to emphasize a specific part of my work with Aristotle.

Section I delves into a comprehensive summary of Aristotle's teachings with the hopes of teaching those with no background in Aristotle enough to understand his philosophical ideas and theories. Through analysis of the Nicomachean Ethics, I look to unpack Aristotle's assertion that happiness is the highest good that all mankind should strive for.

Section 2 presents a series of objections that I raised to Aristotle's work challenging some of his assumptions, mainly the belief that virtue is the only requirement for happiness, and highlighting potential shortcomings. Through critiques such as societal barriers that impede equal access to happiness, to the efficacy of the virtues themselves, this section looks to then

introduce the modern guide to happiness. A version of achieving happiness that arises from the objections that I find in Aristotle's work and looks to replace Aristotle and allow for a new approach to happiness. This new approach shall be based upon fulfillment. Fulfillment shall be the new means by which we replaced Aristotle's virtues and shall be detailed in this section.

Section 2 also looks to further the conversation with Aristotle by exploring areas of agreement in the discourse of happiness. Here, I acknowledge Aristotle's contributions and admit that Aristotle and I do stand in agreement on some of our ideas of happiness. One of them is happiness being defined as the highest good for which man should strive for.

At heart, this project embodies a scholarly journey that dates back to my sophomore year and is guided by philosophical curiosity and a wish to further the philosophical conversation of happiness through dialogue with Aristotle and his work.

Section I: Aristotle's Theory of Happiness

For Aristotle, every action and pursuit aims at some end and happiness is the highest end that humans pursue. He states, "If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good" (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, Chapter 7). For Aristotle happiness was not merely a fleeting feeling nor dependent on external circumstances. Rather, it was that which all humans look for, not for the sake of having it lead to something else but rather for the sake of acquiring that and that itself. Therefore, happiness is the highest good that one can aim for. One does not desire happiness for the sake of more happiness as one would desire money for the sake of more money. Happiness is the means to the complete life and harmony that individuals spend their lives looking for.

Aristotle describes how one can achieve happiness through the acquisition of virtues which leads to living a complete life. The complete life can be described as a life encompassing all the virtues to complete the being and allow it to be happy. These virtues represented a variety of different social functions yet were all seen as of equal importance in the achievement of the complete life. When discussing virtues Aristotle goes into great detail to showcase how these virtues will function and what the purpose of each virtue is; The purpose of the virtues as a whole is to lead the individual to live life the right way, the right way being one in which you conform and find happiness in the mean and just things in life. Virtues lead to happiness because, for Aristotle, these virtues were at the highest good for humans which in turn leads to a life of

happiness. These virtues are the only capable means of happiness for they are done for the sake of their own and rather not to acquire something else.

This means that one is not worried about the extreme ends of any of the virtues, for this is not the mean and just. This would be partaking in what Aristotle calls the “vices.” In describing the purpose, he says, "Virtue, then, is a state that decides, consisting in a mean, the mean relative to us, which is defined by reference to reason, that is to say, to the reason by reference to which the intelligent person would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency" (Aristotle 2.6). The virtues are the means which is the balanced feeling between the vices. The vice is described as either an extreme deficiency or an extreme excess. For example, cowardice will be seen as the extreme deficiency of bravery and bravery will be seen as the virtue as it is recognized as the means between the two extremes. On the other hand, one could have too much bravery which would be seen as overconfidence and be just as detrimental as cowardice. Thus, it is important to be neither in excess or deficiency of the virtue at hand. This is because to be in excess or deficiency of virtue is to remove the individual from being able to exercise practical reasoning and make morally sound decisions which leads to a state of harmony, i.e. happiness. After all, virtues for Aristotle are not so much absolute as they are situated on a continuum between excess and deficiency. Virtue is the midpoint that adheres to the most rational and beneficial course of action. To better understand this, consider the following example, a soldier who partakes in the deficiency of courage would look at the battle and quickly retreat, fleeing from the ability to be courageous. On the other hand, a soldier who partakes in the extreme of courage would quickly jump into battle recklessly and be faced with a quick demise. Thus, Aristotle urges the individual to act in accordance with the rational and beneficial course of action.

Still, Aristotle finds that in order to achieve happiness, one must not only find the means of a particular virtue but must also achieve all virtues or none. There is a unity to the virtues that Aristotle sees as necessary for the achievement of happiness. From book I to book X Aristotle discusses the relationship between happiness and virtues asserting that the most virtuous person is the happiest person and that to be the most virtuous one must acquire all the virtues. From the moral to the intellectual virtues, all are necessary for a happy person. This is because all virtues are interconnected, contributing to the development of moral character and essential in achieving happiness. In chapter 6 Aristotle states, “For the virtuous man’s actions and passions also will be in accordance with the right rule, because he feels towards them as he ought, and as he ought, when he ought, and all the other intermediate states similarly” (Aristotle 2.6). This is to say that the virtuous person’s actions and even emotions all act in accordance with one another for this is the right “rule”; given that it is done because they feel and act as they ought to. This interconnectedness plays a role in shaping the individual and supports the idea that to have one virtue requires having them all as they cultivate each other.

It is also not sufficient to simply have one virtue because this one virtue could be practiced maliciously. For example, the virtue of patience will not have any effect on the achievement of happiness if the individual does not accompany such with the virtues of courage, moderation, and all other virtues. This is because one virtue or more specifically the action of one specific virtue could be used for wrongdoings that will not aid the individual in their fulfillment of happiness. True happiness is achieved through the cultivation of virtues and the doing of virtuous activity. It is not enough to merely practice one virtue. Phillippa Foot helps explain this very well in her essay “*Virtues and vices*” when she proposes the following example “Suppose for instance that a sordid murder was in question, say murder is done for gain or to get

an inconvenient person out of the way, but that this murder had to be done in alarming circumstances or the face of real danger; should we be happy to say that such an action was an act of courage or a courageous act?" (Foot 15). The same can be said about many of the other virtues, for example, imagine that one were to rob a bank but out of moderation decides to only rob a specific amount of money, would we be content for such robbery to have occurred in moderation? Thus, we can begin to understand the necessity in theory for all virtues to be acquired and practiced in order for the individual to be able to be happy. To practice one virtue is not to have the virtues but rather to simply act in accordance with the specific morality that is convenient at the time being. This means that virtue is not being done for the sake of itself but rather as a means to acquire something else. Due to this, one cannot partake in virtue and in good conscience say that they have achieved the highest good, for in so far as it would be wrong, it will also be against the use of reason and morals.

Another element that Aristotle saw as highly important was friendship in the lives of human beings. Friendship for Aristotle is an essential ingredient in the pursuit of happiness. Friendship ties back to virtues as Aristotle believes that in true friendship one can cultivate and practice the virtues necessary in life. However, Aristotle is very clear on what a meaningful friendship shall be based on and, on the other hand, what friendships would bear no fruits and shall be discarded. He describes three types of friendships based on the three objects of love, "Now, in each kind, there is a mutual and recognized love, and those who love each other wish well to each other in that respect in which they love one another. The objects of love are the lovable, the useful, and the pleasant. Friendship may, therefore, be thought to consist in mutual love, as indeed it does; for it is a state of loving rather than of being loved" (Aristotle 8.3).

Aristotle also says that pursuing happiness cannot be achieved in isolation and one must be intertwined with society and contribute to the well-being of the community. For the individual is social in nature and must engage with his own community. While Aristotle also asserts that individual virtue is necessary for achieving happiness, he strongly asserts the notion that community is essential for the individual. He says, "Without friends, no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods; even rich men and those in possession of office and of dominating power are thought to need friends most of all; for what is the use of such prosperity without the opportunity of beneficence, which is exercised chiefly and in its most laudable form towards friends?" (Aristotle 1.7). Here Aristotle strongly suggests the need for friendship and social connection. It does not matter if the individual possesses wealth or stands in a position of power for these are to be deemed obsolete if there is no one with which to share them. This is because for Aristotle friendship provides opportunity not just for companionship but also for virtuous development.

Aristotle, then, goes on to say that one person must act upon not only friendship but also civic duty and fulfill their social and political obligation in order to achieve the virtuous life that he describes. He states, "state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that" (Aristotle 1.2). This is to say that the state plays a fundamental role in the life of the individual and it is one's duty to contribute to such a state for the sake of the individual self. The state can very well serve as the framework for which the individual can pursue the virtues and develop the relationships which are to contribute to their happiness.

Yet, not all friendships described by Aristotle are to hold the same importance. In these friendships, there are two of these types which are to be considered based on external factors and are thus not pertaining to the happiness of the individual. These are friendships based on pleasure and utility or as Aristotle calls them, the useful and the pleasant. These friendships are superficial and are only formed because they may benefit another external good rather than being done for the means of friendship itself. Friendships of virtue on the other hand involve the right disposition that Aristotle deems necessary for happiness. These friends help form mutually beneficial relationships. Aristotle tells us that we should look in our friends for the values and virtues that we wish to practice ourselves. In hindsight, he says that we should befriend those who are just like us because we like who we ourselves are. "The marks of friendship in relation to those around us, and by which friendships are defined, seem to have arisen from things pertaining to oneself" (Aristotle 9.4). Having friendships that are mirrors of oneself helps cultivate and sustain the other virtues of oneself in the pursuit of happiness. This makes friendship in itself, so far as it is conducted correctly, a virtue, in itself, that helps the individual in their journey to achieving the highest good which is happiness. Therefore, If one is bound to others based on how much they resemble oneself, then that would imply that we shall look to befriend those in our same class, who share the same values as well as the same opportunities.

As mentioned Aristotle saw not just friendship but the overall participation in civic life as important for the individual, as he believes this is part of the function of the being. This is because Aristotle believed that the political community contributed to the well-being and flourishing of the individuals. He also believed that virtues played a role in developing this community and thus saw happiness to be involved in the civic duties of the individual. These virtues would help shape the character of citizens and in turn, promote a common good that

should be acknowledged by the community. Virtues such as justice, fairness, and honesty helped maintain a well-ordered society and promote a community of justice and fairness. Other virtues such as courage and temperance help individuals to be able to prioritize the community over their own self-interests to achieve shared goals. These civic duties in turn lead to civic friendships which Aristotle describes as strong bonds of mutual trust and respect. Overall, Aristotle believes that civic participation is an important role in the life of the individual, but more so he believes that virtues are indispensable in ensuring the moral and political health of the community. Virtuous citizens promote the common good, uphold justice, and provide necessary leadership for the betterment of society all through the cultivation of their virtues.

Aristotle's understanding of happiness is deeply connected to the idea of virtues as the means by which you achieve such happiness. Happiness and virtues are intertwined in which one cannot exist without the other. Without the virtues, true happiness is not a possibility. These virtues enable individuals to act in accordance with reason through reflection and guided choices. After all, Aristotle sees the role of the individual to be one of rationality and reflection. He says, "Again, the good for man is thought to be that which is peculiar to him, and that which is the excellence of man; and if so, then the life of the good man would be the life in accordance with virtue. But we must not only suppose that the mere possession of virtue is enough, but that it must be in a complete life" (Aristotle 1.7). In happiness lies the practice of rationality and the exercise of virtues. When these functions are performed then the individual can begin to live in a state of harmony. Rationality is also important to help determine the means of the virtues in which one must partake. Without this rationality, we would not be able to think through what the vices of our virtues are. In order to properly assess a situation, consider the best course of action, and choose such best course of action, one must be capable of rational thought. Thus, happiness

cannot exist without rationality. These virtues and reasoning are the qualities of a certain person that enable them on the path to happiness.

These virtues ensure that happiness is not just a feeling but a state of being. This means that happiness is not a transient feeling or emotion, rather it is a holistic state of well-being. It is a constant pursuit of development and growth through the acquisition of virtues. Happiness is not solely dependent on external factors and instead is a constant state in which the agent cultivates virtues and realizes one potential. Happiness is a lasting and enduring state that reflects the quality of the individual's life. This is the fullest potential for which humans shall aim at. It is made of a comprehensive sense of well-being that encompasses rationality and virtues to ensure a constant state of happiness. Happiness is also an activity, one that must be practiced and is not to be expected to simply fall in our laps for the taking. With this, Aristotle emphasizes that happiness is not just mere momentary pleasures but instead an overall quality and assertion of one's life and actions. A life in which one must find satisfaction in the rational and the moral and intellectual virtues.

Therefore, there are certain things that Aristotle quickly proposes as a means of happiness only to quickly shut them down. One of these is wealth, wealth fails to be a means of happiness because you are only happy with your wealth until you now require more and more of it. For example, a person who has won the lottery and now believes themselves to be a happy person because they have acquired all this money chooses to buy a sports car. They think this will make them happy and for the first few days, they have a feeling of ecstasy, a feeling of overwhelming emotion but only shortly lasting. Until one day they see someone else with a better-looking sports car, for example, all of a sudden the enjoyment of their wealth has been replaced by the want to acquire more wealth to buy the sports car they just saw. The person who

thinks wealth will lead to happiness will forever be chasing such happiness. And thus, never actually achieve the happiness that they think wealth brings. Another example is the life of honor that was mentioned at the beginning of this essay. Those who decide that a life of honor will lead to happiness will once again never achieve this because they will always be seeking that honor to be given to them. They will continue to act in search of gratification and acknowledgment given by others meaning that they are looking for a feeling and external satisfaction, which as we noted earlier fails to truly guide the person to happiness.

Long-term happiness will lead you towards a fulfilling life that every person should strive for. This long-term happiness will be achieved through fulfillment in the actions that you do in your life. This fulfillment accompanies feelings of joy, comradery, and satisfaction rather than a feeling of completion or way of doing. This idea that a complete life is necessary for happiness can be found in Aristotle's description of happiness as he says "both complete virtue and a complete life are required:... Nobody deems happy someone who deals with fortunes of that sort and comes to a wretched end" (Aristotle 1.9). For Aristotle, misfortune abruptly ends one life not allowing for completion and self-sufficiency of oneself.

As Aristotle says, "Happiness is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action. The demonstration of it must be conducted by reference to the whole of a life, and to the lives of the many, because we seek the nature of what is final and self-sufficient in things generally" (Aristotle 1.8). Misfortune puts the whole life to a short stop affecting one's quality of life and the pursuit of virtuous activity. Without this complete life, one cannot acquire nor exercise the virtues that one should acquire for the highest good. This is especially true when misfortune is brought on by someone's own doing stemming from vice. This reflects the flaws of the individual and their moral failings. Even if such downfall brought temporary pleasure along

the way. Thus, someone who faces misfortune, especially when such misfortune is brought forth by their own moral flaws, cannot be considered happy within Aristotle's theory. This means that Aristotle sees completeness as a requirement for happiness. He believes that happiness must be complete and encompasses all aspects of the life of the individual, it must not end at the mercy of an abrupt end but rather needs to be developed and reach a natural end for the individual. This also means as we have mentioned that happiness is not reserved to mere moments or experiences but rather overall life and the quality of such life. This creates a self-sufficiency in happiness. This means that happiness is not dependent on situations beyond the individual's control and emphasizes that happiness is an inner state of virtue and reason.

Another factor that Aristotle lays out for happiness is the need for good fortune, he expresses how good fortune is an important factor for many and helps facilitate the realization of happiness. He acknowledges that those who have access to this good fortune are in a better position to acquire and practice the virtues for they do not have any hardships standing in their way that would prevent them from happiness. He does not say that good fortune is a requirement of happiness for he still sees happiness to be found in the virtues and practical reasoning of the individual, However, he indirectly positions good fortune as a key instrument when he says, "Happiness evidently requires external goods also; for it is impossible, or not easy, to do noble acts without the proper equipment. In many actions we use friends and wealth and political power as instruments; and there are some things the lack of which takes the luster from happiness, as good birth, goodly children, beauty; for the man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is not very likely to be happy, and perhaps a man would be still less likely if he had thoroughly bad children or friends or had lost good children or friends by death. As we said, then, happiness seems to need this sort of prosperity in addition; for which

reason some identify happiness with good fortune, though others identify it with virtue" (Aristotle 1.7). In this passage, Aristotle looks to assert that good fortune and external goods can contribute to the accessibility of happiness to those who possess this good fortune. Others who are not as lucky as to have good fortune or external goods readily available at their disposal struggle more with their journey to happiness.

These requirements that are laid out by Aristotle give a path to happiness through what he calls the practical life. The practical life is one that engages in practical affairs such as that of the political community and the development of friends. In this practical life, Aristotle asserts the importance of virtue and practical reasoning as the guides to happiness that have been detailed above. This striving to live life virtuously and to fulfill one's social and political duties is, up until book X, Aristotle's approach to happiness and the highest good that one can achieve. In Book X however, Aristotle proposes another path to happiness in what he calls the contemplative life. This contemplative life is one found in contemplation of intellectual pursuits, philosophical inquiry, and an overall pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. Such life is deemed by Aristotle to be the highest form of human existence and the ultimate source of happiness.

The contemplative life enables individuals to achieve a deeper understanding of reality which allows them to truly contemplate the highest truth and values the world has to offer. Such life allows the capacity for profound insight into the true nature of human existence and its condition. Unlike, the practical life which is focused on external engagement with the world and more collaborative action. Although both are to be grounded in virtue and reasoning, the contemplative life is for Aristotle the highest form of happiness that the individual can achieve as it enables a deeper understanding of the world and its realities.

In summary, we shall lay out Aristotle's criteria for happiness. His first criterion is completeness, having been explained as being happiness as a whole without being limited to temporary moments or experiences. The second criterion is self-sufficiency making happiness to be independent of external circumstances and factors and instead being harvested by internal cultivation of virtue and reason. The last criterion is good fortune for Aristotle believes that without this access to happiness is made excruciatingly harder and less plausible. Good fortune allows people to do the noble acts as it presents them with the equipment and means necessary to do as such. In this criteria lies Aristotle's ultimate requirement of that of the virtues. Having explained in the section above how Aristotle intertwined all of our actions with virtues, I now lay clear his assertion that without virtue happiness cannot be achieved.

It is also important to reiterate that for Aristotle, all of these virtues worked harmoniously together and you could not truly have one without having all of them. These virtues are cultivated throughout the journey of man and thus, are at the mercy of misfortune. Misfortune as Aristotle mentioned removes one's ability for happiness because it disrupts the cultivation of the virtues and eliminates the ability. This is why Aristotle sees good fortune as a contributor to the acquisition of happiness.

This complete life, made up of virtues, is for Aristotle the path to happiness but that is not to say that this is the only path to happiness that he proposes. Remember that for Aristotle there is a distinction between the complete life and the contemplative life. The complete life has now been explained and summarized. The contemplative life is for Aristotle a different path to happiness that he considers to be the ultimate path to happiness and the highest form that an individual can achieve. The contemplative life is more concerned with the inner affairs of humans, focusing on the knowledge and insight of the nature of man; Meaning that it is not

concerned with the external affairs such as that of community and friendship. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that Aristotle still finds this highest form of happiness to arise from the cultivation and practice of the virtues.

Section II: Fulfillment

In section I, we looked at Aristotle and his definition of happiness, where he explained happiness as the highest good and detailed how such happiness could be achieved; through the virtues and the complete life. In this section, we shall dissect the reasonings that he puts forward to showcase how in his theories he fails to truly showcase the necessities of the virtues as the means of happiness. Then, having looked at the ways in which Aristotle's reasoning and therefore the virtues, fail. I shall then propose a new alternative to the approach of happiness. For after all, Aristotle does not err in his definition of happiness but instead in the means by which we achieve it.

I shall begin by acknowledging that the objections that I raise to Aristotle's arguments vary from less important to more important. This list does not look to be comprehensive in nature but rather aims to show the flaws in Aristotle's argument and then looks to further the conversation of happiness by providing an alternative approach to exchange for that one of Aristotle.

In Aristotle's list of virtues lies an accessibility problem. For when we begin to look closely at the list of virtues that Aristotle proposes it starts becoming apparent that some individuals are, because of given circumstances outside of their control, unable to achieve all the virtues that are listed by Aristotle as necessary to have a happy life. For example, In Book IV he speaks of the greatness of the soul, "For he who is worthy of small things and deems himself worthy of them is moderate but not great-souled, since greatness of soul resides in greatness, just as beauty involves a great stature" (Aristotle 4.3). This description seems to be put only in order to justify individuals being above one another. After all, how can one clearly distinguish

greatness if not to only be separated by rank and public opinion. This statement makes clear that there is an evident hierarchy and that those at the top are only to be capable of greatness. Here Aristotle asserts the notion that the greatness of the soul requires recognition of the public in order to be considered as greatness of the soul or more specifically “magnanimity” as he calls it. Then, A farmer who does and sees himself as great is only moderate in his behavior because he does not get recognition from the general public and thus cannot truly achieve the virtue. Neither would be the parent who sees themselves as great because of the job that they did in raising their children. These acts may be noble and moderate but they fail to reside in greatness. Such logic, in turn, negates the opportunity for that farmer and the parent to ever acquire magnanimity and achieve happiness.

Aristotle further cements this point when he says that “the man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is not very likely to be happy” (Aristotle 1.7). Here Aristotle recognizes that there are certain criteria associated with achieving happiness. Although this statement seems insignificant in the grand scheme of the argument, it is important to remember that for Aristotle there are external goods that he sees as helpful in the pursuit of the virtuous life as outlined in section I of this essay. This combination of the external goods such as that of beauty are the external goods that allows specific individuals to be able to pursue and cultivate the necessary virtues. After all, Aristotle does not presume that everyone can be great, or fortunate enough to have these external goods. Much like he does not presume that everyone can be happy. This helps showcase how the virtues were meant for specific individuals rather than all. For only the ones who have access to the requirements of the virtues and the luck of the external goods have a chance at the complete life.

The individual who succeeds in only a menial task shall forever be stuck in this feeling of worthiness yet never truly being able to take the steps necessary to achieve happiness. Much the same, the parent who sees greatness in his children is bound to temporary satisfaction for he does not reside in proper greatness. If this is true, shall we still look at virtues as the only means by which one can achieve happiness? Should happiness not be within the reach of every individual? Not everyone must reach happiness but all shall have the option to look for it, if Aristotle removes, in the virtues, the opportunity for the majority to reach the highest good then we cannot sit here and say that virtues are without a doubt the only approach to happiness and automatically discard the opportunity for the majority to reach it.

Then, in our first objection, we showcased how in the criteria that are listed by Aristotle, stemming from the virtues themselves and extending themselves out into the necessity of external good, happiness becomes unattainable for the majority of humans. Instead, happiness is reserved for the elite in the hands of Aristotle's description of how to achieve the complete life. These virtues being the only path to happiness are thus not essential to achieving happiness but instead, they are essential in controlling who gets to pursue happiness. This objection is less important in the grand scheme of our argument as I mentioned but it serves to guide the path that led me to question the validity of Aristotle's argument. This objection is then to be considered less important not because it has no strength in its basis but rather because it leads us to a much stronger and deeper conception of the issues that arise within Aristotle's work. Therefore, consider this objection as less important as it serves to guide us through the journey in our analysis of Aristotle but not any weaker in its criticism.

In the essay *Feminism and Aristotle's Rational Ideal* by Homiak, she proposes a theory in response to my first objection in which Aristotle's structural society does allow for the window

of opportunity for all to achieve happiness; it just requires all parties involved to divide the menial labor, which is a term Homiak uses to describe the type of labor that someone with a lower social class status would be required to do. If one can do this switch in society it will allow for all parties to achieve the status necessary to acquire the virtues and all would be able to achieve happiness. This is because "Actions do not differ as honorable or dishonorable in themselves so much as in the end and intention of them. Just as citizens take turns ruling and being ruled, then, they could take their turns at menial labor, while preserving for themselves the type of life that Aristotle considers fully human" (Homiak 310). This means that everyone involved would be able to be at the top of society.

That is to say that if society can agree on this menial labor as something that needs to be done for the betterment of society then one shall have no problem alternating between who must do such work and who would be attaining the fully human life that Aristotle presents, which as mentioned earlier is that which includes the practice of all virtues. Yet, we are not concerned with whether society would be able to agree and take their turns as menial labor any more than we are concerned with Aristotle allowing for this turn of social class to occur. For, after all, Aristotle would not allow this turn of social class to occur.

One important reason as to why he would not let this turn of social class occur lies within how Aristotle saw friendships. There is no denying that Aristotle sees friendship as one of the key elements within the lives of human beings but Aristotle is also very clear on what a meaningful friendship shall be based on and, on the other hand, what friendships would bear no fruits and shall be discarded. Aristotle tells us that we should look in our friends for the values and virtues that we wish to practice ourselves. In hindsight it says that we should befriend those who are just like us because we like who we ourselves are. "the marks of friendship in relation to

those around us, and by which friendships are defined, seem to have arisen from things pertaining to oneself." (Aristotle 9.4). Therefore, If one is bound to others based on how much they resemble oneself, then that would imply that we shall look to befriend those in our same class, who share the same values as well as the same opportunities.

This turn of the social hierarchy would in theory introduce the opportunity for someone beneath the ranks of those at the top to befriend them and thus gain the opportunity to achieve all the virtues and achieve happiness. Yet, If those in the top class do not befriend those who are currently in charge of the menial labor they would have no reason as to why they would want to allow the switch in which they would become the ones doing such work. Thus, given Aristotle's definition of what we should look for in our friendships, we become bonded to a society in which those without status would find themselves unable to gather the friendships to develop their virtues further. Therefore, only those with the opportunity to achieve all the virtues will be found with the opportunity to achieve happiness.

This ideal removes the opportunity for the majority of the world to find happiness and instead delegates happiness to the hands of the elite. This delegation eliminates the opportunity for everyone to achieve happiness in their lives. Aristotle was intentional in his description of virtues and how we are to seek each one. If we were to divide the sides and have everyone partake in menial labor that still does not give a reason for those who were previously held at the bottom to know what to do when they are now part of the elite. In fact, some could argue that this switch would actually create a further divide as the ones who were previously doing all of the menial labor would take the time not to acquire the virtues and gather the public recognition for their greatness that they need but instead would use this opportunity to take back much of what they have suffered at the hands of others. They would wish to do the same as the previous

structure and only engage with the ones that are now found at the top. This would keep occurring in a never-ending cycle at every switch of societal structure.

Nonetheless, it serves well to ponder on what happiness would look like if Aristotle did agree to this distribution of menial labor or if Homiak decided that she agreed with Aristotle's idea of happiness but discarded a few concepts. That is to say, if there was a version of Aristotle's method of achieving happiness that allowed everyone to achieve happiness, would this method be one of true complete life and happiness? Let's imagine that those who agree with me in saying that Aristotle deliberately eliminates the possibility for all to achieve happiness and rather reserves it for a select few argue that the main concepts are still true and his theory needs to be tweaked rather than replaced. For example, Homiak argues that the life of happiness that Aristotle puts forth need only be tweaked to guarantee happiness for all and remove any need for any other alternative to achieving happiness to be introduced. Am I then content in saying that I agree with Aristotle and would just change minor details of the theory to adapt to modern times?

For this we will assert one thing, Aristotle's approach to happiness is available for all, and it's an equal approach to the complete life. That is to say that a farmer and a wealthy man have the same chance of acquiring all of the virtues and none is any more likely than the other. This removes my previous criticism of the theory by creating an equal approach for all and makes the theory a fair approach to happiness.

However, In doing such reconstruction, only to allow everyone to achieve happiness, we alter Aristotle's theory altogether. Since to allow everyone to achieve happiness requires us to modify three specific aspects of Aristotle's theory. The first is friendships, in order to allow everyone to be happy we must be okay with altering the definition of friendship from that of Aristotle to one that allows all classes of people to interact with each other despite any

differences in stature. This means that friendships are not as much a reflection of oneself as they are a social dynamic with no class implications. The second thing that we must alter is magnanimity itself to remove greatness as that which is to be judged by the masses rather than an internal affair. This leads us to our third revision which is that of society itself. We must alter the structure of society to eliminate the separations between classes and the distinction between what is noble and what is great. In fact, this revision serves as the most important since without being able to change the structure of society one would fail in revisioning how we look at friendships and greatness.

Despite these revisions, there is still more to Aristotle's approach to happiness that brings forth questions of its validity, this leads us to our second objection which is our most important. Virtues as a hold are the means by which Aristotle says happiness is obtained but how do the virtues in themselves bring forth happiness? Does cultivating a specific virtue really allow for happiness? The answer is quite simply no even for Aristotle. For if one specific virtue was all that was needed there would be no need to gather them all which is one of the main requirements for Aristotle.

In this case, the issue becomes virtues themselves. It is true that, in theory, one could understand why all virtues would need to be acquired and practiced to be able to be happy. Yet, this does not mean that this then becomes the only means for which this shall be possible. For how can Aristotle include in this list all the virtues that shall be of importance in the search for happiness. What if there is a virtue that is missing from this list? Aristotle makes his list extensive in saying that the collection of the virtues he puts forth are the only ones needed, but what happens if after one collects all these virtues he still feels as if he is missing more? Does he

look for the virtues that Aristotle says do not exist or is he to feel happiness despite his discontent?

In response to this some may argue that Aristotle does not explicitly say that his list is to be exhaustive in the search for happiness, to this I say that he also never denies nor mentions the ability to look for other virtues or that these virtues are to hold the same importance as the one that he deems important. In this limbo of whether or not these virtues are to be the only ones responsible for happiness also lies the biggest problem in these virtues. In the midst of virtues, it creates confusion on which virtues are to be important. Is it only the ones Aristotle mentions or do I have the freedom to create my own list of virtues that shall bring me to the complete life? If the specific virtues are to be doubted, not knowing which list is plausible, then how are we to confidently say that the virtues are the only means by which one can achieve happiness. After all, if we are not to have basic virtues, a list that is comprehensible and tells all that these are the virtues that in turn lead to happiness, then we are weakening the argument for the need for virtues. This is because it then becomes subjective as to which virtues are to be required and which can be forgotten.

Thus, if the virtues as they stand for Aristotle, are designed to only allow a select few to have the chance to acquire happiness, and then even if such exclusivity was removed the virtues still fail to confidently be the path to happiness then we must be able to say that Aristotle fails to showcase the necessity of the virtues in the path to the highest good that we all strive for.

If virtue in itself fails to bring forth happiness then we can also not expect the accumulation of virtues to be the road to happiness. This is to say that if one virtue is not enough for all, then we also cannot expect that by simply collecting more and more virtues we would be able to say we are happy. Others who agree with Aristotle may say that virtues in themselves and

the accumulation of such are not happiness but rather the acquisition of these virtues leads to a well-balanced life which, in turn, leads to happiness. To say this is to acknowledge that Aristotle fails to make virtues the path to happiness and that virtues themselves are not the goal. If this is the case then would happiness not be a well-balanced life rather than a virtuous life? Thus, eliminating the necessity for the virtues and rather making them simply a path to the well-balanced life rather than the only road. If this is true then virtue cannot be the means to achieving happiness. Rather the virtues then become an approach that leads individuals to the well-balanced life that shall be considered to be happiness. Aristotle himself understood this, which is why at the end of his book he introduced the contemplative life as the ultimate version of happiness.

Let us now return to an earlier point found in section I to really understand what Aristotle calls the contemplative life. In section I, we showcased how the contemplative life was for Aristotle the highest form of human happiness. In this definition, Aristotle proposed a new means by which one can achieve happiness that he put above the virtuous and social life described previously. Why does he do this? Could it be because he himself recognizes that his theory of happiness through the virtues is too narrow? He, himself, understood that happiness as being achieved only through the virtues was not solid enough and instead, he looked to introduce a new approach. One that also disassociates itself from the external and gives light to happiness as an internal affair. In this contemplative life we find that Aristotle does not oppose new avenues to happiness for he, through reflection, also came to understand that his argument lacks the necessary statements to truly showcase the necessity of the virtues as the means of happiness.

In this vein, those who agree with Aristotle in the contemplative life as the means to happiness would do so by saying that Aristotle acknowledges a life of happiness that is free from

external affairs such as society. Yet, in removing themselves from the external affairs Aristotle tries to show that the contemplative life needs to be fulfilling for the individual. One must find in this life the completion of their journey much the same as what I argue to be the new path to happiness. This approach enables individuals to achieve a deeper understanding of reality according to Aristotle. In this contemplative life, Aristotle begins to understand that happiness is not truly tied to a specific action or means such as the virtues. He never makes this explicit but through the contemplative life, he hints for fulfillment as open to any action and not just that of the virtuous life. Then, given the contemplative life and within this, Aristotle's reflection, the necessity for virtues as the means to happiness seems arbitrary and opens up fulfillment as the new guide to happiness

In brief, our second objection brings forth issues with virtues themselves showing how Aristotle never explicitly showcases how we are to uphold and choose these virtues while also admitting to a new version of happiness that concerns itself more with the internal affairs of the individual and with the feeling that arises from this reflection. Thus, creating confusion amongst those who wish to live a virtuous life. In this confusion, Aristotle fails to make virtues clear as the necessary means to happiness.

Having now raised two objections to Aristotle's approach to happiness, one showing how he fails to include the majority of people and the other showing how virtue, in itself, fails to be a reliable approach to a complete life. I wish to return to the revisions that were made in response to my first objection. In these revisions to Aristotle's version of happiness, we created a version of happiness that is not based on competition, unlike that of Aristotle. In agreeing to these revisions, those who agree with Aristotle recognize that there is a contingency between virtues and happiness. If this is true then this must create a new avenue to the approach of happiness. In

this case, I shall now propose a new approach to happiness, this approach does not look to be in defense of Aristotle but rather an alternative to Aristotle. For, after all, remember that Aristotle did not fail in his definition of happiness but rather in his approach to such.

Let us now return to the well-rounded and complete life. If we have already established virtues as not the makeup of this complete life then what guides us in the journey to a harmonious life? For as we mentioned Aristotle's definition of happiness is not wrong. I, too, agree that happiness is the end goal that all individuals should be reaching towards and that to not achieve happiness is to limit oneself in the journey of life. This complete life allows all who achieve to gain the maximum potential of what life has to offer. It completes the person and gives them a sense of unity that cannot be replicated. This is because this complete life serves not for the sake of something else but for the sake of itself, as Aristotle said.

Although I concur with Aristotle in the idea that happiness is a way of life and not a momentary feeling, we differ in the ways that we believe this happiness is achieved. While he believes that happiness will be found through a complete and virtuous life, I find happiness to be found through other means that differ greatly from the ones that have so far been brought forth by Aristotle.

I propose that happiness comes not from a specific action but rather a feeling of completion no matter the action that one performs. This feeling shall be called fulfillment; Fulfillment is the thing necessary to achieve happiness for it does not matter the action one does, if he feels he has completed the act he will be happy. Let us look at an example of wealth, if one thinks wealth leads to happiness one will forever be chasing happiness, for he is focused on the action and its result rather than the feeling of completion that comes from this action. Yet if one feels complete after attaining a small amount of wealth, he no longer feels the need to continue

the pursuit of wealth. Thus, achieving happiness. Let us look at another example. Let us imagine that one thinks they will achieve happiness through their job, and therefore look for happiness by working and working and working every day no matter what. This person will always feel as if they must continue to work forever, not allowing them to truly achieve happiness. They are bound to the actions and their results instead of looking for fulfillment in the process of this action. If we return to honor, As Aristotle also used, as a means of being happy, we can find that once again if the person feels fulfilled and is looking for fulfillment rather than a constant chase for honor, they will be able to be happy.

This feeling of fulfillment can easily be confused during the search for happiness so it is important to recognize that fulfillment is found not in what you are striving for but in the process it takes to achieve whatever you have set forth for yourself. This feeling of happiness will not be short-lived, and it will transform into a state of being in your life. One might confuse momentary happiness with fulfillment because, for a short period, one will experience feelings of joy and satisfaction. However, momentary happiness ties in with the ecstasy feeling that is short-lived and does not amount to the complete life that we give to arise from happiness. You will experience such a feeling when for example you get a new job, however, this feeling will quickly fade away as you settle into the job and therefore cannot be described as true happiness. This feeling of joy was only temporary unlike the happiness that we described which ought to be everlasting and lead to a complete life.

This temporary feeling is much like the search for honor and wealth in that happiness is being looked for in actions that will ultimately need to be repeated over and over in order to maintain their happiness. Actions cannot be the source of happiness because they cannot guarantee the feeling after the completion of one and only one action. That is to say that one

particular action will not bring happiness for any longer than the duration of such action. In this, I concur with Aristotle. As he also mentioned, happiness is an everlasting feeling and not one that is found in temporary joy. Yet, Aristotle also believed that both complete virtue and a complete life are required (Book I Ch 9) to achieve happiness. However, we have already looked at how the complete virtue, meaning the collection and application of the virtues, is not truly necessary as the means for happiness. Thus, Aristotle and I are to agree on the definition of happiness but this approach looks to amend in the areas in which Aristotle failed in providing an approach and introducing an alternative.

This definition of happiness does not exclude anyone from the capability of achieving happiness. No matter if the person is a part of the elite or not, anyone can feel fulfilled in the process and completion of their acts and thus, can achieve a life of happiness. In fact, I propose that this definition of happiness allows for more of the common class to achieve happiness for they are more likely to find fulfillment in their actions than someone elite. After all, in the modern world, many at the elite level struggle to grasp their reasoning for why they do what they do and instead live their lives in constant search of episodic happiness rather than a true state of being with happiness. Therefore, they would struggle to find fulfillment in their actions and would not be able to achieve happiness. Nevertheless, this is not to say that they are unable to achieve it.

As a result, I see a life of happiness as one filled not by the doing of actions but rather by the feeling of completion and fulfillment in those actions. If there is no need to keep pursuing the action itself then one will be able to finally be in a state of happiness. The search for happiness will not be an easy process and in fact, many will find this happiness to be more fulfilling after the struggles that they face. For more acts of failure will lead to a bigger fulfillment once the

individual learns how to look at not the action but the feeling gained from such action. It becomes a joyous experience after having struggled to find happiness for a while. Consequently, this search for happiness would lead to limitations for everyone can be fulfilled but not all are automatically fulfilled.

Ultimately, the new alternate approach to happiness is one that focuses on the process of a particular action rather than the result and needs for the individual to find fulfillment in this process rather than in the action itself. This allows everyone to achieve happiness, unlike Aristotle's approach. While also making happiness and the search for such an internal affair, insofar as the action is not important nor is any action required to properly guide one to happiness. In this case, any outside influence can be disregarded and not deter anyone from happiness. In the same way, one can find happiness in the feeling of fulfillment that comes from actions deriving from others and needed outside influence.

When discussing this definition of happiness, many who disagree will find themselves arguing that the definition of happiness I propose fails because it allows for happiness in things that we, as a society, deem to never be the cause of happiness. I.E. acts such as theft, bullying, and other acts harmful to society. One could say that an individual could rob a store and through this act achieve happiness for they found the act of robbing the store fulfilling and feel completion in their lives. While I acknowledge this point of view, I feel inclined to explain that this act would not be seen as fulfilling by the individual who commits it if and only when the individual themselves find themselves battling with the results of their actions.

The act of robbing a store or any other harmful act to society would not be able to lead to happiness in the individual if instead of fulfillment it introduces feelings of doubt and wrong-doing in the person who has committed the act. This is because the person would feel as if

what they have done is not right even though the reasoning for doing it could be justified. For example, a parent who no longer has a job but needs to provide for their children steals a few cans of soup from the store, the reason for which the theft was committed could be understood but this does not lead to any feeling of completion in the person who committed the theft if the person who committed the theft has self-doubts about their actions. This could also apply to any other act that will be seen as wrong in society. We can think about bullying, the person who bullies another could be doing so because they feel a need to feel superior, or because they are projecting insecurities onto someone else. This person uses bullying as a means to deal with something else but not as a means to achieve happiness. The important thing to note here is that the inability to find happiness in these actions is not dependent on how society views these actions but rather the self-conflict present in the individual who is committing these acts. This is because society need not play a role in the internal affair that is the search for happiness.

To say that this act would not lead to happiness implies that happiness cannot be obtained without the approval of others. If society does not feel your contributions to its community to be meaningful then you are not to be granted happiness. This idea is not just followed by Aristotle but agreed upon and expanded on by many other philosophers. For this paper, we shall not focus on other philosophers and how they connect happiness with society but instead focus on the dilemma that arises from this requirement for happiness. Is happiness internal or external? For this case, external shall be defined as the need for societal approval and the need to contribute to society.

Although an act that is considered to be harmful by society holds no implication for the individual who searches for happiness, this dilemma introduces one of the limitations that arises from fulfillment. The feeling of regret is a feeling that will impede someone from achieving

happiness. Regret, for the sake of this argument, refers not to regret for what one did not get to do but instead regret for the actions that one has committed. This feeling of regret would not allow anyone to find fulfillment because they do not feel complete in their process given their wish to not have partaken in this act in the first place. To return to the example of the parent, if the parent feels regret for having stolen the food for their children they could never find fulfillment in this process.

Then it becomes clear that happiness is not contingent upon society as Aristotle had presumed and therefore not external. This gives rise to our third objection to Aristotle's approach. Societal expectations are another method that looks to further exclude all individuals from achieving happiness and remove internal implications of happiness. Just as Aristotle listed many virtues that were unattainable for a significant group of people, societal norms look to further control what we believe to be a happy life through the implications of what is acceptable and what is wrong. Instead, by making happiness to be an internal feeling of fulfillment, it allows everyone to be able to achieve happiness despite what others may think of their actions and methods.

This would include a person who wishes to completely seclude themselves and live in the woods surrounded by nothing but nature while also including the individuals who do align with the expectations of society. Fulfillment does not present itself any differently to those who do not align with society nor to someone who does harm to society with an act such as theft or worse as previously detailed. We do not hold the right to say to a person who opposes society that they are any less happy than we are simply because we frown upon their actions. In fact, if we ourselves have not found the fulfillment that allows us to achieve happiness then the person who opposes society may well be happier than we are.

Many who will disagree on happiness being internal would lean on the fact that we as human beings are naturally social beings who require interaction amongst each other and are in fact interconnected and require interactions with other members of society. Society provides social support and assistance and facilitates the day-to-day for many individuals. It also gives a majority of people a framework for life and how to contribute their talents, thoughts, and efforts towards a common goal. This also creates shared experiences that individuals can use to connect with each other and create meaningful connections. With all that being said, it fails to provide a logical connection between what society provides and its necessity for happiness to exist. After all, one could agree that individuals may have an obligation to be part of society but this does not also create a requirement for society to be a part of happiness.

Given the achievement of happiness arising from the feeling of fulfillment and completion. I feel obliged to return to the example of a man robbing a store and further explain what happens if there are no feelings of wrongdoing and rather they do find themselves to be fulfilled in their actions. Are we then inclined to say that this man has achieved happiness despite causing harm to society? I dare say yes because happiness need not be tied to society and its expectations. Although harm can be caused by the actions of the individual in search of happiness, such harm shall not impede the realization of happiness in the individual. As I mentioned earlier in the text, if such an individual finds regret in the action then that person shall not be considered happy for they do not feel fulfilled in their action. Yet, if the same action is repeated by those who do not find regret and instead feel fulfilled they shall be considered happy. This is because the individual's happiness is not contingent upon the impact on society nor is it contingent upon the action itself, but rather the feeling that arises from the action which has been performed.

Let us return to the example of the man wishing to live the rest of his life in the woods. If he were to decide to stay and contribute to society he would never have the opportunity to be happy for he does not find this fulfilling. Instead, he will have to contribute to society and society would recognize him as a happy member because he is contributing to the cause but he would never see himself as happy. Once again, showcasing happiness as an internal affair removed from external implications.

Let me introduce a new example. Let us imagine a person whose fulfillment comes from never leaving their house and spending their whole day lying on the couch watching reruns of their favorite TV show. One who believes happiness is external would say this person is not happy and instead is wasting their potential in life by not doing anything productive. However, what they actually mean is that by not doing something that is agreed to contribute to society they feel that what they do cannot be meaningful or bring forth any happiness. Yet, who in society truly has the power to say what one person must find fulfilling? Society has no power to say that such action is worthless because it is only worthless for as long as it does not bring anything to other members of society. That is to say, the action itself is not what is being considered meaningless but rather the result of such action. If all of a sudden the act of staying in, laying on the couch, and watching reruns was being observed by a scientist to learn the impact it has on the human body, society would now consider this as meaningful despite the act staying the same. The same can be said for a person who plays video games all day, society would be quick to label this as a lacking member of society. But if this person were to be a professional video game player the response by society would be different despite the fact that the action is the same. For much of what society finds meaningful is attached to results that go against the search for happiness which does not concern itself with the results of actions.

The individual shall not be focused on how their actions affect society because society is only interested in what they gain from each individual. If one only attempts to achieve happiness through the lens of society they shall never achieve true happiness and completion. Thus, the only way to achieve happiness would be to focus on the internal affairs of the individual. One cannot focus on how their actions impact society in their search for happiness if one wants to truly achieve it. For society holds no power in saying what happiness looks like for a person, even if such action is harmful to society. The act can still bring happiness to the individual just as long as they are fulfilled in the process.

In contrast, Aristotle believed that one who deviates from society would not be able to achieve happiness. Although Aristotle did believe in individuality, he still believed that one must conform to society and contribute in order to achieve the virtues necessary for happiness. Yet, just as the expectations of virtues, societal expectations will remove the ability for many to achieve happiness. Conforming to what society expects of you only creates a false sense of happiness in which, although you do not feel satisfied, you justify it with the impact that you have on your community. It is still possible for internal happiness to align with the expectations that society places on the individual. A person who finds happiness in helping and teaching kids will place themselves well in the eyes of society but that is still an internal happiness. The welcome of society does not affect his ability to be happy, it just makes it more acceptable in the eyes of others.

In discussing attempts at happiness, there is one specific thought that has lingered persistently. Earlier in the essay, I mentioned that under the idea of happiness as fulfillment, such happiness could be acquired by means that other members of society would deem as unworthy of happiness. I.E. Someone who commits evil is still able to achieve happiness. I mentioned how

the individual themselves could control this but now I wish to talk about the role of society in this matter. As mentioned, Aristotle saw society as a key aspect of happiness. For him, one could not truly achieve their potential without relationships and communities that are helping develop the virtues necessary. Therefore, relationships were an essential aspect of happiness and were needed to truly achieve the highest good that happiness is. Once again, I disagree with Aristotle on the importance that society plays and even go as far as to say that at times society can actually do more harm to an individual's happiness than good.

If we look at happiness from a social perspective then it could be understood why happiness could never come from the evil person. For this person would be contributing nothing but wrongdoing to society. Let us for example look at a man who works a corporate job. This individual works in business, handles a ton of money, and is responsible for generating a sizable income for his respective business. Let us imagine that, in the process, this person commits financial fraud, which hurts the business and in turn, hurts the workers and their families. Given this, many members would characterize this individual as evil, for he took advantage for his own personal gain. Thus, society would say that this person is not capable of achieving happiness for he lacks the relationships and sense of community needed to achieve this. Furthermore, the person could very much recognize that in their actions they are hurting their fellow members creating a sense of doubt in their mind. This could lead to further complications as they do not feel satisfied with their actions and in turn, are incapable of realizing the highest good.

This train of thought, however, has merit only if we assume that the individual recognizes the importance of their community and wishes to be a member of this society. As mentioned previously, if the individual is not concerned with the impact that his actions will have on the community then he is also not concerned about the implications that their actions will have on

their social standing. Rather, he is concerned about his individual happiness and he believes that by committing this fraud he is positioning himself one step closer to achieving it. Individual happiness is not concerned with society and the development of relationships in order to achieve such per se, but this does not mean that society does not play a role in happiness. Rather, it tells us that the individual chooses whether or not society would have a say in their happiness.

The individual who decided to commit financial fraud does not find happiness in society but rather in his actions. However, one would be inclined to think that the individual would recognize the wrongdoing in their actions even if they are not concerned with the results it has on others. If we say this to be true, then the individual would be incapable of happiness through this means as they would be in a constant state of defense for their actions. If this is true, then evil could not lead to happiness for evil itself is recognized as something that one ought to not do.

I do not mean to talk about the psychological aspect of human behavior but I do wish to propose a scenario in which an individual does not see evil as evil but rather as human behavior. Consider a person who's what is now called a social media influencer. Their job is to influence their followers into whatever product they are promoting albeit a faulty product. In their mind, they are simply doing what they find fulfilling and have no idea or concern for what the advertisement of the product does for others. In this case, given that in the eyes of this person he is not any more evil than someone else in the community, is he just as able to achieve happiness despite how other members of society look at his actions? The answer is yes, for happiness comes from the individual, and insofar as the person sees no wrongdoing or evilness in their actions then they shall face no internal conflict in their doings. Aristotle saw society and the role of the community as vital in the road to happiness. Once again, in doing so he leaves great power in the community to be able to judge and decide what one could be happy for. This removes the

autonomy of the individual and places them within a tight circle of activities that are approved by society.

In brief, evil is only to affect the individual when they, themselves, see their actions as harmful to others or themselves. If one describes evil as accepted by society but not the individual, then he is no less incapable of fulfillment than the utmost standing member of society.

Now I wish to make clear that I do not wish to disagree with the importance of society in creating a sense of unity in the world but I do bring forth doubts when it comes to its validity as a proper means to its relation to the happiness of every person. Imagine this, If society serves as a needed relation to happiness then this would invalidate the happiness that has been created by individuals who lived before we created what we now call society. Are we to say that those early humans were not happy simply because they did not have a framework to life that included political obligations? It could be that those who lived without society actually had greater ease in achieving happiness for they were not presented with all the obligations and norms that all must follow today. This allowed them to focus on their own internal affairs and achieve their fulfillment thus leading to a happy life. Instead, society today serves to deter people from their fulfillment by establishing norms that benefit a community rather than a self. In turn, we spend our lives serving our community rather than realizing our internal happiness.

One of the things that I now wish to return to in this paper is the accessibility of happiness to the individual. Although it is true that to begin this paper, I mentioned that for Aristotle happiness is only available to a select few, it is also true that one must question whether everyone gets to be happy. There lies a fundamental difference between having access to

happiness and achieving happiness; that which has been mentioned briefly but I wish to make clear now.

Aristotle, as we saw earlier in the paper, was concerned with making happiness only available to a select elite group of people who would, then, be the only ones capable of deeming themselves as happy. My theory on the other hand wishes to allow everyone to be able to achieve happiness, I.E have equal access to happiness. Yet, to then say that everyone would, in so far as happiness is available to them, be happy is a flawed logic and would diminish the purpose of happiness. After all, if all were to be happy only for the sake that it is available to oneself then happiness would serve no purpose in the life of the individual. Therefore, it becomes apparent that in order for happiness to be the highest good we need people to not choose happiness although they are quite capable of such.

In Chinese philosophy, many follow and understand the concept of the Yin-Yang. Which is a concept used to describe the interconnectedness of even the most opposites of ideals. Meaning that all things exist as inseparable and contradictory opposites, including happiness and unhappiness. As such, we give meaning to happiness as the highest good for which one should strive for because it is also not present in everyone at all times. Let me now further differentiate between Aristotle and myself in saying that Aristotle, in my view, positions only a specific crowd to be able to obtain happiness, while I position everyone on the same playing field regardless of social standing but acknowledge that not everyone would still achieve it.

In fact, what would by some be seen as happiness might actually be described as a limitation to happiness. Let us imagine that a man has won the lottery. As described this person would seem filled with ecstasy for they now think of themselves as happy given the life-changing reward they have gained. Nonetheless, this reaction and thought lays a fundamental

error in the way in which some individuals view happiness. They focus on the result as the means by which they measure their happiness. This leads to what we will call episodic happiness. It is the short feeling of euphoria that vanishes as soon as the individual wishes for more of what caused the feeling. It is a constant search for this momentary feeling and thus, unable to bring true happiness. This is why philosophers such as Aristotle and myself are quick to dismiss these attempts at happiness. They are futile in bringing forth the actual good and ever-lasting feeling that happiness provides.

I wish now to return to an earlier point in this paper in which I mentioned how Aristotle saw happiness as affected by misfortune. Remember that for him, those who were at the mercy of misfortune and came to an unfortunate end could not be deemed as happy individuals. This idea for Aristotle came mostly because, for him, happiness as the highest good required a complete life. As a result, those who faced the highest of misfortune and had an early end were incapable of achieving this complete life and thus failed to acquire happiness. The reasoning here is easy to understand for Aristotle would see misfortune as not allowing a complete collection of virtues and thus the inability to have a lifelong well lived. His emphasis on the community can also be noted here as much of the misfortune would be at the hands of the community and how they react to the misfortune of one another. Some who consider my view of fulfillment as happiness would be inclined to say that even at the hands of misfortune one could come out as happy.

Let us Imagine the following example: there is a lovely parent who has achieved happiness through the fulfillment of raising their children. However, this parent is met with misfortune and their house catches on fire with the children still at home. The parents, with no second thought, jumped to the rescue of their children and saved them. Yet, in the process, they

were met with misfortune and received a wretched end. In plain sight, some would think that Aristotle would see such a tragic end as an inability for the parent to achieve happiness. This could be in part because such misfortune and tragic ending make the individuals unable to acquire all virtues that Aristotle sees as necessary. However, Aristotle would indeed see this noble act as one that would still allow for the complete life and the cultivation of virtues. After all, Aristotle recognized that the complete life was not only bound to time but also to action. The complete life is a sense of purpose, a story, and also a risk of failure all at once. It is not completely merely for the passage of time.

At the same time, happiness as fulfillment rather than the acquisition of virtues gives rise to the opportunity for happiness to be had even at the hands of misfortune. In another example, imagine that a warrior dies at the hands of war, a young warrior who had just recently joined the army and chosen to fight for their country. One would not be wrong in saying that this is a misfortune, having so much more life to live all cut short in the midst of battle. Yet, one would be wrong in saying that this warrior is not fulfilled having the ability to give his life for his country.

In this, he takes great pride and brings forth happiness in his last moments. What to others is misfortune to the individual it represents their happiness. Nonetheless, I must admit that the same would not be true of the individual whose misfortune was not preceded by moments of reflection or action. For example, a man who slips and falls down the hill to an unfortunate end is clearly a victim of misfortune. Unlike the other examples, this misfortune does not occur in response to that for which they care about. In this case of misfortune, the individual is indeed limited to the happiness that he was able to acquire for he received an end that gave no rise to completion nor reflection in any of their actions. In the acts in which the danger of misfortune

has no purpose then we cannot say that the person is happy to be at the mercy of this end. Then, I must admit that Aristotle was right in his description of misfortune for he also saw that the ones who faced misfortune in a noble act such as that of the warrior would deem their life as complete more than that of the one who faced misfortune in an abrupt and unexpected manner. If such is the case, then our third limitation in our view of happiness as fulfillment comes in agreement with Aristotle as misfortune without the opportunity for reflection does indeed take away the opportunity to achieve happiness. Since this is the case, I want to further clarify an important distinction in my theory of happiness, since some may be inclined to say that happiness as I propose it to be still does not allow for everyone to be happy much like Aristotle. In my definition of happiness, I acknowledge that everyone can be happy but that does not mean that everyone will end up happy. Yet to further clarify this, I wish to make clear that happiness under my guide allows everyone access to happiness despite social standing. Since in this paper, we have proved such endeavor to be internal and not concerned with external factors.

Conclusion:

To conclude, this paper started by explaining who Aristotle was, what he believed happiness to be, and how it was achieved. Aristotle, having been a staple of the philosophical community, proposed a theory of happiness that was established through the virtues. These virtues were the tools necessary for one individual to be able to achieve the complete life. Aristotle believed that every action was aimed at something and that we must have the thing that we aim at for the sake of itself. For him this was happiness. Happiness for Aristotle was not concerned with a passing feeling but with an everlasting harmony that encompasses the journey of the individual. To achieve this, Aristotle proposed the acquisition of all virtues to complete man. It is important to note that Aristotle was explicit in saying that to have virtue is to have them all. One could not dare say they possess one virtue while lacking others. This logic would never be capable of achieving happiness.

This is why Aristotle went into detail explaining the extreme ends of the virtues. Each virtue works as a means to an extreme end, whether that be of deficiency or of an extreme end. To be on either end of this scale is to fail at having the virtue and therefore failing to acquire happiness. It is important to remember that for Aristotle these virtues were not absolute and kept continuously building and cultivating upon each other.

These virtues were intertwined with the daily activities that humans partook in every day. Aristotle saw friendship as deeply relevant in the cultivation of the virtues. Friendship served as a necessary part of human development that could help cultivate the virtues amidst the day-to-day interactions of friendship. Yet, remember that for Aristotle, not all friendships worked the same. Much like the virtues as means, friendship also can be described as partaking in a scale. There are those friendships that are based on pleasure and utility. These friendships focus

on the external good and do not aim at the right disposition for the achievement of happiness. On that same lens, Aristotle also saw the social and political obligations as part of the path to happiness. He believed that in performing their civic duty, the individuals can cultivate their virtues through the framework of society and their relationships.

These virtues were not as much requirements to happiness as they were happiness itself. Aristotle believed that without virtues happiness could not exist. The virtues are that which enable oneself to act in accordance with reason and reflection. In the virtues, one can find the practice of rationality which translates to the happiness of the person. Again, man is one of rationality and reflection, this which can be found in their responsibilities like their friendships and social actions.

For Aristotle, it was not sufficient to look at what many considered to be means of happiness such as wealth or money making. This activity only concerns itself with the sake of something else, meaning that money-making concerns itself with making more and more money and it is never satisfied with itself. Therefore, these actions do not require virtue and are also not done for the highest good meaning that they shall be incapable of granting someone happiness. Furthermore, happiness is not just self-sufficient but also long-lasting and complete. Thus, misfortune is that which can and will abruptly end one's path to happiness as per Aristotle. Misfortune quickly puts a stop to this complete life which affects the quality of life and even more importantly the ability to pursue the virtues. Without this complete life and ability to cultivate and practice the virtues, one's ability for happiness is quickly dismissed. Misfortune reflects the abrupt end to an otherwise virtuous journey and therefore eliminates the capability of happiness.

Having laid out a path to happiness, Aristotle did not quite feel satisfied with what we had laid out on the table as the one and only path. Due to this, he later presented the contemplative life. This was his version of happiness that he considered to be the highest form and the one that we should truly strive for. It was, like his previous version, predicated on the virtues but it did not concern itself with the day-to-day activities of man but rather wanted to be based on the highest truth and values that were in the world's disposal. This different approach to happiness created two different paths for happiness for Aristotle, with the two leading to happiness but the contemplative life being held as the highest and purest form of happiness that one could achieve.

In Aristotle's approach to happiness, he did not make clear the absolute need for virtues as the path to happiness. If we are to understand virtues as a means to happiness then the relationship between virtue and happiness is not clearly laid out, making it neither necessary nor identical. This means that virtues are not, in themselves, the only proper path to happiness. Section II concerned itself with proving this, examining the multiple instances in which Aristotle fails to properly assert this notion of happiness requiring virtues.

First, we discussed how Aristotle's virtues, when properly examined, seem to be constructed to purposely separate the ones who are able to achieve these virtues and the ones who are at the mercy of others and unable to attain these virtues. Virtues being attainable to only a select few creates the problem of availability, after all, why would we not be concerned with ensuring that everyone has the same ability to obtain happiness? Instead, Aristotle seems to have been determined in his list of virtues to ensure a majority of people were excluded. This can be noted in virtues such as the greatness of the soul, which he describes to be not just at the hands of the individual but also at the hands of those who judged such greatness. Aristotle is not content

in allowing a small thing to be worthy of greatness, instead, such greatness is reserved to those acts of glamor accepted by the overall society, in turn telling us that only those at the top possess the capability to cultivate greatness of the soul. This virtue was not the only one that disregarded a majority of the individuals, in fact, Aristotle even goes as far as to label beauty as one of these requirements, a need for such a thing seems to be tied not to happiness but rather the social dynamic that Aristotle deems important for man and his ability to obtain happiness.

This introduced our next problem with how Aristotle sees the path to happiness. He emphasizes that friendships are a requirement for the happy person as they allow for the cultivation and practice of the virtues. In saying this, he also mentions that in doing so we shall look for in our friends that which pertains to ourselves. This means that our friends should be a reflection of who we see ourselves to be and thus further create a separation between people. The person who sees themselves as possessing greatness of the soul would not look to befriend the farmer who sees their greatness as moderate. This creates a disparity between those at the top and those at the bottom, enabling only those at the top the ability to practice and cultivate the necessary virtues for happiness.

Having recognized how virtues are made to create a discrepancy between the top and bottom of a community. We also observed virtues at face value and how they, in themselves, do not serve as enough for happiness. If virtues in itself fail to bring forth happiness then how is the accumulation of such the road that leads to happiness? If, rather, the acquisition of these virtues leads to happiness instead of happiness itself then happiness becomes that led by a well-rounded life instead of the virtuous life. Virtues, as the only means to happiness as described by Aristotle, fail to properly assert the connection between happiness and virtue and rather only create a

possibility in which one can achieve happiness through virtue while still never cementing the necessity of such.

Given how virtues fail as the only path to happiness, I put forth a new approach to the complete life since Aristotle did not fail in his understanding of happiness but rather only in the ways in which one could achieve this. Happiness, then, is not a collection of virtues but instead a life of fulfillment. Fulfillment being the feeling of completion and satisfaction that one feels after an action. This makes happiness an internal affair that does not concern itself with the implications of external obligations such as civic duty or friendship. Societal expectations look to control what we ought to call the happy person, due to this looking at society as a means of contribution to happiness would instead fail to bring forth that which it ought to bring. Fulfillment allows everyone to achieve happiness despite what others may think of their actions and methods.

This feeling of fulfillment could be misinterpreted and thus, it is important to recognize that fulfillment is found not in what you are looking to get out of the action that you are performing but instead in the process it takes to achieve that which you have set up to do. This feeling of happiness, like Aristotle's definition, would not be short-lived, instead, it shall transform into a state of being that will allow you to achieve the highest good which is happiness.

This created a possibility of happiness through many different actions so long as the individuals themselves find fulfillment in the process. This means that the idea of happiness through the cultivation of virtues is not far-fetched, but rather not happiness itself. An individual could find happiness in virtues but also just as likely to find happiness in the process of any other action just so long as they feel completed during such a process. Happiness is then not an

external affair concerned with the perception others have of oneself but instead, an internal affair arising from the feeling of fulfillment one gets from their very own process of action. In the end, Aristotle was true in having happiness as the highest good for which man should strive for.

Happiness is the complete life, what Aristotle failed to do is to make clear the necessity of the virtues as the means to happiness. Thus, fulfillment shall be the new guide to the highest good.

Allowing all to achieve happiness and making clear the connection between completion and the complete life.

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