

# Free aristotle book review sample

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



Aristotle's notion of happiness is quite different from our understanding of happiness. He called happiness an "activity" while the contemporary interpretation of happiness is a placid state of human mind. Thus, happiness now is seen as an emotional state rather than the result of certain action. Greek word eudaimonia can be rendered as "success". People who are successful according to this notion are not in a particular state, but they live successfully. Aristotle considered happiness as an ongoing state caused by actions, rather than temporary euphoria. He stated that virtuous people can be happy when they exercise their virtues. A virtue that is not exercised by a virtuous person cannot make this person happy as an action is needed realize potential or reach success, i. e. to be happy. Thus, Aristotle put forward the idea of a proactive conception of the good life: only people who make efforts can be happy.

Aristotle distinguished two kind of virtue: intellectual and moral. Intellectual virtue can be inborn or acquired as a result of growth to teaching. The acquired virtue requires experience and time to be developed. A moral virtue is a result of habit. The Greek word ethike was formed from another Greek word ethos that means "habit". Aristotle concluded that the moral virtues do not arise in people by nature "for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature" (Aristotle II, 1). As well as happiness, virtue is considered by Aristotle an action or an active condition. Thus, being born ethically virtuous, one can fully develop practical wisdom with time. Bad decisions caused by psychological forces may result in acting unethically. Aristotle claimed that the development of the proper habits is needed in the childhood and reflecting intelligently on the aims in the adulthood is

necessary to restrain the destructive inner forces (Aristotle II, 5).

According to Aristotle, humans are not inclined to deliberate about obvious things such as the letters in the alphabet or natural phenomena, but rather about the things that are within their power to be done. Aristotle stated that ability to deliberate is connected with ability to investigate and analyze. However, not all investigations can be called deliberation. For example, mathematical investigations do not involve deliberation because of their nature. Thus, people cannot deliberate about everything, but only about the things that depend on man and could be changed. He also stated that if deliberation is a continuous process, the one who is deliberating will go on to infinity. The choice of the object of deliberation is in our power and it is a result of our deliberation. Thus, we desire something according to the results of the deliberation process (Aristotle ch. 3).

Aristotle defined justice and injustice as a state of character that making people act either justly or unjustly. He also defined injustice as grasping, law-breaking, and unfairness. Aristotle distinguished between distributive and corrective justice. Distributive justice depends on the merits of the parties while corrective justice concerns restoring a disturbed balance as a result of injustice that occurred. To his point of view, just distribution was not a question of equality, but the question of the right proportion. Aristotle emphasized that in the State “ justice is obtained from the law and its administrators” (Aristotle V, 1). For Aristotle, justice is one of the virtues. He also marked out that justice within a household is regulated by the members of that household. Justice within a household was considered personal responsibility of each member who was not supposed to act unjustly because

the household was the part of each member.

In his book *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle defined friendship as a virtue that helped make honorable actions and escape troubles. He also referred to this virtue as equality between those who made friendship. There were three kinds of friendship distinguished by Aristotle, namely: friendship based on utility, pleasure, and respect to each other. He considered friendship based on utility a temporary event. The most important outcome made by Aristotle was that perfect friendship is possible when people are alike in virtue.

However, this type of friendship in its pure form can be rarely met and require much time and familiarity to be developed (Aristotle 192). Besides, Aristotle eliminated possibility of making friendship between older and younger people because of age inequality. The same observation was made by Aristotle regarding those people who are not giving my nature and cannot express love because in this case the two parties cannot contribute equally into the development of the relationships. To his point of view, sour people were unable to make friendship as well. Similarly, Aristotle had little trust in friendship of people who belong to different social stratum and level of welfare.

Aristotle considered justice as a state of character while contemporary ethical theorists consider justice from equality perspective. The modern ethics theories are presented by the theories of Robert Nozick (libertarian approach), Kai Nielsen (socialistic approach), Michael Sandel (communitarian approach), Thomas Pogge (globalist approach), Martha Nussbaum (feminist approach), and Michael Boylan (right-based approach). The notion of justice given by the founders of libertarian approach is connected with individual

liberty and socio-economic equality; socialists proposed egalitarian concept of justice, the notion of justice given by Nielsen is the closest to the notion of equality; on the contrary to Nozick, Sandel referred to the notion of justice from community perspective meaning that community well-being is more important than individual freedom; Pogge was the first one who attempted to apply the principles of justice on an international level; Nussbaum supported the ideas of Pogge making emphasis on justice towards women; Boylan presented deontological approach stating that justice or injustice of human actions depends on personal circumstances.

Justice is often tied to equality that is considered by a number of ethical theories. One of the ethical theories, intuitionist theory, considers the ability to distinguish between just and unjust actions intuitive. Intuitionist theory was criticized because intuitive perception of justice is subjective. This is the reason why some groupings are discriminated in the workplace. However, style of work had significantly changed nowadays. Previously, more men were promoted to the leading positions in a company. At the present time, more emphasis is made on ability to lead others, perform one's duties well, and to improve one's personality (LeBlanc para 5). The contemporary relations at the working place interlink with the ideas of Nussbaum to a greater extent than with ideas of Aristotle related justice because equality of men and women narrows the notion of justice if applied to a particular society. More women occupy leading positions nowadays that was not observed before because of gender discrimination. Aristotle's notion of justice is consistent with the contemporary understanding of just distribution of the roles at the workplace. His notion is more generalized in comparison

to the notion given by Nussbaum. Besides, her ideas reflect the state of society better than the ideas developed by Aristotle. However, they can be applied to any society and any working place (Marvin 32).

Michel (para 4) discussed her mentality of people supporting Aristotle's argument that all people have similar way of thinking and are inclined to deliberate similarly about the same things. Michel (para 2) referred to the example of Holland tulips when all people started to sell tulips because of opportunity to make a lot of money doing something everybody was doing that finally ended with the failure. If applied to a particular working place, Michael (para 10) stated that " we opt to defer, deflect, or all together deny making the tough call" instead of making the decisions others expect of us. Thus, the difference between Aristotle's notion of deliberation (ch. 3) and the notion given by Michael (para 2) is that Aristotle's deliberation targeted the subject of deliberation, but Michael (para 2) described the current and recommended patterns of deliberation at the workplace. Herd mentality is typical for the majority of people while originality of thinking is a privilege of philosophers and other thinkers. Once if originality of thinking is developed at the working place, the productivity and effectiveness of the workforce will be increased automatically (Marvin 67).

The thoughts of Caccamese (para 1) were consistent with Aristotle's notion of virtues. Aristotle defined virtues as rightful actions towards other people. Caccamese (para 1) touched upon the issue related spending more money on wellness for employees by employers. However, this tendency reflects the two sides of the issue: on the one hand, employers, according to the Aristotle's notion, act virtuously by offering their employees the new

opportunities to improve their physical state and health; on the other hand, by taking care of their employees, employers obtained more productive workforce. Thus, capitalist mode of production expanded the scope of virtue outlined by Aristotle by enabling mutual virtues and benefits. Aristotle addressed virtues referring to the source of their emerging, either inborn or acquired. On the contrary to Aristotle, deontology emphasizes duties when considering virtues while consequentialism refers to the virtues as the consequences of certain actions. Thus, in deontology, virtue is seen as a duty. It does not matter whether it is inborn or acquired - one person should help another person in the case if the other needs this help following the moral rule. A follower of consequentialism would rather help a person in need aiming to maximize well-being.

Contemporary notion of happiness contains two perspectives: a state of mind and the overall life that is led well by a person. On the contrary to Aristotle's notion, people used to perceive happiness as an emotional state rather than an action. Therefore, the contemporary people tend to derive positive emotions from outside (entertainments) rather than from their actions leading to success (inside source of happiness derived from inner force or actions). Thus, both modern perspectives of happiness are different from the notion of happiness given by Aristotle, but the second notion is closer to the notion given by him as he defined happiness as an action. At the present time, happiness at the working place is seen as not only material incentives and positive internal climate. A hard task of the contemporary employers is to motivate their employees to work hard and effective in a team. Barber (para 1) stated that making the employees happy is not limited

to altruistic intentions only. Therefore, developing trustful relationships at work and making employees' happy are seen as the sources of revenue. Employers learn how to derive benefits from common human values. Thus, returning back to the Aristotle, notion of happiness, properly motivated rightful actions at work can help make employees happy by giving them a feeling of belonging to a certain community or a part of corporation. The employers who are aware of the ethical theories can greatly contribute from their knowledge by giving their employees an opportunity to feel happy within a single organization.

The contemporary notion of friendship is a personal relationship grounded on a concern on the part of each other. For Aristotle, friendship is based on equality and mutual trust. The notions were considered different perspectives of friendship: the contemporary understanding is based on interaction between two parties involved in friendship while Aristotle emphasized virtues necessary to develop friendship. Thus, the contemporary understanding of friendship is in the dimension of mutual benefits rather than in the dimension of human virtues that are necessary to develop friendship relationships. However, Aristotle excluded the possibility of emerging friendship based on unequal contribution to the personal relationships and stated that friendship based on taking benefits was temporary.

Krause and Cheung (para 3) emphasized the necessity of developing trusting relationships at the workplace as the basement for engagement. Creating positive internal climate contributes to the development of trusting relationships at work. Trust was described by Krause and Cheung (para 6) as



a prerequisite to employees' engagement. Similarly, Aristotle mentioned developing trust in friendship as the most important component. Thus, the contemporary and ancient notions of friendship, given by Aristotle, coincide. In Aristotle's times, less attention was paid to the economic side of the relationships. He talked more about human virtues and the development of the interpersonal relationships. Nowadays, trust is seen from the perspective of making benefits for business. Thus, it was estimated by Krause and Cheung (para 13) that trust can contribute to a business by making 16% greater profits and 18% greater productivity. Thus, contemporary businesses transformed values common to all mankind to dollars.

In conclusion, it is considered at the contemporary workplace to derive benefits from human virtues. Previously, ancient philosophers considered human virtues as something that cannot be counted. Nowadays, human virtues are material assets having value. Besides, ancient people were prone to derive happiness from their own actions while the contemporary people rely on outer sources of happiness. The contemporary notion of friendship is also transferred from disinterested dimension to the dimension of mutual benefits. On the one hand, it means that friendship was also evaluated and assigned certain value; on the other hand, there are things that cannot and should not be evaluated. The current research shed light on the contemporary values, changes in attitude to virtues, and societal mode of the contemporary society.

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