

Faith, Belief, and Divine Experiences

Samantha McHood

Adviser: Mr. Sullivan

Examination of personal experiences, aided by reason, causes belief. Using Plato's line metaphor, man's perception of the Good falls into one of four categories: images, artifacts, geometry, or forms. From this perception and man's personal experiences, one can articulate the reasons *why* he thinks he is pursuing the ultimate Good, even if he is pursuing an image, thus possessing belief. Descartes uses reason to "prove" the existence of God, and although he may *believe* that God exists, he still lacks faith. Faith, differing from belief, is not rationally deducible from any source or experience, but is something only proven by its own existence. Without having had the divine experience oneself, it is impossible to imagine the impact on the soul. Just as a blind man cannot imagine the colors of a sunset he has never seen, one cannot imagine a divine experience. Of those select few who have had a divine experience, not all have faith. Upon examination of the divine, one can have belief, but must make a movement of infinity, or leap of faith, from what is known and provable into the mysterious mists of faith.

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The Necessity of Theological Virtues

Samuel Gerkin

Adviser: Mr. Ward

Précis: The theological virtues are necessary for human beings to live the happiest they can. Plato lays out the philosophical virtues: wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice. These virtues, he says, will lead to the most proper ordering of the soul, and consequently to the happiest life. However, a life focused on the fleeting happiness of life cannot be the happiest. In order to have the happiest life, one also requires the theological virtues: faith, hope, and love. Each exists naturally in every person, but only fully become virtues when directed towards God. Kierkegaard's idea of true faith in finitude beyond conventional faith in infinitude leads to the most perfect form of all these virtues, and therefore the happiest life possible.

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The Bible.

Friendship is Essential to Happiness

Aseel Atalla

Ms. McCaleb

Every action, ambition, and rational choice aims at some good. That good is happiness. It is a common goal between all humans, for they all strive for it. Not only do they all strive for it, but they need each other to acquire it. I will be analyzing the characters of John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* to discover why humans need one another and in what ways they do. I will also present arguments from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* which oppose ideas from the *Ethics* to provide an intriguing counter argument. Friends are essential to our surviving and thriving. We cannot exist without people. Further, if we want to be happy, we need our friends to support us in balancing our souls which grants us virtue in the soul. Virtue in the soul leads to happiness. The understanding of why friends are necessary will deepen the appreciation and value of the people in our lives.

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The Origin of Goodness

Emily Hovan

Adviser: Mr. Myers

Précis: It is a common belief that all things aim at the good. But humans are imperfect creatures, and sometimes they miss the mark of goodness. Goodness is achieved when one acts temperately out of love. Individuals most often fall short of goodness because they pursue it for the wrong reasons. Humans naturally care to serve themselves before others, so it is common for one to be selfish in his or her pursuit of goodness. This mindset is dangerous, however, because goodness cannot be forced upon individuals. The desire for virtue is an essential prerequisite for goodness. One must be willing to pursue goodness before he or she can effectually obtain it. Goodness is not easily obtained, and one must understand that there are several factors that contribute to the acquisition of this virtue. By uniting ideas from Flannery O'Connor, George Eliot, and Aristotle, one can better understand the origin of goodness.

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Title: The Notion of Justice With Regard to the Welfare of Society

By: Clare Brown

Advisor: Dr. Williams

Précis: This thesis addresses the misconceptions that societies have with respect to applying justice. Societies cannot determine their justice system completely based on opinion, and all must acknowledge one universal idea of justice. However, a society must first have a thorough comprehension of this universal idea of justice before it can enforce and maintain it. Without this understanding, a society cannot carry out its job of maintaining the safety and welfare for all.

Two societies, *Les Misérables* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, will be analyzed with context given by *Nicomachean Ethics* to address whether these societies follow a universal justice. The justice in each society must uphold the common good and be heavily based in proportionate justice, that equalizes the gains and losses of man.

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Greatness is only achieved through lack of emotion

Rachel Robbins

Anthony Sifert

The truly great people from history had the ability to disregard other people. With disregarding other people, comes lacking empathy and compassion for them. Large acts of relinquishment are carried out by people labeled as great, and those sacrificial acts can only be achieved by lack of emotion. I will be discussing a few protagonists in multiple books, and how their actions and relationships with others either proved that they could become great leaders; or, if some emotion impeded them from being great.

Gard, Roger, and Stendhal. *The Red and the Black*. N.p.: Penguin Classics, 2002. Print.

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Perfection as the Goal of Life: A Portrait of Knights and Prophets

Ethan Drew Lipson

Advisor: Mr. Jared Reasy

Instigated by Chaucer's *A Knight's Portrait*, Maimonides answers the question "What is the purpose of life?" Maimonides establishes that perfection is the goal of life and can be attained via the cultivation of the rational, moral and imaginative faculties of the mind and soul. Kierkegaard responds with an existential investigation of what it means to have faith. Although Kierkegaard and Maimonides share the Hebrew prophet Abraham as their image of perfection, Kierkegaard believes that perfection is achieved through grand leaps of passion. The conversation takes place at a table set by Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* because ethical pursuit is necessarily relevant. Maimonides approaches life by systematically arranging ideas into lists, while Kierkegaard uses narrative examples to prove that the situation is never as simple as it appears. Kierkegaard's idea of aestheticism gives the benefit of the doubt to humanity.

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In honor of Art Ehrenreich, whose ethical code was rivaled in size only by his heart.

The Pursuit of Happiness

Madison Grady-O'Brennan

Advisor: Mrs. Youn

Précis: The purpose and the meaning of life is to find happiness. This sounds like a straightforward concept that we can all achieve but unfortunately it is a struggle for some to understand. Children have an uncomplicated time understanding the pursuit of happiness because their lives are simple. They are able to feel the internal experience of happiness before their environment, experiences, the media, peers, family, and even religion can influence their state of mind. Society and cultures that we grow up in can intertwine the concepts of happiness, wealth, love, and friendship which can confuse the true meaning of happiness. What is happiness? Aristotle says, "happiness is the state of mind or feeling characterized by contentment, love, satisfaction, pleasure, or joy." (I.7.11) Using the novels *Silas Marner*, *The Great Gatsby*, and Aristotle I will be able to show you that in order to achieve true happiness one must have relationships not just fortune. The connection between happiness and relationships are far stronger and more meaningful throughout life and just add value to the meaning of wealth. True happiness and wealth consists of love and friendship, not money.

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The Obligations of a Community in War and Peace

Deric Wagner

Adviser: Mr. Fink

A society is a distasteful thing if it ever does not satisfy its obligation to the citizen. It is also a foul thing should the citizen ever not satisfy its obligation to a society. This is because man is an inherently unfit creature for society and must be constantly pursuing peace for a society to exist. Man is unfit for society because we all, naturally, do whatever we want whenever we want and such spontaneity is destructive in an environment striving for order. This order grants man safety and this safety is detrimental to fulfill our right of preservation, which is the drive to not feel any bodily harm. A society can pursue peace in two ways. One by maintaining a peace they already have. The other by actively acquiring peace. These two societies are governed by laws that are made by right reasoning, the intellectual pursuit of peace, for the benefit of having a functioning society in which everybody is equal, safe, and prosperous.

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