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Dissertation Summary

of

Happiness and Emotion: Affect Theory as a Prism on Aristotelian Eudaimonia

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I. General Overview of the Dissertation

Volume, Structure, and Referenced Literature

The dissertation consists of a total of 231 pages, including an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The bibliography contains 104 sources by Bulgarian and international authors, as well as online resources. The introduction outlines the relevance of the topic, defines the object and subject of the research, formulates the goals and objectives, and presents the research thesis. It also describes the methodological approach and the limitations of the study. The original language of the dissertation is English.

Chapter One explores the historical and philosophical roots of the concept of eudaimonia, tracing the views of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle on happiness, virtue, and ethics. Special attention is given to Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and its connection to value theory and the critique of cultural and moral relativism.

Chapter Two analyzes various contemporary interpretations of Aristotelian ethics by comparing the intellectualist perspective with the blended approach. It discusses the influence of neuroscience and moral psychology on ethical theories, as well as the role of Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach in rethinking the relationship between reason, emotion, and virtue.

Chapter Three introduces the foundations of affect theory and its application to understanding happiness and moral behavior. The views of Silvan Tomkins, Brian Massumi, and other representatives of this theory are examined, investigating how their ideas can contribute to a deeper understanding of Aristotelian eudaimonia and virtue ethics.

Chapter Four explores modern psychological theories of happiness and emotion, including the "Emotional State Theory" and "Self-Determination Theory." The relationship between affective states and eudaimonia is examined, with an attempt to synthesize classical philosophical ideas with new discoveries in psychology.

The Conclusion summarizes the main findings of the research, emphasizing the need to integrate the emotional dimension into the understanding of eudaimonia. A more comprehensive approach to happiness and human well-being is proposed.

Relevance and Significance of the Topic

The question of happiness is among the most fundamental and enduring themes in human thought. Regardless of cultural or historical context, people have always sought to define the meaning of a good life and the means of achieving it. In today's world—where issues such as mental health, emotional intelligence, and personal development are gaining increasing importance—the philosophical exploration of eudaimonia is highly relevant, both in academic discourse and in everyday life.

This research is grounded in the understanding that happiness is not merely a subjective experience, but a complex phenomenon encompassing rational, moral, and emotional dimensions. While traditional interpretations of Aristotle emphasize reason and virtue as the path to happiness, contemporary scientific studies show that emotions and affective states also play a crucial role in human well-being. This discussion is particularly timely, as many people today turn to psychology, philosophy, and neuroscience to better understand the factors shaping their sense of a fulfilling life.

Beyond its deep practical implications for individual and societal well-being, the problem of happiness is also a central concern in ethics. From antiquity to the present, philosophers have debated whether happiness is primarily an intellectual achievement or the result of a balance between reason and emotion. This dissertation contributes a new perspective to the debate by applying affect theory as an additional lens through which to examine Aristotelian eudaimonia, aiming to enrich the understanding of this classical issue with insights from contemporary emotion and affect theory.

The dissertation's relevance is further supported by its interdisciplinary orientation. Through a dialogue between philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science, the study offers a more integrated and dynamic model of human happiness. This approach is valuable not only to philosophers, but also to mental health professionals, educators, and all those interested in building a deeper understanding of human well-being and the paths toward achieving it.

Object of the Dissertation

The object of the present study is the concept of happiness (eudaimonia) in Aristotle's philosophy, examined through the lens of contemporary theories of affect and emotion.

Subject of the Dissertation

The subject of the dissertation is the relationship between reason and emotion in the formation of a virtuous and happy life, analyzed through Aristotelian ethics and affect theory.

Main Goal of the Dissertation

The main goal of the study is to demonstrate that the understanding of eudaimonia cannot be limited to a purely rational process but must also include affective and emotional dimensions, which play a crucial role in human well-being.

Main Tasks of the Dissertation

- To analyze ancient philosophical views on happiness, with a special focus on Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia.
- To examine the role of reason and virtue in the construction of the good life according to Aristotle.
- To present contemporary interpretations of Aristotelian ethics and the differing views on intellectualism and emotivism.

- To explore affect theory as an additional approach to understanding happiness.
- To critically analyze the positions of affect theorists (Silvan Tomkins, Brian Massumi, and others).
- To investigate the relationship between affective states and moral behavior.
- To analyze contemporary psychological models of happiness, including the Theory of Constructed Emotion and Self-Determination Theory.
- To propose an integrative approach to happiness that combines philosophical and psychological dimensions.
- To synthesize the findings and draw conclusions about the significance of emotions and affects in moral development.

Research Thesis of the Dissertation

This study defends the thesis that understanding eudaimonia as the supreme human good requires the integration of both rational and affective components. Affect theory offers a valuable tool for rethinking the relationship between virtue, happiness, and emotion.

Methodology of the Dissertation Research

This research adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining philosophical analysis, comparative analysis, and conceptual synthesis. The core methodological framework is based on the analysis of classical philosophical texts, with particular focus on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and its interpretation within contemporary philosophical and psychological contexts.

A comparative analysis is employed to juxtapose traditional Aristotelian interpretations of happiness with newer concepts emerging from affect theory and cognitive psychology. The study also engages with alternative readings of Aristotelian ethics, including the differences between the intellectualist and holistic approaches to virtue and eudaimonia.

Additionally, the research includes conceptual reconstruction, proposing new ways of understanding the relationship between reason, emotion, and moral development. Through this method, the study seeks to synthesize Aristotelian philosophy and affect theory, exploring the potential for a more comprehensive model of happiness that unites ethics, psychology, and the philosophy of emotion.

When analyzing contemporary views on happiness and emotion, the study uses an approach that allows for the critical interpretation of texts by philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum, Thomas Nagel, and Nancy Sherman, as well as affect theorists like Silvan Tomkins and Brian Massumi. This approach reveals the connections between classical and modern conceptions of happiness.

Limitations of the Scope of the Study

Although the research provides a broad philosophical and psychological context, it is limited to the analysis of Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia and its interpretation through the lens of

affect theory. In this respect, the dissertation does not delve into other philosophical traditions—such as Stoicism or Hedonism—which also offer significant alternative conceptions of happiness.

Furthermore, although the dissertation draws on ideas from contemporary psychology and cognitive science, it does not claim to be an empirical study. Rather, it presents a theoretical and conceptual analysis. For this reason, the work does not include experimental data or empirical research on the influence of affective states on moral behavior.

Another limitation concerns the focus on the Western philosophical tradition. While the dissertation addresses universal questions related to happiness and morality, it does not explore Eastern philosophical perspectives, such as Buddhist or Confucian views on virtue and inner contentment.

The study aims to provide a philosophical synthesis by rethinking Aristotelian ethics through the lens of affect theory, but it does not claim to be exhaustive in covering all possible interpretations of happiness and human well-being.

II. Main Structure and Summary of the Dissertation Content

Introduction

I. Eudaimonia, Virtue, and Ethics

1.1 Ancient Philosophical Views on Happiness: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle: The Great Greek Lineage on Eudaimonia

1.2 Definition of Eudaimonia

1.3 An in-depth inquiry into Aristotle's theory of eudaimonia in Nicomachean Ethics

1.4 Value Theory: Values, Virtues, and Refuting Cultural Relativism

1.5 Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas on Happiness

1.6 Conclusions

II. Newer (Virtue Ethicist) Interpretations of Aristotle: The Intellectualist

Perspective vs. The Blended Perspective

2.1 Reconciling Nagel's Intellectualism with Sherman's Holistic Interpretation of Aristotle

2.2 Antonio Damasio and Jonathan Haidt: Bridging Cognitive Science and Aristotle's Integration of Emotion and Reason

2.3 Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach and Theory of Emotions as a Bridge between Virtue Ethics and Affect Theory

III. Affect Theory

3.1 Theoretical Background of Affect Theory

- 3.2 Affect Theorists on the Notion of Happiness
- 3.3 Applying Affect Theory to Aristotle and Aquinas
- 3.4 Applying Affect Theory to Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach
- 3.5 Conclusions

IV. Contemporary Psychological Views on Eudaimonia in Relation to Emotion & Affect

- 4.1 Emotional State Theory: Foundations
- 4.2 Emotional State Theory & Eudaimonia
- 4.3 Self-Determination Theory, Eudaimonia & Affect Theory
- 4.4 Conclusions

Conclusion

Bibliography

The logical structure of the text follows the sequence of steps necessary for achieving the main goal and objectives of the dissertation. In summarized form, the content can be presented as follows.

Introduction

The introduction of the dissertation presents the central research problem: the understanding of happiness (*eudaimonia*) in Aristotelian philosophy and its reinterpretation through the lens of affect theory. The study is based on the premise that happiness cannot be reduced solely to a rational process but also involves emotional and affective dimensions that play a crucial role in human well-being and moral development.

The introduction raises key philosophical questions concerning the nature of happiness: whether it is an objective achievement or a subjective experience; whether it depends entirely on reason or also involves emotional components; and whether it is a temporary state or a lasting condition of human existence. The historical development of this debate is reviewed, and its contemporary relevance is outlined, drawing connections between ancient philosophy, modern psychology, and the theory of emotions.

The choice of Aristotelian ethics as the central focus of the study is also justified. The *Nicomachean Ethics* is presented as one of the most significant philosophical works devoted to the question of human happiness. At the same time, it is emphasized that there are scholarly disagreements about the exact nature of Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*.

Particular attention is given to differing interpretations of Aristotelian ethics, contrasting the intellectualist view (which highlights reason and contemplative activity as the primary sources of happiness) with the holistic view (which emphasizes the interaction between reason and emotion).

In this context, the dissertation argues that Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia* can be more fully understood and developed through affect theory. Affect theory—examined through the works of Silvan Tomkins, Brian Massumi, and Martha Nussbaum—offers a new perspective on how emotions shape moral choices and behavior.

The introduction also includes an overview of the structure of the dissertation, briefly presenting the content of each chapter.

Finally, the introduction emphasizes the significance of this research for contemporary philosophical and psychological discussions on the nature of happiness, proposing an integrated approach that bridges classical virtue-ethical theories with modern understandings of emotions and affects.

I. Eudaimonia, Virtue, and Ethics

1.1 Ancient Philosophical Views on Happiness: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle: The Great Greek Lineage on Eudaimonia

Chapter One provides an analysis of the concept of *eudaimonia* within the context of the ancient philosophical tradition, examining the views of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the theoretical continuity between these three philosophers, while also emphasizing the differences in their understanding of happiness, virtue, and the roles of reason and emotion.

This section presents a brief but essential overview of the main moral theories of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Special attention is given to the definition of *eudaimonia*, which, in the Greek philosophical context, is not reduced to a fleeting feeling of satisfaction but refers to human fulfillment and a life well lived. It is considered the highest good that one must attain through proper conduct and way of life.

Socrates: Knowledge, Virtue, and Happiness

Socrates views *eudaimonia* as a universal and absolute value toward which every person naturally strives. He emphasizes that happiness is objective and depends on knowledge of virtue. The only way to attain true good is through philosophical inquiry and rational reflection. According to Socrates, people do not commit wrongful acts knowingly; rather, they do so out of ignorance of the good. This means that knowledge and moral excellence are inextricably linked, and virtue is understood as a conscious choice grounded in rational understanding of what is right.

Although Socrates places a strong emphasis on reason, he does not completely deny the role of emotions and passions. However, he subordinates them to the care of the soul, which he considers the true essence of the human being. As a result, material goods such as wealth and power are not ends in themselves, but must be used wisely and virtuously in order to contribute to human fulfillment.

Plato: The Balance Between Reason, Spirit, and Desire

Building upon and expanding Socratic ideas, Plato also views eudaimonia as the ultimate goal of human life. However, he introduces the theory of the tripartite soul. In *The Republic*, he divides the soul into three parts: logos, associated with intellect, thought, and reason; thymos, linked to spirit, courage, and emotion; and eros (or appetites), which stem from bodily desires.

Plato introduces the concept of the Forms, arguing that true knowledge cannot be derived from the sensory world but exists in abstract, ideal entities, the highest of which is the Form of the Good. According to him, happiness is found in a life guided by philosophical knowledge, where the soul aspires to contemplate the true and the eternal.

Plato also considers the connection between individual happiness and society. He claims that a just state is a prerequisite for personal well-being. He draws an analogy between harmony within the soul and harmony in society, emphasizing that philosophers must be the ruling class, as only they possess knowledge of the absolute truth.

Aristotle: Virtue as the Path to Eudaimonia

Aristotle, a student of Plato, offers a more practical vision of happiness. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he defines eudaimonia as the ultimate goal of human existence, but understands it as a process of actively exercising virtues in real life. According to him, happiness is not merely a state of being but an activity that requires the cultivation of virtues through right actions.

Unlike Plato, who views happiness as an abstract intellectual ideal, Aristotle grounds it in concrete human experience. He sees the soul as composed of three parts: the vegetative (common to all living beings), the sensitive (shared with animals), and the rational (unique to humans). Happiness, in his view, is a function of the rational part of the soul, which governs desires and emotions through wisdom and moderation.

At the heart of Aristotle's ethics is the doctrine of the Golden Mean, which holds that virtue lies between two extremes—excess and deficiency. For example, courage is the mean between cowardice and reckless boldness. According to Aristotle, the virtuous life does not reject pleasure and emotions altogether, but insists they be governed by reason.

Aristotle also makes an important distinction between practical (ethical) happiness and contemplative (intellectual) happiness. Practical happiness involves moral virtues and active participation in public life, while contemplative happiness is achieved through philosophical knowledge and represents the highest form of human existence.

Conclusion of the Chapter

At the end of the chapter, the differences between the three philosophical approaches to eudaimonia are emphasized:

- Socrates: Happiness is knowledge of virtue, not the result of sensory pleasures or external goods.
- Plato: Happiness is only possible when reason governs desires and when one lives in a just society.
- Aristotle: Happiness is the process of cultivating virtues and exercising reason, encompassing both moral and intellectual development.

These ideas are further examined in the context of contemporary interpretations of virtue ethics, which seek to integrate both the rational and emotional dimensions in the understanding of happiness.

1.2. Definition of Eudaimonia

This section of the dissertation presents the distinction between various definitions of happiness, with particular emphasis on *eudaimonia* in Aristotelian philosophy. It examines the main contemporary understandings of happiness and compares them to Aristotle's perspective, in order to determine whether the term "*happiness*" is an appropriate translation of the Greek word *εὐδαιμονία* (*eudaimonia*).

At the beginning of the section, it is emphasized that *eudaimonia*, for Aristotle, is not a fleeting experience of pleasure or a subjective sense of happiness, but a long-term process of fully realizing human potential. It is closely associated with practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and life within a virtuous community, which makes it not merely an individual state but a phenomenon shaped by social interaction and moral context.

Съвременни дефиниции на щастието и техните ограничения

This section analyzes three popular contemporary understandings of happiness:

1. Happiness as a Momentary Emotional State

In everyday language, happiness is often associated with feelings of joy and positive emotions, regardless of moral context. For example, a person may experience pleasure from an unethical act (such as embezzling funds), which shows that this type of happiness lacks an ethical component.

2. Happiness as the Result of External Circumstances

A person may feel happy when enjoying good material conditions, good health, or social status. This definition also lacks moral direction and depends on external factors, which do not guarantee lasting well-being.

3. Happiness as the Outcome of Living a Meaningful Life

In this case, happiness is connected to leading a good, holistic life that involves moral and personal growth. This is the closest modern understanding to Aristotle's

eudaimonia, as it incorporates ethical dimensions and the concept of self-actualization.

The author of the dissertation defends the view that the third approach—linking happiness with a meaningful and morally good life—best corresponds to Aristotle’s understanding of *eudaimonia*.

The Role of Pleasure in Achieving Happiness: A Comparison with Epicurus

This section explores the distinction between *eudaimonia* and hedonistic happiness, making reference to the teachings of Epicurus. While Epicureanism associates happiness with the absence of pain and the presence of moderate pleasure, Aristotle emphasizes rational activity and moral development as key factors in achieving a fulfilled life.

Epicurus views happiness as the absence of suffering (*ataraxia*) and stresses the importance of moderate desires and self-control. Although this concept shares certain features with *eudaimonia*, it does not fully encompass the moral and social dimensions of happiness as understood by Aristotle. While Epicurus focuses on individual inner tranquility, Aristotle connects happiness with social interaction, the cultivation of virtue, and active participation in the community.

Eudaimonia as a Higher Concept Than Pleasure

Aristotle draws a clear distinction between happiness based on pleasure and happiness based on the full realization of human potential. He points out that people often confuse pleasure with happiness, since pleasure can be fleeting and incomplete, whereas *eudaimonia* is a long-term state of harmony between virtues, reason, and social life.

The section also discusses the relationship between personal and collective well-being. Aristotle maintains that no one can be truly happy in isolation, but only through participation in a well-ordered society. In this context, the connection between the ideal state and individual happiness is examined, as well as the role of friendship in achieving *eudaimonia*.

The Difficulty of Translating “Eudaimonia”

This section addresses the question of how best to translate the term *εὐδαιμονία*, outlining several possible options:

- **“Happiness”** – This is the most commonly used translation, but it has the drawback of often being understood as a subjective feeling, whereas in Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is an objective achievement.
- **“Well-being”** – This term conveys the idea of long-term development and personal fulfillment, but it may overlook the ethical and active dimensions of *eudaimonia*.

- **“Flourishing”** – This translation is the closest to Aristotle’s meaning, as it emphasizes *eudaimonia* as a process of growth and self-improvement, though it may still fall short in capturing the full moral depth of the concept.
- **“Well-doing”** – This translation highlights the active aspect of *eudaimonia*, but may understate the internal states, attitudes, and emotions involved.

The author of the dissertation argues that the most accurate rendering would combine “flourishing” and “well-being”, as together they reflect both the active and long-term nature of *eudaimonia*. In the remainder of this dissertation summary, the terms “happiness,” “fulfillment,” “well-being,” and “*eudaimonia*” will be used interchangeably.

Conclusion of the Section

The section concludes with a summary of the various definitions of happiness discussed, emphasizing that *eudaimonia* is not merely a state of pleasure or an accumulation of external goods, but a process of active life in accordance with virtue.

Unlike hedonistic concepts, *eudaimonia* is not centered on the pursuit of pleasure alone—it requires moral development and social engagement.

Unlike materialistic views of happiness, *eudaimonia* does not depend solely on external conditions, but primarily on the inner formation of character.

Unlike many contemporary psychological understandings of well-being, *eudaimonia* includes not only individual emotions but also ethical norms and social interactions.

This section sets the stage for the following chapters of the dissertation, which will offer a deeper analysis of Aristotelian ethics, affect theory, and contemporary conceptions of happiness.

1.3. An in-depth inquiry into Aristotle’s theory of *eudaimonia* in Nicomachean Ethics

This part of the dissertation offers a detailed analysis of the concept of *eudaimonia* in Aristotle’s ethics, focusing on the core arguments found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The section presents two interconnected stages in understanding Aristotle’s theory: an initial exposition of its main ideas, followed by a deeper exploration of the *ergon* (function) argument, the distinction between moral and intellectual virtues, and the role of contemplation (*theōria*) as the highest good.

Aristotle begins his work by investigating the ultimate goal of human existence. He argues that all human activities aim at some end, but there is one final and supreme goal that is desired for its own sake—*eudaimonia*. This is not merely a feeling of satisfaction or material success, but a state of human flourishing grounded in virtue. To support this view, Aristotle introduces his *ergon* argument, which claims that every being has a specific function, and that

the human function is the exercise of rational activity. Thus, *eudaimonia* is achieved by living in accordance with reason and cultivating moral virtues.

The *ergon* argument is based on the reasoning that everything has a specific role which defines what it means to be “good” in its category. For example, a good musician is one who plays their instrument well. Similarly, a good human being is one who exercises their rational capacity in the best possible way. Aristotle makes an important distinction between moral virtues (such as courage, temperance, and justice), which are developed through habit and practice, and intellectual virtues, which are cultivated through education and contemplation.

In this context, Aristotle claims that the highest human activity is contemplation (*theōria*), because it is the most enduring, self-sufficient, and divine-like mode of existence. Contemplation requires few external resources and is pursued for its own sake—unlike political or practical activities, which often aim at external outcomes. The person who devotes themselves to philosophical contemplation achieves the fullest form of *eudaimonia* by exercising the most distinctive and elevated human capacity: reason.

However, Aristotle does not exclude the possibility that ordinary people can also attain happiness. While the philosophical life represents the highest form of human existence, a virtuous life can also lead to *eudaimonia*, even if it does not involve intense contemplation. One can live a fulfilled life within the context of family and society, provided that they develop moral virtues and act in accordance with reason.

The section concludes with an analysis of the relationship between moral and intellectual virtues and their roles in building a virtuous life. Although Aristotle places contemplation at the pinnacle of happiness, he also acknowledges the importance of practical virtues such as justice and temperance. True *eudaimonia*, in his view, is achieved through a balance of reason, virtue, and the necessary external conditions. This makes Aristotle’s concept not merely a theoretical construct, but a practical model for living a good life.

1.4. Value Theory: Values, Virtues, and Refuting Cultural Relativism

This section explores the relationship between values, virtues, and ethics, comparing the three main moral theories: Aristotle’s virtue ethics, Kant’s deontological ethics, and the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill. It then addresses why cultural relativism is philosophically untenable and how its acceptance can lead to undesirable social and moral consequences.

Virtue ethics centers the moral life around the development of character and the cultivation of virtues. While utilitarianism judges the morality of actions based on their consequences, and deontology evaluates them by their adherence to universal moral principles, virtue ethics focuses on the formation of the virtuous person—someone who, through habit and rational choice, achieves *eudaimonia*.

Deontology, developed by Kant, asserts that the morality of actions is determined not by their outcomes but by their alignment with the categorical imperative—a universal moral law that must be followed in every situation. In utilitarianism, by contrast, the moral value of an action depends on whether it maximizes overall happiness—"the greatest good for the greatest number."

Although utilitarianism resembles Epicurean philosophy, it differs in how it evaluates pleasure. Bentham treats all pleasures as equal, whereas Mill introduces a hierarchy of pleasures, placing intellectual pleasures above bodily ones. Mill also introduces the harm principle, which states that individuals should be free to act as they wish, provided their actions do not harm others.

Within the framework of virtue ethics, it is crucial to understand the relationship between values and virtues. Values are fundamental ideas that guide our actions, while virtues are their embodiment in behavior. For example, if justice is a value, then honesty and impartiality are the virtues that express it.

The following part of this section is dedicated to the refutation of cultural relativism—the idea that moral values are entirely relative and depend solely on cultural context. In his article "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism," James Rachels demonstrates that this view is logically flawed and leads to unacceptable consequences. If we accept cultural relativism, then:

1. We would be unable to morally condemn practices such as slavery or the oppression of women, since all moral norms would be considered valid only within their respective cultures.
2. We would be unable to criticize our own society, leading to stagnation and the preservation of unjust traditions.
3. We would lose the notion of moral progress, as there would be no universal standard by which to judge whether a society has advanced or regressed.

While the specific expressions of virtues may depend on cultural context, the virtues themselves are universal. Courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom are essential for a good life, regardless of cultural background. Moreover, Aristotle's doctrine of the mean shows that virtue is a balanced state between two extremes (e.g., courage is the mean between cowardice and recklessness), and this balance is determined by reason, not cultural norms.

Thus, cultural relativism is untenable, as it undermines the very idea of virtue and human development. Instead, we must accept that objective moral virtues exist and are necessary for achieving *eudaimonia*. In this way, Aristotle's philosophy provides a more stable foundation for ethics—one that does not rely solely on social context, but is rooted in the rational pursuit of the good life.

1.5. Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas on Happiness

This section of the dissertation traces the development of the concept of happiness from ancient philosophy to medieval scholasticism by comparing the views of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas adopts and modifies Aristotle's theory of virtue and human well-being, integrating it into Christian theology. While Aristotle sees eudaimonia as the highest human good, attained through the cultivation of moral and intellectual virtues, Aquinas distinguishes between happiness in this life and beatific happiness—perfect happiness achievable only through union with God after death.

Aquinas and the Reinterpretation of Aristotelian Happiness

Aquinas does not reject Aristotle's idea of happiness but expands its scope by emphasizing the limitations of philosophical reasoning in attaining the ultimate good. Unlike Aristotle's purely rational and immanent understanding, Aquinas introduces the concept of divine grace as a necessary condition for reaching final fulfillment. He adapts the classical theory of virtues by adding the theological virtues—faith, love, and hope—which complement the traditional ancient virtues such as wisdom, temperance, justice, and courage.

Aquinas also preserves Aristotle's distinction between the intellectual and appetitive parts of the soul. The intellectual part governs reason and judgment, while the appetitive part regulates emotions and desires. Happiness is achieved when these two parts function in harmony: intellectual virtues ensure correct reasoning, and moral virtues regulate desires in accordance with reason.

Happiness and Contemplation

Both Aristotle and Aquinas regard theoretical wisdom as the highest virtue and contemplation as the most perfect human activity. Anthony Kenny supports the traditional interpretation that true happiness lies in contemplation, because:

- Contemplation is pursued for its own sake—it is not a means to another good, but constitutes the supreme good itself.
- Contemplation requires minimal external conditions—it is self-sufficient and less dependent on material factors.

Contemplation activates the highest part of the human soul—reason—which corresponds to human nature.

Aquinas also upholds this view but introduces an important modification: while contemplation is indeed the highest form of happiness, it cannot be fully realized in earthly life. Perfect happiness (*beatitudo*) belongs to the afterlife; the human intellect will attain perfect knowledge of God, which will completely satisfy its natural desire for truth.

The Interaction Between Moral and Intellectual Virtues

Although Aquinas follows Aristotle in affirming the primacy of the contemplation of God, he does not reduce happiness to this alone. Unlike Anthony Kenny, who treats moral virtues as secondary, Aquinas argues that they are not only necessary for contemplation but also an integral part of a fulfilled human life.

Happiness requires not only theoretical wisdom but also the proper regulation of desires and emotions. If a person possesses intellectual virtues but lives in constant anxiety or suffering, their happiness will be incomplete.

Moreover, Aristotle acknowledges that even the best person needs certain external goods—such as health, friendship, and a stable social environment. Aquinas clarifies this idea by distinguishing between:

- Indirect conditions for happiness—education, friendship, and pleasure, which are beneficial but not essential to happiness itself;
- Essential conditions for happiness—the exercise of virtue, which is necessary for a flourishing existence.

Dominant and Inclusive Conceptions of Happiness

Based on Aristotle's idea of *ergon* (the characteristic function of a human being), a distinction can be made between two interpretations of happiness:

- Dominant happiness – focused exclusively on contemplation as the supreme human activity.
- Inclusive happiness – acknowledges the necessity of moral virtues, practical reason, and social life as essential components of a fulfilled life.

While the first view is supported by Anthony Kenny and traditional interpretations of Aristotle, the second has been developed by scholars such as Wai Lau, who argues that a philosopher cannot be truly happy without possessing practical wisdom and moral virtues, which enable one to function well within society.

Aquinas and the Final Hierarchy of Happiness

Aquinas's analysis in the *Summa Theologiae* offers a more complex understanding of happiness that combines both the dominant and inclusive perspectives:

- Ultimate happiness (*beatitudo*) is attainable only in the afterlife through the contemplation of God.
- Temporal happiness (*felicitas*) can be achieved in this life through the practice of virtues and philosophical wisdom.

Aquinas identifies four ways in which something can be necessary for happiness:

1. As preparation – such as education, which prepares a person for cultivating virtues.
2. As perfection – virtues that refine the soul and make it capable of happiness.
3. As supportive means – friends, social support, and material conditions that contribute to a happy life.
4. As accompanying factors – pleasure, which naturally accompanies a virtuous and fulfilled life.

According to Aquinas, happiness in this life is not fully perfect, but it can still be genuine and meaningful if one lives in accordance with reason, moral virtues, and the pursuit of knowledge.

The views of Aristotle and Aquinas on happiness are both similar and different. Both agree that happiness is connected to reason and virtue, but Aquinas introduces a theological perspective, asserting that perfect happiness is only achievable in the afterlife. In this life, one may experience happiness through virtuous living, but it does not constitute the ultimate, beatific happiness. This synthesis of ancient philosophy and Christian theology positions Aquinas as a key figure in the evolution of the idea of *eudaimonia* and its lasting influence on later Western philosophy.

1.6. Conclusions

The conclusion following Chapter One summarizes the key ideas explored in the analysis of *eudaimonia*, presenting the central philosophical traditions that shape the concept of happiness and the virtuous life. It traces the intellectual continuity from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas, highlighting their lasting influence on the understanding of human flourishing.

At the end of the analysis, the text raises the question of Aristotle's relevance in contemporary society, which is increasingly oriented toward instant gratification and material prosperity.

The conclusion emphasizes that Aristotle's philosophy offers a model for deeper engagement with life. Happiness is not merely a collection of experiences, but a way of being in which virtue and wisdom play a central role.

II. Newer (Virtue Ethicist) Interpretations of Aristotle: The Intellectualist Perspective vs. The Blended Perspective

Chapter 2 explores the ongoing debate regarding the interpretation of Aristotle's virtue ethics and the role of emotions in moral development. The central question is whether Aristotle's ethics is purely intellectualist, focused on reason and contemplation (*theōria*), or whether it represents a blended concept that integrates both intellect and emotion.

To illustrate this dilemma, the text analyzes two opposing viewpoints:

- Thomas Nagel defends the intellectualist model, according to which *eudaimonia* is achieved primarily through the activity of reason, especially through theoretical contemplation.
- Nancy Sherman offers a holistic interpretation, arguing that *eudaimonia* requires an interplay between intellect and emotions, with the latter playing a crucial role in the cultivation of moral virtues.

2.1. Reconciling Nagel's Intellectualism with Sherman's Holistic Interpretation of Aristotle

Thomas Nagel, in his work "*Aristotle on Eudaimonia*" (1980), presents a rationally dominated interpretation of Aristotle's concept of happiness. According to him:

- The only quality that distinguishes humans from other living beings is their capacity for rational thought.
- The physical and emotional aspects of human life cannot be essential to *eudaimonia*, since they are shared with other organisms.
- The highest good (*summum bonum*) must be defined by the highest human capacity, which, in his view, is reasoning and pure contemplation (*sophia*).

Nagel bases his thesis on Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle states that *eudaimonia* is "the activity of the most divine part of man," which Nagel interprets as theoretical contemplation.

In contrast to the intellectualist position, Nancy Sherman critiques the reduction of virtue ethics to purely rational processes. She argues that:

- Emotions are not irrational impulses, but cognitively rich processes that are inextricably linked to reason.
- Virtues cannot function without properly managed emotions, since moral choice requires engagement and motivation, not just rational analysis.
- Feelings must be cultivated through practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), so that they support correct moral decisions.

Sherman refers to Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle defines virtue as a state of character regulated by reason, which implies that virtue is not merely an intellectual exercise, but also involves emotions and actions directed toward proper conduct.

In addition, Sherman draws on Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle distinguishes between theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) and practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). Practical wisdom includes:

- Knowledge of universal moral principles, and

- The ability to respond appropriately in concrete situations.

Sherman interprets this as clear support for the integration of emotion and reason in the moral life.

Critique of Intellectualism and Defense of the Blended Perspective

The text rejects Nagel’s radical intellectualist interpretation for failing to sufficiently account for the richness of human experience. In support of Sherman’s holistic model, the following points are made:

- Human well-being cannot be reduced to rational reflection alone—moral life involves emotions, attachments, and engagement with others.
- At times, the right moral decision is not purely rational, but requires emotional empathy and sound intuition.
- Practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) is more relevant in real life because it deals with concrete situations, not abstract truths.

To support this thesis, the text offers a modern example:

A manager in a software company must decide whether to shut down an innovative but low-profit project or a more stable, yet less innovative one. If they follow a purely rational analysis, they will choose to terminate the innovative project due to lower revenue.

However, by incorporating emotional and ethical considerations, the manager may recognize that preserving innovation has long-term value. As a result, they find a compromise—redistributing resources more evenly instead of canceling projects. While seemingly trivial, this example illustrates how balancing reason and emotion leads to better moral decisions.

Comparison with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Rejecting the Reason–Emotion Dualism

In support of the thesis on the inseparable connection between reason and emotion, the text introduces Deleuze and Guattari and their concept of immanence. They reject the classical division between reason and emotion by:

- Proposing the concept of the “Body without Organs” (BwO)—the idea that the human being is a dynamic system composed of desires, emotions, and mental processes.
- Arguing that there is no dualism between reason and emotion, and that human experience is a complex interplay of rational and emotional interactions.

This postmodern perspective strengthens Sherman’s argument by rejecting the notion of the isolated rational subject and affirming the view that reason and emotion are intrinsically linked and cannot be considered separately.

The text supports a blended perspective on *eudaimonia*, which incorporates both rational reflection and emotional engagement. Nagel's intellectualism proves too limited, as it fails to account for the fullness of human experience.

Sherman's holistic model offers a more complete understanding of *eudaimonia*, emphasizing the importance of practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), regulated emotions, and moral action. Contemporary philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari further challenge the classical dualistic opposition between reason and emotion.

Ultimately, to fully understand *eudaimonia* and moral development, we must adopt an integrative approach that combines intellect, emotion, and practical wisdom.

2.2. Antonio Damasio and Jonathan Haidt: Bridging Cognitive Science and Aristotle's Integration of Emotion and Reason

This section examines the relationship between emotions and rational decision-making through the research of Antonio Damasio and Jonathan Haidt, who provide empirical support for the holistic interpretation of Aristotle's virtue ethics. Their studies confirm that emotions are not an obstacle to rationality but a crucial element in moral judgment and practical wisdom (*phronēsis*).

The section extends the theme introduced through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of immanence and transitions to neuroscientific and psychological research on the connection between emotions and moral reasoning.

In *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, Antonio Damasio challenges Cartesian dualism—which separates reason from emotion—and demonstrates through clinical case studies that without emotional engagement, rational decision-making becomes severely impaired. Based on observations of patients with damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex—most notably the case of Elliot—Damasio shows that although these patients retain their cognitive abilities, their ability to make decisions is paralyzed. Elliot, for instance, can analyze options and draw logical conclusions but is unable to choose between them and act. This phenomenon led Damasio to formulate the Somatic Marker Hypothesis—the theory that emotions generate bodily signals which serve as cognitive cues, guiding attention toward favorable or unfavorable outcomes based on past experiences. Somatic markers act as a kind of “pre-filter” for decisions, reducing cognitive load and aiding the effectiveness of reason.

This theory aligns with Aristotle's concept of *phronēsis*, which involves not only rational deliberation about moral situations but also the intuitive recognition of right action formed through experience and emotional engagement. According to Aristotle, moral virtue is shaped by practicing good actions and acquiring appropriate emotional responses to specific situations.

In this context, Damasio's findings offer empirical support for the view that reason and emotion are not opposites but work together in moral decision-making.

Jonathan Haidt expands on this idea in his work *The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment*. He argues that moral intuitions, shaped by emotions, often precede rational reasoning. In his model, reasoning is not the driver of moral decisions but a post-hoc mechanism people use to justify choices they have already made.

Haidt illustrates this with the “dog and shopping cart” experiment, where participants evaluate the morality of a family that eats its deceased pet dog. Despite the lack of any clear harm, most participants judge the act as immoral, based on a strong emotional reaction. Haidt concludes that moral evaluations arise intuitively, with reasoning primarily serving to justify them afterward.

Haidt's model and Damasio's hypothesis are similar in that both place emotions at the center of moral decision-making. The difference lies in their emphasis: Damasio focuses on the neurological mechanisms by which emotions influence cognition, while Haidt highlights the social-cognitive dimension—how people use reason to justify emotional moral intuitions in social contexts. Both approaches fit into Aristotle's concept of moral virtue, which requires not only intellectual capacity but also properly regulated emotions.

After establishing that the integration of reason and emotion is essential to Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*, the section transitions to Martha Nussbaum's approach. Nussbaum develops the capabilities theory, which builds on Aristotle's virtue ethics by emphasizing the importance of developing key human capabilities for a flourishing life. For her, emotions are not irrational impulses but forms of evaluative judgment about the world and the objects of our concern and commitment. In this way, she offers a contemporary interpretation of Aristotle's ethics, attuned to today's social and philosophical contexts.

This section connects cognitive science and moral psychology with virtue ethics, showing that emotions are not antagonists to reason but a fundamental component of practical wisdom and moral decision-making. The findings of Damasio and Haidt confirm that moral choices cannot be fully reduced to rational analysis, as intuition and emotional response often play a leading role. In this context, Nussbaum's theory serves as a bridge between ancient ethics and modern views on human well-being, offering a way to integrate virtues, cognitive sciences, and social factors into a unified ethical model.

2.3 Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach and Theory of Emotions as a Bridge between Virtue Ethics and Affect Theory

This section explores the relationship between Aristotle's virtue ethics and contemporary approaches to emotion through the work of Martha Nussbaum. Her Capabilities Approach and theory of emotions serve as a bridge between classical philosophical understandings of human flourishing and modern social, political, and psychological frameworks. Nussbaum

offers a model that links personal virtue to the institutional and structural conditions necessary for the full development of the individual.

Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach is inspired by Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia* but adapts it to address modern socio-political challenges. She outlines a list of ten central human capabilities that she argues must be guaranteed in order for individuals to live a dignified and flourishing life.

Unlike Aristotle, who focused on the cultivation of individual virtue, Nussbaum emphasizes that these capabilities must be actively protected and supported by social institutions and government policy. This shift positions her as a thinker who expands virtue ethics by including broader societal responsibility for enabling human development.

Nussbaum stresses that true justice is not measured solely by outcomes, but by the real opportunities people have. For instance, a person may appear healthy because they are well-fed, but if they lack secure access to food, their capability for bodily health remains vulnerable. According to Nussbaum, governments and institutions have a moral obligation to ensure access to such basic capabilities so that all citizens can lead meaningful lives.

Whereas Aristotle regards virtue primarily as a matter of personal choice and moral refinement, Nussbaum extends this into the realm of social justice and human rights. In *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, she examines how historically marginalized groups—such as women and people with disabilities—have been systematically denied opportunities to develop their capabilities. She argues that justice requires not just formal legal equality, but the active removal of social and political barriers that hinder real freedom of choice.

Critics of this approach argue that it risks being overly universalistic or even prescriptive, raising concerns about whether a single set of capabilities should be imposed on all cultures. Nussbaum defends her model by clarifying that her list of ten central capabilities is not a fixed dogma, but a starting point for dialogue, meant to be adapted to different cultural and social contexts.

Nussbaum's theory of emotions is also a significant bridge between classical virtue ethics and contemporary affect studies. In *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, she rejects the traditional Cartesian separation of reason and emotion, arguing that emotions are not irrational impulses but cognitive evaluations of the value of things in our world. Drawing from Stoicism, Nussbaum departs from the Stoic view that emotions are obstacles to reason; instead, she claims they can be cultivated and directed toward moral growth.

According to Nussbaum, emotions play a crucial role in the development of moral character and ethical decision-making. For example, compassion is not merely an automatic reaction, but the result of recognizing another person's suffering and its moral significance. She asserts that emotions not only reflect what we value, but also motivate ethical behavior. In this sense,

moral education should not be limited to the cultivation of rational virtues, but must include the development of emotional intelligence and empathy.

Nussbaum also emphasizes the role of imagination as a key tool for moral development. She argues that literature, art, and the humanities are irreplaceable in expanding our moral horizons by allowing us to place ourselves in others' shoes and understand their perspectives.

For instance, through classical tragedies like Sophocles' *Antigone*, readers can emotionally engage with moral conflicts that go beyond their personal experience. Nussbaum believes that this kind of aesthetic and emotional education is essential for developing moral sensitivity and civic awareness.

Of course, her approach has drawn criticism. Some philosophers argue that emphasizing emotion too heavily can lead to moral subjectivism, where ethical judgments are based more on personal feeling than rational principle. Nussbaum responds by insisting that emotions must be regulated and cultivated through moral education and critical thinking to avoid cognitive distortions and biases.

In conclusion, Martha Nussbaum's work provides one of the most comprehensive contemporary interpretations of Aristotle's ethics, integrating the virtue tradition with social justice, emotional education, and institutional responsibility. Her Capabilities Approach offers a framework for political and social reform aimed at ensuring real freedom and equality, while her theory of emotions highlights the importance of emotional intelligence and empathy in moral development.

III. Affect Theory

3.1. Theoretical Background of Affect Theory

This section explores affect theory as a supplement and expansion of Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*. While Aristotle defines human happiness as the achievement of virtue through a combination of intellectual excellence and practical wisdom, affect theory offers a new perspective that investigates the preconscious and embodied dimensions of human experience. This extension is particularly important in three aspects:

First, affect theory challenges the dominant role of reason and cognitive processes in Western philosophy. Thinkers such as Silvan Tomkins and Brian Massumi argue that affect precedes rational interpretation of an experience. This aligns with Aristotle's understanding of practical virtues, which are formed through habit and sensory experience, rather than through purely rational thought.

Second, affect highlights the role of pleasure and enjoyment, which Aristotle also acknowledges as important for *eudaimonia*. Affect theorists claim that pleasure is not simply the result of rational choices, but emerges from preconscious and bodily intensities that shape our sense of well-being.

Third, affect theory provides a deeper understanding of Aristotle's concept of contemplation as the highest human activity. While Aristotle presents contemplation as a cognitive act, affect theory reveals that contemplation involves affective resonance, which goes beyond the limits of pure thought.

The study of these dimensions allows us to overcome the traditional oppositions between reason and emotion, conscious and unconscious, and rationality and embodiment. The following sections introduce the key ideas and authors in affect theory that can complement and enrich Aristotle's model of *eudaimonia*.

Foundations of Affect Theory

Affect theory gained prominence in the second half of the 20th century as a reaction against traditional cognitive and linguistic theories in psychology and philosophy. Its core assumption is that we feel before we know that we feel, which challenges the classical philosophical distinction between body and mind.

There are various currents within this field, but most are rooted in two main traditions: the psychoanalytic tradition, represented by Silvan Tomkins, and the Spinozist tradition, developed by Brian Massumi. This part of the dissertation focuses specifically on these two thinkers as central figures in contemporary affect theory.

Before examining their concepts, it is important to distinguish between affective science and affect theory. The former stems from cognitive science and treats "affect" as synonymous with emotion, seeking to measure and analyze it empirically. The latter offers a broader interpretation, encompassing political and cultural analysis, and views affect as a fundamental aspect of human experience that cannot be reduced to cognitive processes.

In this text, the term *affect* will be used within the framework of affect theory, rather than the cognitive tradition.

Affect According to Spinoza and Its Revival in Massumi

The concept of *affect* originates with Baruch Spinoza, who formulates it in his work *Ethics* (1677). According to Spinoza, there is a fundamental distinction between the representational and non-representational dimensions of human experience.

Deleuze, who plays a central role in the modern interpretation of Spinoza, explains that an idea is a mode of thought that has objective reality and refers to something concrete—for example, the idea of a triangle represents the triangle as a form. In contrast, affect does not represent anything specific, but exists independently as an inner experience. Spinoza views affect as a line of continuous variation in our vital force, which constantly shifts depending on circumstances.

Three centuries later, Brian Massumi develops a contemporary theory of affect grounded in Spinoza, but also inspired by Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze. In *Parables for the Virtual*,

Massumi presents affect as a primary bodily intensity that precedes linguistic interpretation. He refers to this as the “autonomy of affect,” emphasizing that affect exists outside of conscious control and cannot be fully captured through rational analysis.

According to Brian Massumi, affect is defined by several key features:

- *Intensity* – Affect is dynamic, like an echo that does not arise from the original sound itself but from the interaction of sound waves. By analogy, human experience is not reducible to a single moment but is a continuous flow of sensations.
- *Unconsciousness* – Affect manifests in the body before conscious awareness. For instance, when someone startles at a sudden sound, their reaction is affective before they interpret it as fear.
- *Pre-linguistic nature* – Unlike emotion, which can be articulated through language, affect remains pre-verbal and cannot be fully translated into words.

Affect According to Tomkins: A Psychoanalytic Perspective

Silvan Tomkins develops his theory of affect in *Affect Imagery Consciousness* as a synthesis between Freudian psychoanalysis and experimental psychology. His central claim is that affect is a primary source of motivation, shaping both our cognitive and behavioral responses.

Tomkins identifies nine innate affects, including joy, interest, fear, anger, surprise, disgust, and shame. These affects are universal and accompanied by specific physiological expressions—for example, shame is manifested through averting the gaze and blushing.

According to Tomkins, the face is the primary vehicle of affective expression, as it is the most developed motor structure in the human body. This idea aligns with Aristotle’s view of the importance of practical virtues, which are also formed through embodied habits and social interaction.

Affect theory, in this sense, offers a new understanding of human experience, enriching Aristotelian ethics by adding preconscious, bodily, and emotional dimensions to the classical concept of *eudaimonia*. Massumi and Tomkins demonstrate that our actions are not solely governed by rational choices, but are deeply influenced by unconscious affective processes.

This rethinking of human existence enables a deeper interpretation of virtue ethics in light of contemporary discoveries in psychology, neuroscience, and philosophy.

3.2. Affect Theorists on the Notion of Happiness

Affect theorists significantly expand our understanding of happiness by revealing the complex interaction between subjective experience and objective reality. Central to this development is Martha Nussbaum’s theory of emotions, which bridges virtue ethics with the study of affective states. Nussbaum acknowledges the cognitive aspects of emotions but also incorporates elements of affect theory, which emphasizes the bodily and relational nature of emotional states.

In *Upheavals of Thought*, Nussbaum argues that emotions are not merely irrational impulses but involve evaluative and intentional components. She claims that emotions are not just the fuel that powers the engine of reason; rather, they are complex, often chaotic components of the thinking process itself. Nussbaum views emotions as evaluative judgments about the world, involving beliefs about what matters. For example, she defines fear as the judgment that an immediate threat is present, and grief as the recognition of the loss of something valuable.

This understanding paves the way for affect theory to explore how affective states, rooted in the body and the environment, shape our perceptions, judgments, and behaviors. Nussbaum emphasizes that the study of emotions is essential to ethical thought, as it reveals how values and rationality are interwoven with affective experience.

Distinction Between Affect and Emotion

Although affect and emotion are closely related, they are not identical. While emotions are intense, short-lived reactions to specific objects or events, affects are longer-lasting, pervasive states that shape one's overall experience of the world. Affects are not confined to the subjective inner world but are embodied and environmentally conditioned.

Laura Sizer offers an integrative theory of happiness that connects subjective experience with objective conditions. In her article "*Good and Good for You: An Affect Theory of Happiness*," she makes an important distinction between local happiness and global happiness:

- *Local happiness* refers to temporary positive emotions linked to specific events or experiences—for example, the joy of success or the pleasure of eating delicious food.
- *Global happiness* is a broader and more enduring state that shapes an individual's attitude and behavior over a longer period.

Global happiness is analogous to Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*, as it represents a holistic condition of well-being, rather than a mere accumulation of pleasures.

In her theory, Sizer draws on dynamic systems thinking, viewing happiness as an equilibrium state within the interconnected relationships between body, mind, and environment. According to her, positive mood is not merely the result of happiness but an active contributor to it, as it influences cognitive processes, behavior, and physiology.

Sizer also explores the relationship between positive mood and moral reasoning. She demonstrates that positive affective states enhance ethical capabilities by facilitating creative problem-solving, cognitive flexibility, and the integration of new information—all of which are key aspects of Aristotle's practical wisdom (*phronēsis*).

Affect Theory and Life Evaluation

Affect theory offers a new framework for understanding how people evaluate their lives and sense of well-being. It suggests that individuals often intuitively draw conclusions about their happiness based on their prevailing affective states. For example, if a person experiences positive emotions most of the time, they may conclude that they are happy.

This raises the question of how we assess the balance between positive and negative affects. There are two main perspectives:

- *Cognitive model* – People consciously calculate the balance between positive and negative affects using rational assessments.
- *Automatic model* – The affective balance arises spontaneously, and the emotional state functions as a meta-signal indicating overall well-being.

According to the second perspective, affects act as regulatory signals that guide us in evaluating whether we are doing well or whether we need to adjust our behavior. Positive affects signal that our needs are being met, while negative affects prompt us to seek change or improvement.

Daniel Haybron and the Affective Metaphysics of Happiness

In his work *Happiness and the Metaphysics of Affect*, Daniel M. Haybron proposes a theory of happiness as an emotional state. He challenges the traditional hedonistic view that happiness is merely the accumulation of pleasures, offering instead a more nuanced theory based on dispositional affective states.

According to Haybron, emotions and moods are “central affective states” that form the core of well-being, whereas fleeting pleasures are “peripheral affective states”, which do not determine long-term happiness.

He introduces the idea of happiness as a “functional state”, analogous to a well-maintained machine. In this view:

- Positive emotional states act as “green lights”, indicating that a person is functioning well.
- Negative affects serve as “warning signals”, pointing to problems and prompting the need for change.

Affect Theory and Aristotle’s Concept of Eudaimonia

Research in affect theory shows that happiness is not merely a cognitive process or rational evaluation, but a bodily and emotional experience deeply connected to one’s environment and interpersonal relationships.

From this perspective, *eudaimonia* is not simply a rational choice, but a holistic state of embodied well-being, which requires the integration of cognitive, affective, and social factors.

Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) can be understood not only as rational judgment, but also as an intuitive capacity for recognizing and regulating affective signals.

This leads to an important conclusion: the traditional division between reason and emotion, between rationality and embodied experience, needs to be reconsidered. Affect theory offers a more comprehensive concept of *eudaimonia*—one that includes not only virtues and reason, but also the bodily and emotional dimensions of human existence.

The following chapters of the dissertation continue to explore how Aristotle's ethics can be reinterpreted through this lens.

3.3. Applying Affect Theory to Aristotle and Aquinas

At first glance, Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*—founded on the realization of rational capacities through virtuous activity—may appear to be in conflict with the insights of affect theory, which emphasizes preconscious bodily resonances and intensities.

Aristotle places reason at the center of human existence, viewing happiness as the result of perfecting our rational nature through moral and intellectual virtues. In this context, the affective system as described by Tomkins and Massumi—with its emphasis on the autonomous activation of innate biological mechanisms such as “joy-pleasure” or “distress-suffering,” which arise prior to rational evaluation—may seem incompatible with Aristotle's high philosophical ideals. How can these bodily processes be meaningfully connected to the highest form of virtuous activity—the contemplative life, which Aristotle defines as the supreme realization of human happiness?

A deeper analysis, however, reveals that Aristotle's ethics is not as detached from the bodily and affective dimensions of human existence as it might initially seem. In fact, the affective resonances emphasized by affect theorists can be understood as a complement to Aristotelian philosophy, revealing new dimensions of human flourishing.

Affect and Rational Virtue in Aristotle's Ethics

Aristotle describes *eudaimonia* as “an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, I.7). From the perspective of affect theory, this concept can be interpreted as a synthesis between rational capacities and preconscious bodily attitudes and affective predispositions.

Affect as the Foundation of Rational Behavior

According to Silvan Tomkins, affective systems act as blueprints for cognition, decision-making, and action. Our rational choices and goals do not emerge *ex nihilo*, but develop on

the basis of preconscious affective impulses and bodily states. A virtuous person does not merely act rationally, but integrates rational decisions with affective responses.

For example, the virtue of temperance does not simply require abstaining from excess, but achieving an inner harmony between desires and reason. In this way, Aristotelian *eudaimonia* is not merely a rational concept, but an embodied, affectively modulated way of life.

Affective Reactions and Moral Choices

Tomkins and Massumi demonstrate that our affective reactions are autonomous forces that shape our ethical awareness. Affect precedes rational evaluation. When a person performs a virtuous act (e.g., helping someone in need), the initial impulse may arise from an affective activation of “joy-pleasure.” This reaction motivates the individual to act even before conscious reasoning occurs. Conversely, when one experiences “distress-suffering,” it may diminish their motivation for virtuous action.

According to Tomkins, affective systems regulate behavior by directing our attention to potential dangers or social challenges. This shows that virtuous behavior is not a purely rational process, but includes bodily and emotional reactions that precede conscious decision-making.

Aristotle and the Contemplative Life Through the Lens of Affect

As previously noted, Aristotle considers the contemplative life the highest form of *eudaimonia*. This is typically interpreted as a purely intellectual activity. However, affect theory shows that contemplation is not only a rational process, but also a deeply embodied and affective experience.

Massumi argues that all knowledge begins with an affective reaction, which shapes our orientation toward the world. In this way, philosophical inquiry is an emotional immersion in the meaning of being.

Wonder as the Foundation of Philosophy

Aristotle states that philosophy begins in wonder (*thaumazein*). Affect theory supports this claim by showing that primary affective responses shape cognitive processes. Therefore, the contemplative life is not the opposite of affect, but rather its highest expression.

Application of Affect Theory to Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas develops Aristotle’s ethics by integrating Christian theology, placing special emphasis on the development of the will and love (*caritas*) as central principles of virtuous life.

Aquinas argues that love (*caritas*) is the highest virtue, guiding all other moral qualities. This aligns with affect theory, which views emotions as drivers of ethical behavior. Similarly, like

Tomkins, Aquinas emphasizes that affective states are rooted in the body. He considers pleasure (*delectatio*) a natural result of virtuous actions.

Therefore, affect theory can be used to reconsider the scholastic tradition, showing that ethical perfection is not merely a rational act, but an embodied practice integrating affect and reason.

The integration of affect theory with classical ethics offers a more comprehensive understanding of human well-being. This chapter concludes with three key insights:

1. Happiness can be understood as a dynamic interaction between reason and bodily affect.
2. Affects are not obstacles to moral development, but prerequisites for the formation of virtue.
3. The contemplative life is not purely intellectual, but an affective immersion in the essence of being.

3.4. Applying Affect Theory to Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach

The integration of affect theory with Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach reveals the importance of preconscious bodily intensities and emotional responses in the realization of human potential. While affect theory emphasizes the non-representational, pre-linguistic aspects of experience, it offers a complementary view to the capabilities model by showing how human flourishing depends not only on conscious decision-making, but also on unconscious, embodied processes.

Massumi and Tomkins challenge the classical division between emotion and reason by arguing that our primary reactions to the world are not rational judgments, but arise at the sensory and affective level. This idea resonates with Nussbaum's view that emotions are not merely irrational impulses, but complex evaluative processes tied to our deep beliefs about the good life.

Nussbaum's capabilities approach, grounded in Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*, offers a framework for human well-being based on a set of essential capabilities required for a flourishing life. While her model highlights emotional well-being, affect theory expands on it by showing how preconscious and embodied experiences shape our sense of *eudaimonia*. In traditional philosophy, affect is often treated as secondary to rational thought, but Massumi and Tomkins demonstrate that affects are primary and influence our behavior and perception before cognition occurs.

Within the capabilities framework, several core categories can be analyzed through the lens of affect theory:

- **Bodily Integrity** – This includes not only physical safety but also the sense of autonomy and control over one's body. Affect theory shows that bodily experiences of safety or vulnerability deeply influence this perception. For instance, someone who

has experienced violence may unconsciously carry tension and anxiety that alters their felt sense of freedom and security.

- **Emotional Capacity** – Defined by Nussbaum as the ability to form attachments and experience emotions without excessive fear. Affect theory reveals that bodily signals such as comfort, tension, or resonance occur prior to conscious awareness of emotional connection, shaping our social relationships. Feelings of acceptance or rejection are not merely rational but are experienced somatically and preconsciously.
- **Senses, Imagination, and Thought** – Nussbaum emphasizes these for human development through education and cultural expression. Affect theory complements this by showing that sensory experiences are always affect-laden. Visual, auditory, and tactile stimuli evoke preconconscious responses that shape aesthetic perception and emotional engagement. For example, the pleasure of watching a sunset or the feeling of comfort at home are not merely cognitive—they are affectively saturated experiences.
- **Practical Reason** – While traditionally associated with rational reflection on the good life, affect theory shows that emotional and bodily intuitions play a vital role in how we perceive and evaluate moral questions. A sense of “injustice” or “inner discomfort” in a given situation is primarily an affective response, later translated into a moral position. This explains why ethical judgments often feel intuitive and resist full rational articulation.

One of the most profound intersections between the capabilities approach and affect theory is in understanding empathy’s role in social justice. Nussbaum stresses affiliation—the ability to live with and for others—as key to a just society. Affect theory complements this by showing that empathy is not only rational sympathy but also a preconconscious affective response. Tomkins introduces the concept of “affective contagion,” describing how we feel the emotional states of others even before consciously recognizing them. These unconscious emotional exchanges shape social dynamics in ways that escape rational control.

Where Nussbaum’s capabilities approach emphasizes rights, structures, and conditions necessary for realizing human potential, affect theory reveals the internal, embodied experiences that orient us toward those opportunities—even before we are consciously aware of them.

3.5. Conclusions

This chapter examined the intersection between affect theory and classical concepts of *eudaimonia*, demonstrating how affect theorists such as Tomkins and Massumi expand our understanding of human well-being.

Affect theory challenges the traditional division between emotion and rationality, revealing the role of preconconscious bodily intensities in shaping moral intuitions, emotional responses,

and the pursuit of a virtuous life. In this sense, *eudaimonia* is not merely a rational endeavor but a harmonization between reason and embodied affective impulses, which shape our values and actions.

Nussbaum's capabilities approach, though rooted in the Aristotelian tradition, is enriched by affect theory, which emphasizes the importance of embodied experience in the formation of moral judgment and the pursuit of social justice.

Empathy, affective contagion, and preconscious intuitions emerge as key elements in broadening our moral horizons, revealing that affect is not just a subjective experience, but a mechanism that shapes our social reality.

Integrating affect theory with classical concepts of *eudaimonia* and the capabilities approach leads to a more holistic understanding of human flourishing. This is not solely a rational pursuit, but a state that involves harmonizing reason with embodied affectivity, where our conscious choices are shaped in dialogue with preconscious sensations. In this sense, *eudaimonia* emerges as a dynamic process in which reason and affect work together in synchrony to achieve a meaningful and fulfilled life.

IV. Contemporary Psychological Views on Eudaimonia in Relation to Emotion & Affect

4.1. Emotional State Theory: Foundations

This chapter presents contemporary psychological theories of *eudaimonia*, focusing on the role of emotions and affect in human well-being. It connects Aristotle's virtue ethics with modern psychological frameworks such as Emotional State Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Affect Theory.

The foundational ideas of Emotional State Theory include appraisal mechanisms, emotion regulation, and the distinction between biologically innate and conceptually constructed emotions. While classical theorists such as Paul Ekman argue for universal, hardwired emotions with clear neural correlates, constructivist approaches, such as that of Lisa Feldman Barrett, claim that emotions are dynamically constructed based on context, cognitive interpretation, and prior experience. The discussion of the "permeability" of emotions reveals the extent to which cognitive processes can modify or even shape emotional experiences.

Research on emotion regulation explores how different coping strategies—such as cognitive reappraisal, emotional suppression, and attentional control—affect psychological well-being and social functioning. Gross's process model of emotion regulation demonstrates how certain strategies can reduce stress, improve interpersonal relationships, and promote resilience. Individual differences in the ability to regulate emotions are linked to clinical conditions such as anxiety and depression, and interventions like cognitive-behavioral therapy and mindfulness-based approaches aim to enhance these capacities.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) adds another layer by emphasizing the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in achieving authentic *eudaimonia*. These three basic psychological needs align with Aristotle’s vision of the virtuous life, highlighting that true well-being arises from the integration of personal values with action and social relationships. In this context, affect theory plays a key role by revealing how preconscious, bodily intensities modulate emotional experience and shape our intuitive moral orientations.

Contemporary psychology contributes to the concept of *eudaimonia* by offering a dynamic model that unites reason, emotion, and affect in the process of personal development and sustainable well-being.

4.2. Emotional State Theory & Eudaimonia

This subsection explores the connection between Daniel Haybron’s Emotional State Theory and the concept of *eudaimonia* in virtue ethics. Haybron defines happiness as a stable positive emotional condition that influences an individual’s ability to adapt to life’s challenges. This approach differs from hedonistic theories by emphasizing not just the presence of pleasure but the overall affective disposition of the person. Integrating this theory with the eudaimonic view of well-being allows for a deeper understanding of the role of emotions in human flourishing.

Eudaimonia is traditionally associated with the development of human capacities and the cultivation of virtues, with particular focus on practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) as the guiding principle of action. However, emotions play a critical role in this process by shaping perception and motivation. According to Rossi and Tappolet, emotions are perceptual states that track value-laden features of the world—fear identifies danger, love focuses on valued persons, and so forth. A virtuous emotional disposition, aligned with correct appraisals, strengthens eudaimonic well-being by enhancing self-understanding, social relationships, and emotional resilience.

Effective emotion regulation is also essential for *eudaimonia*. Gross’s process model of emotional regulation highlights the importance of cognitive reappraisal as a strategy for adaptively managing emotional responses. People who master such techniques are better able to maintain a positive emotional orientation, even in the face of adversity. In this context, therapeutic methods like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based practices foster skills for emotional regulation and self-awareness, facilitating personal growth and resilience.

Emotional State Theory supports the view of happiness as a dispositional phenomenon, rather than a series of isolated emotional episodes. Haybron describes happiness as a functional state, indicating a person’s readiness to respond positively to life’s circumstances—analogueous to health or the condition of a well-functioning engine. In this sense, depression is not merely temporary sadness but a condition that limits the capacity for positive adaptation.

The *eudaimonic* individual is not only someone who possesses virtuous traits, but also someone who has developed a stable emotional structure that guides their actions in alignment with their higher values. Emotions are an active force in the formation of virtuous character. Virtue-oriented desires and emotions, when combined with practical wisdom, become the driving force of personal well-being. In this light, emotional intelligence and self-reflection are essential components of a *eudaimonic* way of life.

This approach provides an alternative to the widespread view that happiness means constant positivity or the avoidance of negative emotions. According to Martha Nussbaum, even painful emotions like grief and compassion can carry eudaimonic value, as they reflect deep interpersonal bonds and an awareness of the inevitable aspects of life. The goal is not to eliminate negative emotions, but to develop the capacity to interact with them wisely and sustainably.

This understanding of *eudaimonia* presents it as a process of development, not a static state—an ongoing refinement of the harmony between reason, emotion, and moral decision-making.

4.3. Self-Determination Theory, Eudaimonia & Affect Theory

This subsection examines the relationship between Self-Determination Theory (SDT), *eudaimonia*, and affect theory, emphasizing the roles of motivation and emotional processes in human well-being. Expanding on the previous analysis of emotional theories of happiness, this section argues that *eudaimonia* is not merely the absence of negative emotions or the presence of constant positivity, but involves the satisfaction of deep psychological needs that enable a meaningful and sustainable life.

SDT identifies three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as essential for personal development and well-being. These needs parallel Aristotle’s concept of *eudaimonia*, as their fulfillment leads to personal growth and active participation in social life. Empirical studies confirm that intrinsic motives, such as personal development, meaningful relationships, and contributing to society, correlate with greater life satisfaction, whereas extrinsic goals, such as material wealth and social status, are associated with higher anxiety and depression. This supports the idea that true fulfillment (happiness) is not achieved through external validation but through self-directed, meaningful goals.

Autonomy is central to both SDT and *eudaimonia*. Research shows that autonomy allows individuals to act in line with their personal values and interests, thereby supporting moral development. Competence relates to the feeling of effectiveness and mastery over challenges, which echoes Aristotle’s view on cultivating intellectual and practical virtues. Relatedness, the third key element, underscores the importance of social relationships, reflecting Aristotle’s understanding of friendship and justice as foundational to the good life.

Affect theory complements SDT by highlighting the role of unconscious, pre-cognitive emotional responses in motivation and self-regulation. Spontaneous affective reactions direct individuals toward activities that align with their inner needs, thereby enhancing experiences

of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In this view, autonomy is not just the capacity to choose but is grounded in emotional authenticity—spontaneous affective signals that indicate whether a decision resonates with one’s core values.

Environment also plays a crucial role. SDT emphasizes that a supportive environment fosters autonomy, competence, and relatedness, while affect theory reveals how emotional reactions to one’s surroundings shape motivation and behavior. For instance, a work environment that provides autonomy, growth opportunities, and a supportive social network contributes to greater motivation and satisfaction. The same applies to educational institutions—structures that encourage personal development and social connection create fertile ground for the realization of eudaimonic potential.

The integration of SDT and affect theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding human well-being, combining rational, motivational, and affective aspects of personal development. This approach offers practical insights for building societies in which people can live lives aligned with their inner values and potential. In this sense, *eudaimonia* is affirmed not merely as a philosophical ideal, but as an achievable life reality, supported by contemporary psychology and empirical research.

4.4. Recommendations for Future Research in the Field of the Dissertation

This dissertation aims to connect ancient concepts of *eudaimonia* with contemporary theories of emotion and affect, yet many questions remain open for further investigation. The relationship between specific emotions and particular virtues calls for deeper analysis—for example, how emotions like gratitude, humility, or awe contribute to (or hinder) the development of virtues such as wisdom, courage, and temperance. A more refined categorization of these interactions could enrich both philosophical and psychological approaches to human happiness.

A vital area for future research is the role of emotion in practical wisdom. How do emotional intelligence, the ability to recognize complex emotional states, and the regulation of responses to moral dilemmas support virtuous decision-making? Understanding this connection could illuminate the cognitive mechanisms underlying moral development and conscious ethical choice.

Further work is also needed on how autonomy and supportive environmental factors influence emotional self-regulation and the building of a *eudaimonic* life. Investigating social structures, cultural narratives, and interpersonal dynamics that facilitate or hinder human growth may have significant practical applications in education, parenting, healthcare, and public policy. Moreover, the connection between *eudaimonic* well-being and concepts such as resilience, post-traumatic growth, and the experience of life meaning remains underexplored. Understanding how virtue and emotional regulation support personal growth in times of adversity could lead to more effective therapeutic models.

From a philosophical standpoint, further discussion is needed on the metaphysical and ontological status of emotional dispositions. Are virtuous emotional tendencies stable traits, embodied skills, or dynamically constructed modes of being? What is their connection to neural structures and fundamental emotional systems? These questions could be examined through the lenses of phenomenology and the philosophy of emotion. Additionally, individual differences should be analyzed—for example, how emotional intelligence, self-control, and mindfulness practices influence the integration of reason and emotion in virtuous action.

Another important area for future inquiry is the ethical and existential implications of understanding *eudaimonic* well-being as a harmony between reason, emotion, and virtue. If life satisfaction depends on a balanced integration of cognition, affect, and autonomy, this could reshape key debates in normative ethics, moral education, and the philosophy of meaning and values. What educational frameworks are needed to cultivate *eudaimonic* dispositions? How does this approach change our understanding of ethics and moral development?

From a practical perspective, the development and empirical testing of interventions aimed at fostering *eudaimonic* well-being are essential. While cognitive-behavioral therapy, social-emotional learning programs, and mindfulness practices address some aspects of emotional regulation, there is still a lack of integrated programs focused on the development of emotional intelligence, autonomy, and virtue. Longitudinal studies tracking the formation of *eudaimonic* dispositions across the lifespan could help identify critical moments for intervention. Furthermore, advances in neuroscience offer new possibilities for training and enhancing emotional regulation, although they also raise ethical questions about the boundaries of personal development.

This dissertation offers an initial attempt to integrate emotion theory, affect theory, and virtue ethics, but it represents only a small part of a much broader discussion. The question of human happiness remains one of the most complex and significant issues in the history of philosophy and psychology and requires ongoing theoretical and empirical inquiry. Only through a deeper understanding of the interaction between reason, emotion, and motivation can we move closer to realizing human potential in a way that combines ancient wisdom with the scientific achievements of the present.

4.5. Conclusions

This section of the dissertation summarizes the connection between Self-Determination Theory (SDT), contemporary concepts of emotion and affect, and eudaimonia. It examined how emotions, together with autonomy, competence, and relatedness, form the foundation of human fulfillment, not merely accompanying but actively guiding moral and personal growth.

The importance of authenticity and emotional intelligence in the development of virtue and sustainable happiness was emphasized. The practical applications of this integrated approach

extend to education, psychotherapy, and social policy, offering guidelines for building environments that support *eudaimonic* development.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation explored the concept of happiness through the lens of Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, enriched by an analysis of emotion and affect. The central question addressed was whether *eudaimonia* is a purely intellectual phenomenon or a synthesis of reason and emotional experience.

Drawing on ancient philosophical perspectives, Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach, and contemporary emotion theories, the study builds a bridge between traditional virtue ethics and modern affect theory. Nussbaum emphasizes that emotions are not merely subjective reactions but play a key role in understanding and achieving well-being, while affect theory reveals how emotions shape our perceptions and moral choices.

This integration between rationality and emotional experience was also examined in the context of modern psychological theories of emotional states and subjective well-being, which show that positive emotional states enhance flourishing, while negative states can hinder it.

The dissertation also explored the role of self-determination in achieving *eudaimonia*, highlighting autonomy, competence, and relatedness as core psychological needs that form the basis of sustainable well-being. These insights have broad practical applications—from psychology and education to social sciences and public policy.

Future research could deepen our understanding of the interplay between reason, emotion, and virtue, and explore how societies can create conditions that foster both individual and collective human flourishing.

Contributions of the Dissertation

The dissertation research allows for the identification of potential contributions, which can be presented in the following main areas:

1. Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

1.1 Integration of the Classical Concept of *Eudaimonia* with Contemporary Affect Theory

The dissertation offers a new interpretation of Aristotelian ethics, complemented by modern theories of emotion and affect. This interdisciplinary connection expands the traditional understanding of happiness and virtue, emphasizing the role of emotional and affective states.

1.2 Critical Analysis of the Relationship Between Reason and Emotion in Moral Development

The research demonstrates that achieving *eudaimonia* is not purely an intellectual process,

but also includes the affective dimensions of human existence. This contributes to the ongoing debate about the significance of emotions in ethics and the psychological mechanisms of moral behavior.

1.3 Expansion of Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach Through Affect Theory

The dissertation enhances Nussbaum's capabilities and talents approach by showing that emotions not only support the development of virtues but are also an inseparable part of them. This contribution deepens our understanding of the link between affective states and moral self-improvement.

1.4 Application of Self-Determination Theory to Virtue Ethics

By analyzing Self-Determination Theory and its three core components (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), the work offers a new perspective on achieving *eudaimonia*. This methodological integration shows that fulfilling psychological needs is an essential part of moral and personal growth.

2. Practical Contributions

2.1 Development of an Integrative Model for the Role of Emotion in Achieving Eudaimonia

The dissertation presents a theoretical framework that can be used in psychotherapy, education, and personal development to better align rational goals with emotional experience.

2.2 Applicability of Emotional Intelligence within Virtue Ethics

The research shows how methods such as cognitive-behavioral therapy and emotion regulation practices can be applied to promote sustainable well-being grounded in ethical principles.

2.3 Potential for Adapting the Results in Social and Educational Policy

The theories and concepts explored provide concrete guidelines for developing educational programs that promote emotional intelligence and moral development in students.

Proposals for New Research Directions in Happiness and Virtue Studies

The dissertation outlines future directions for research on the relationship between affect, ethics, and sustainable well-being. This perspective can inform the development of more effective strategies for mental health and personal growth.