

# Attaining the good life philosophy essay

[Philosophy](#), [Life Philosophy](#)



Everyone should want to live the “ good life.” Along with attaining the “ good life” there are many definitions and interpretations of how to get there.

People all around the world strive to live the “ good life” each day. What may seem ordinary and boring to someone could be a dream or fantasy for someone who is less fortunate. There are two great days in a person’s life- the day he is born and the day he discovers why he was born. In other words, when he discovers what he was meant to do with his life. There are plenty of people who have a desire to live the “ good life” and really make the most of the fun available to them. People who have lived the “ good life” by my definition which is one that has a balanced lifestyle, accomplished goals and dreams which are beneficial to a person and their loved ones, an education, and last but not least having stability through relationships, work, health, and money include Aristotle and Plato. Plato and Aristotle each had ideas on how to proceed with improving the society in which they were part of during their lifetime. It is necessary therefore to analyze their different theoretical approaches regarding their philosophical perspectives.

A child in the less-developed parts Africa could only dream of living the life we live. They would see the “ good life” as having an education, a safe place to live, clean food and water, and a more promising future. These things are given to us and should be implemented into our lives. Instead, we often find ourselves complaining about not having brand name clothes, or not going out to eat, or having to do homework.

Many attempts have been made throughout history to better define the word happiness, and the two best-known philosophers in history, Plato and Aristotle, spent much of their studies on the subject. A good and happy life is

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one in which pleasures outweigh the pains overall. Many questions have been asked about the good life and happiness. People always answer those questions with their lives, and we see many different ideas of the good life and happiness playing out in the strivings of humanity to live well and be happy. Both Plato and Aristotle felt that happiness was an important factor of life. Plato's notion of happiness was significantly different from those with normal views. He spent as much time undermining the traditional understanding of the "good life" as to describing his own conception. Plato considered happiness as a state of flawlessness that is hard to apprehend because it is based on metaphysical presuppositions that appear unclear for ordinary understanding. Aristotle speaks of the "good life" as the happy life; he does not mean that the "good life" is merely one of feeling happy or amused. Rather, as the "good life" for a person is the active life of functioning well in those ways that are essential and unique to humans. Aristotle's idea of the "good life" is very similar to mine because my definition the "good life" is merely one with a balanced lifestyle, accomplished goals and dreams, receiving an education, and stability in all aspects of life. These similarities and differences can be observed by exploring what Aristotle and Plato taught.

Both Aristotle and Plato see the "good life" as the state in which a person exhibits total virtue. A virtue is total moral excellence. However, these philosophers disagree on the definition of virtue, and its relevance to happiness. Virtue is an essential component of the good life according to Aristotle. The "good life" cannot be identified with virtue because being virtuous is consistent with leading an inactive domicile or with suffering

greatly. As Plato reasoned, total virtue shows only when his desires have been extinguished. Aristotle argues that the “ good life” is different for each individual because each person will have different virtues. Plato sees the “ good life” as being achieved through the perfect love and lack of desire, while Aristotle believes that the “ good life” is achieved through a perfect state that causes its citizens to act upon their virtues Aristotle’s ideas seem more practical and easier to follow whereas Plato’s works seem more complicated.

Many people are unhappy because they fail to set or attempt to achieve goals. One must set new goals for themselves and do something each day towards it’s accomplishment. Being true to oneself is a must when setting goals. One must also keep in mind in order to live the “ good life” the goals made should be positive so once they are achieved, only good things will come out of it. The worst thing in life is to live by what others say. Plato said, “ Apply yourself both now and in the next life. Without effort, you cannot be prosperous. Though the land be good, You cannot have an abundant crop without cultivation.” One should live life on one’s own terms and should always keep in mind that it is possible to live one’s dreams. Aristotle said, “ Everyone who can live according to his own choice should adopt some goal for the good life... be it honor or reputation or wealth or culture-a goal that he will keep in view in all his actions...” (Mintoff 159). Ultimate happiness occurs when a person’s actions and goals which are virtuous.

The effects of lack of motivation have a negative impact on people. One will miss the sense of accomplishment and the satisfaction that comes with

succeeding on a big scale. He will also lose the respect of his peers and will be excluded from the winner's circle. He will no longer feel in control of his own destiny and in fact be a victim of circumstance. He will tend to earn far less than people of lesser intelligence and ability. One will also worry about the future because they fear they may not be able to deal with things.

In 2006, the movie, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, was released. This movie was based on the true story of Christopher Gardner's life. Gardner was a bright and talented employed salesman. He continued to struggle making ends meet, Gardner found himself and his five-year-old son evicted from their San Francisco apartment with nowhere to go. He and his son endured many hardships, including living in shelters and in public restrooms. In pursuit of his dream of a better life for the two of them, Gardner landed an internship at a prestigious stock brokerage firm. Although there was no salary, he accepted with the hope that he will end the program with a job and a promising future. He continued to honor his commitment as a loving and caring father, using the affection and trust his son has placed in him as an impetus to overcome the obstacles he faced. On the last day of the internship, he was called into an office. Chris was told him that he has been an excellent trainee.

Aristotle took on a task similar in some respects to the one Plato conveyed out in the *Republic*. One of Plato's main points is that it is a great advantage to set up a hierarchical ordering of the elements in one's soul, " Unlike Aristotle, who would bring philosophy back to earth, Plato held that the unseen, heavenly, eternal things are more real than the things of our world,"

(Boyleston) and he shows how the traditional virtues can be interpreted to nurture or show the proper relation between reason and less rational elements of the psyche. Aristotle's function argument shows in a general way that our good lies in the authority of reason, and the detailed studies of the particular virtues reveal how each of them involves the proper kind of ordering of the soul.

Aristotle's goal was to come to conclusions like Plato's, but without relying upon the Platonic metaphysics that takes on a fundamental role in the argument of the Republic. The word metaphysics is defined as the study or theory of reality sometimes used more narrowly to refer to transcendent reality, that is, reality which lies beyond the physical world and cannot therefore be grasped by means of the senses. Plato believed in an inside out view of metaphysics which shows two realms to our reality the realm of changing, becoming things and a realm of fixed, and being forms, which are unchanging and that all things owe their reality. Aristotle saw in his outside in view, that there was only one level to our reality and that in it forms are found only within particular things, which have both form and matter. If there were not individual round things, there would be no such thing as the Form roundness. Forms do not exist separately or apart from particulars. Roundness, for example, has no independent existence apart from particular round things. One cannot think the Form roundness without thinking of a particular round thing.

The importance of education cannot be measured because it determines ones future. Its value is unmatched. Without it, there will be ignorance,

frustration, anger, and demise. With it, solutions, alternatives, and new ideas can be brought forth to further improve life itself. John Milton said, “ Nevertheless to write now the reforming of Education, though it be one of the greatest and noblest designs that can be thought on, and for the want whereof this Nation perishes . . . the knowledge and the use of which, cannot but be a great furtherance both to the enlargement of truth, and honest living, with much more peace.” (Milton 96). We would not let uneducated officials run our country. As we learn from our mistakes, we are able to improve the next time around. Without education, improvement and progress would never be achieved. There is no greater purpose than using the mind to everyone’s best advantage because it is a gift given by God. Plato stated in the Republic, “ When the mind’s eye rests on objects illuminated by truth and reality, it understands and comprehends them, and functions intelligently; but when it turns to the twilight world of change and decay, it can only form opinions, its vision is confused and its beliefs shifting, and it seems to lack intelligence” (Plato).

Both Plato and Aristotle concur that a good education is the way to attain virtue, but they disagree on how a person should be educated because of his differing views on the cause of virtue. By the means of education only one’s potential can be used to maximum extent. Education teaches how to think, how to work properly, and how to make decisions. Through receiving an education, one can make a separate identity. Aristotle rejects the existence of Plato’s forms in general and the form of the good in particular; and he rejects the idea that in order to become fully virtuous one must study mathematics and the sciences, and see all branches of knowledge as a

unified whole. Aristotle said, " Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity." Aristotle believed that education should begin from birth and should involve changing the child's habits and forming his reason so that his nature, habits, and reason will align. Plato believed that virtue comes from an understanding of true beauty, which exists only in the higher plane of the world. Plato also believes that education should begin when the child is ready to love another. A valuable effect of education is creativity. Creativity can build a bridge in between seemingly different concepts of information or knowledge.

People without morals will never do beneficial deeds in their life. A lack of morals in life is a huge problem. A person without morals is one who does not care to help others, who does not care to put themselves in other's shoes, and who thinks he is better than everyone else. This is a common trait in wealthy people as well. However, not all wealthy people are like this. Those who are will never know what it is like to live a life a poor person lives, nor will they be concerned. They do not think it is necessary to give to the poor because they feel it is their own money. A person with a lack of morals cannot tell the difference between right and wrong. They have never been taught or never acknowledged true morals. " He that has improved the virtue or advanced the happiness of one fellow-creature, he that has ascertained a single moral proposition, or added one useful experiment to natural knowledge, may be contented with his own performance, and, with respect to mortals like himself, may demand, like Augustus, to be dismissed at his departure with applause" (Johnson 122).



Lack of morals connects to the reasons why people make bad decisions in life. When people do drugs and drink uncontrollably, they see nothing wrong with it because no one told them it was wrong. If they were told, they ignored those who tried to save them from a life of failure. It is sad to see the amount of people who have addictions to certain things and rely on those things for survival. However, these addictions will never help, rather it will hurt them and affect the people around them as well. Lack of morals also leads to violence. Without evident morals people would just turn to violence in stressful situations. It is a proven fact that lack of morals leads to crime. Mary Wollstonecraft said, " And, when you are examining your heart, if it would not be too much like mathematical drudgery, to which a fine imagination very reluctantly stoops, enquire further, how it is consistent with the vulgar notions of honesty, and the foundation of morality-truth; for a man to boast of his virtue and independence, when he cannot forget that he is at the moment enjoying the wages of falsehood; and that, in a skulking, unmanly way, he has secured himself a pension of fifteen hundred pounds per annum on the Irish establishment?" (Wollstonecraft 129). It is morals that will make a person who they are.

A balanced lifestyle is vital in living the " good life." One's lifestyle is made up of everything he does for example, work, school, social life, and of course personal time. A balanced lifestyle is a collection of all the activities and places that characterize who one is as a person. One's lifestyle has an emotional impact on. If one's lifestyle's net effect leaves him feeling bad about himself then changes in it are needed. Otherwise, it can lead to stress and depression. If one can accommodate all his activities and fit them in his

schedule allowing time to relax and do things for himself, not only will he be happy but everyone around him will be as well. If one's lifestyle isn't balanced, he could find great stress-reduction benefits in taking a thorough inventory of his life and how he spends his time, and making changes. First, one must determine which areas were lacking, and then work on building up those areas. Stress is a normal physical response to events that make one feel threatened or upset one's balance in some way. If one dwells over a stressful situation not only will they be able to see the good out of the situation but it could also lead to pain of any kind, heart disease, sleep problems, and depression. Keep in mind that there is always some good in every bad situation. In order to live the "good life" one must be able to handle stressful situations.

Socializing with friends and family is also an important part of healthy living. Having a healthy social life means having a few close friends and confidants that one enjoys being with to share ideas, discuss important personal issues, and have a few good laughs. Being able to express oneself and sharing feelings will help one as he is going on with life because he will know that he has friends to talk to when times go bad. Bottling feelings inside will just hurt oneself more and will not be able to enjoy things he used to because of whatever burden he is going through. He will also withdraw themselves from all social happenings, which may give his friends the impression that something is being hidden. Keep in mind, not every detail has to be shared but being able to share thoughts and feelings help one feel more relieved and often helps with taking that extra load off one's back. "For the purpose of living one has to assume that the personality is solid, and the "self" is an

entity, and to ignore all contrary evidence. And since to ignore evidence is one of the characteristics of faith, I certainly can proclaim that I believe in personal relationships” (Foster 182). Plato and Aristotle agree on the importance of interpersonal relationships in the quest for the “ good life.” Both agree that interpersonal relationships account for the education of individuals, but Aristotle goes further because he sees attaining the “ good life” as societal.

By my definition of the “ good life,” one must be positively stable in every aspect of his life. Being financially stable provides a healthy and safe way of living. Nevertheless, he will be able to support themselves and his family in the matter of food, water, and shelter. Money will always be a worry factor but if money is handled the right way then it is easy to remain stable. Good, stable health keeps one’s mind sharp, doctor bills low, a longer lifespan in some cases, and lets one work more to make more money. Plato agreed with this and said, “ Lack of activity destroys the good condition of every human being, while movement and methodical physical exercise save it and preserve it.” One must remain active because a sedentary lifestyle is not beneficial to one’s health.

The “ good life” is simply success though stability, accomplished goals and dreams, and a balanced lifestyle. Peace comes with contentment. Harmony is achieved through balance. Stability revolves around rationalization. The “ good life” with out either element; contentment, balanced rationalization cannot be achieved in its true essence. If we started to appreciate what is given to us we would truly see how easy it is to fully understand and live the

“ good life.” Let’s make the best out of our life for those kids in Africa and other third world countries. Let’s better ourselves so we can make a difference so those unprivileged people can live the “ good life” as well.

It is obvious that both Plato and Aristotle had a different concept of the “ good life,” but their ideas behind living the “ good life” support my opinion. Human happiness is the primary concern for both Plato and Aristotle in their works of literature. Since happiness is almost a universal emotion their conclusions on the cause of happiness are similar. However, Plato and Aristotle are completely different individuals, so the causes of their happiness are completely different. Achieving the “ good life” was viewed by both philosophers as being a life-long task with several aspects to keep in mind. Their basic conceptions and appreciation of life were prominent throughout their studies of how to achieve the “ good life.”

Sometimes, big effects come from little causes. For example, when making bread one has to use flour and water and then he knead the dough. If he forgets to add just a little bit of yeast, he will end up with an unappetizing hockey puck. A big effect, like a healthier person, calls for a lot of big causes, like eating better and exercising more. Sometimes just a little change can make a big difference. To live the “ good life” one must go through the whole process of trial and error.