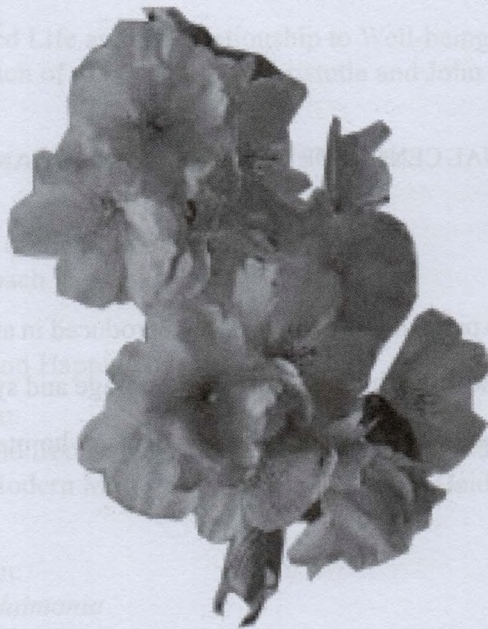


**THE POSSIBILITY OF EUDAIMONIA
(HAPPINESS AND HUMAN FLOURISHING)
IN THE WORLD TODAY**



ATHENS 2020

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(HAPPINESS AND HUMAN FLOURISHING)
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EDITED BY
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ΣΕΙΡΑ : «ΜΕΛΕΤΕΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑΣ»
STUDIES IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY SERIES



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National Library Publication Data

a. Philosophy b. Greek Philosophy c. Eudaimonia
d. Happiness e. Aristotle and Plato

ISBN: 978-618-5492-01-4

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ICOP 2019 Proceedings
The Possibility of Eudaimonia in the World Today

Ineta Kivle

Choice to Be Happy: Rhythm of Flourishing in Aristotle's,
The Nicomachean Ethics and Hanna Arendt's, *The Human Condition*

ABSTRACT: The current study is focused on concepts of choice and rhythm in the context of happy life viewing possibility of human flourishing in two different environments – antiquity and nowadays. In this case, rhythm is used as a conceptual tool and a methodological instrument giving a possibility to actualize ancient cognitions of happy and self-sufficient life in connection with the global society of the XX - XXI centuries. In the antiquity rhythm performs harmony and proportionality between the soul, body, polis and cosmos; in postmodern society technological and political rhythm enslaves and controls human lives. In both of them individual happiness is viewed in connection with the social order or global structures where people find themselves on the crossroads. Ancient ethics gives a clear view on happiness and harmonic life where human capacities to make a free and right choice determine their further lives; contemporary theories dedicated to the concept of happiness refer to global changes of social environment. Regardless of human aspirations to live an unhurried life, the speed of rhythm of technologies requires finding a more appropriate way of life making resonance between dynamics of age and the inner constitution of human.

Cognitions of Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics" and Hanna Arendt's "The Human Condition" are employed as the primary resource of the study. Arendt's writings on eudaimonia and ancient philosophy, her focus on human in social and political dimensions make resonance with Aristotle's ethics and stimulate to compare their views. The study centres upon two different manifestations of rhythm: (a) a maintaining of harmony between individual, social, natural and cosmic; (b) a replacing of natural rhythm by constructed rhythm.

KEY WORDS: rhythm, happiness, flourishing, consumer society, polis

The question about the possibility of eudaimonia in the world today facilitates developing concepts of ancient philosophy in correlation with cognitions of the XX - XXI centuries and viewing human flourishing in two different environments – ancient and modernity. Eudaimonia relates to eternal things and contemplative thinking, otherwise, man, living *vita active* that comprehends all human activities, knows the world making by himself; therefore human becomes the former of things, toolmaker

– *homo faber*. A way of thinking of *homo faber* takes other directions and intensities compared to those of the contemplative philosopher of ancient Greece. These two approaches, ancient and *vita activa*, show different attention not only to flourishing but also to the world and the things: contemplation relates to the things that are by themselves, *vita activa* is directed to the things which owe their existence to man.

Aristotle follows the position that good is at which all things aim, “therefore among the ends at which our actions aim, there is one which we wish for its own sake.”¹ Eudaimonia stays at the highest post to which humans strive and relates to those who are capable to contemplative reasoning and their virtue is wisdom. Eudaimonia requires continuity of self-flourishing, deliberation and harmony that is characterised by the following criteria: 1) finality, because eudaimonia is chosen for its own sake, and 2) self-sufficiency, because it is complete good that is not improved by the addition of any other goods. Hanna Arendt writes:

“For eudaimonia means neither happiness nor beatitude; it cannot be translated and perhaps cannot even be explained. It has the connotation of blessedness, but without any religious overtones, and it means literally something like the well-being of the daimon who accompanies each man throughout life, who is his distinct identity, but appears and is visible only to others. Unlike happiness, therefore, which is a passing mood, and unlike good fortune, which one may have at certain periods of life and lack in others, eudaimonia, like life itself, is a lasting state of being which is neither subject to change nor capable of effecting change. To be eudaimonian and to have been eudaimonian, according to Aristotle, are the same, just as to “live well”, and to have “lived well” are the same as long as life lasts. They are not states or activities which change a person’s quality, such as learning and having learned, which indicate two altogether different attributes of the same person at different moments.”²

Eudaimonia as an exclusive life of the highest degree of self-flourishing and knowing of truth is separated from other kinds of good, such as happiness and body pleasures. The happiness depends on balanced relations between virtue and human capacity to realize this virtue. If these relations develop harmoniously, human can reach the corresponding kind of happiness. Human can be happy in accordance with his own character excellence. For Aristotle more “beautiful” and happier life is concerned with things neither necessary nor merely useful.

Choice to Be Happy

Choice is the realm of freedom in both situations— antique and nowadays. Aristotle’s conviction that choice seems to be concerned with things within our own control, marks a realm of possible objects of choice: for Aristotle it is the choice of the right means for

¹ Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics* (1094a1-25)

² Arendt H., *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, p. 192-193.

reaching the final end; for Arendt choice relates to the human conditions that are man-made and are also in our own power. Aristotle's answer is that for different persons there are natural different choices changing in every particular situation. However any right choice explores continence, deliberation, practical wisdom and rational principle. What kind of things and activities are in our own power and is happiness among them? How to make the right choice? How can human be happy in *vita activa*?

In the XX – XXI centuries human is creating new conditions for existence that are rooted so deeply in consumer society and everydayness, that human becomes a part of these conditions. His life depends on maintaining capacities to be in consonance with rhythm of the created conditions and constructed worlds. Otherwise, contemplation and thinking are survived till nowadays, and there is no force to forbid it. The difference is in the directions of intentions – what is in the centre of attention? As it is seen in Aristotle's cognitions, he focuses on the revealing of the "territory" of free choice. Human is not able to choose contemplative thinking, but he is capable to wish and favour it. Choice differs from wish – we wish to be healthy, happy and rich, but we have no possibility to choose them. For self-flourishing human must choose the means of the best virtue in conformity with one's own soul's faculties and do it persistently. In other words, it is continuous work for reaching self-sufficiency. Human possibilities to make the right choices change from deliberation of the right means and contemplative attention to governance of technologies over human choices. Today the contemplative reason remains more as an object of philosophical interests and less as a kind of life – human choices are embedded in programmes, and human is bound to follow them without reasoning. By contemplation the ancient philosopher reaches self-sufficiency, a sense of understanding and knowing, harmony of one's own life with sociality and natural processes. Philosophers of the recent decades find themselves in a reversed situation where constructed instruments and tools, over-civilized environments determine and control human activities. Human loses his grip to control the amount of created things, but these things are so highly developed that they control human and take the functions of supervisors. Human is no more a self-sufficient being in the ancient sense, and eudaimonia becomes more the object of philosophical thinking than the final aim of life.

To reach self-sufficiency by contemplative thinking is problematic today; human is included in networks of global society and the speed of rhythm of life requires continual renewal of knowledge and tools for development, implementation of ideas and earning of money. In such a situation rhythm as well as choice change their dimensions, from harmony of noble life and wish to become a virtuous citizen or contemplative thinker to tendency to choose appropriate tools for realization of the current projects. Rhythm of flourishing is changed not only by growing dynamic and speed, but also by included elements. Rhythm constitutes its own meaningful environments, "territories" that are fulfilled by physical elements, mental and social activities where human creates one's own territory of freedom. Hanna Arendt writes:

"Every particle is "free" to behave as it wants and the laws ruling movements of

atoms are the same laws which rule human behaviour – no matter how “free” the individual particle may be in its choices – behaviour of the infinitely small particle is not only similar in pattern to the planetary system but also resembles the life and behaviour patterns in human society.”³

Human is included in the changing structures of the world, and realm of human choice depends on belonging to these structures. Aristotle’s answer is that for different persons there are natural different choices changing at every situation. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, a detailed characterization of realm concerning human choice, is given: (a) Choice is distinguished from the voluntary. (b) The object of choice is the result of previous deliberation. (c) Choice is a deliberate desire of things in our own power, and virtue and vice are in our power. (d) Choice relates to the means, wish and in the end – by choosing of virtues human is closer to contemplation and flourishing.⁴

Aristotle and Arendt’s views are based on different characterization of human and consequently give alternate approach to happiness, choice and rhythm. Such concepts of Aristotle’s philosophy as: *a rational animal* – a general characterization of human, *the philosopher* – the contemplator of eternal things, essentially differ from Arendt’s classification of human into two ruling parts: *homo faber* – toolmaker, and *animal laborans* – *human like a slave*. Certainly the classification is not completed and universal. The contradiction between *labor* and *work*, *laborans* (*animal laborans*) and *homo faber* shows two different ways of existence: *labor* corresponds to activities that are necessary for the maintenance of life itself; *work* (as both *technê* and *poiesis*) corresponds to the fabrication, making of tools and creation of *artificial* world of things.

“*Homo faber* knows only what he makes, his higher capacities depend upon making, and therefore he is primarily *homo faber* and not an *animal rationale*.”⁵

Society of *laborans* and *homo faber* turns away from a possibility of reaching of flourishing – *laborans* are situated on the same level as slaves, and it means that they act without deliberation and consequently without a capability of choice. Otherwise, *homo faber* can be compared to a free craftsman of the ancient polis. However there are substantial disagreements between *homo faber* and the craftsman: (a) The activities of the craftsman concern moral virtues and attention, they strive for life in accordance with their own excellence and nature. (b) *Homo faber* is included in production of tools and depends on the current conditions – *homo faber* is a conditioned being and master of his doings. The tools and instruments designed and invented by *homo faber* are used in mechanical and rhythmic labour:

“Labour but not work requires for best results a rhythmically ordered performance and, in so far as many laborers gang together, needs a rhythmic co-ordination of all individual movements.”⁶

³ Arendt H., *The Human Condition*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, p. 323.

⁴ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Book III: Moral Virtues.

⁵ Arendt H., *The Human Condition*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, p. 228.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 145.

Arendt gives reference to Joseph Schopp's *Das deutsche Arbeitslied* (1935) that stresses that natural rhythm, presented in craftsmen's activities and songs, does not exist in labour existence. Natural rhythm of human life and creativity are completely missing from mechanical movements of laborans:

"It is no longer the body movement that determines the implement's movement but the machine's movement which enforces the movements of body."⁷

Arendt's writings are more dedicated to totalitarianism and political power, otherwise such characteristics as usurpation of tools and instruments over human and derogation of free choice concern general problems of the XX-XXI centuries. For instance, Martin Heidegger's essay "The Question Concerning Technology" (1953) where the author writes:

"We ask the question concerning technology when we ask what it is. Everyone knows two statements that answer our question. One says: Technology is the means to an end. The other says: Technology is a human activity."⁸

Technology as a result of human activities enslaves them – technology is no more the end of creative activity, it becomes the urgently needed condition for maintaining of life. The world has changed – that which was created as means has become the end, and that which was suggested as the end, is becoming the means.

Power of technique turns human from a self-sufficient being into a conditioned being. Human as a conditioned being (*homo faber* and *laborans*) means that man is living under man-made conditions, radically different from natural conditions, such as birth and death, natality and mortality. How is flourishing possible living in conditions of *vita activa*?

Rhythm of Flourishing

Elements included in the rhythmic movements, their directions and intensity vary in dynamics between the individual and the social, the inward and the outward. The philosophical cognitions of rhythm dedicated to human flourishing mainly concern the question: How does human internal rhythm relates to the surrounding sociality, and reverse? Antiquity sees rhythm as an order, harmony and measure among various strata, uniting human soul, choice to live an appropriate life, self-flourishing, organization of the polis and the order of cosmos. Harmony and balance between these strata is a way to self-sufficient life, rhythmic movements between the single and the whole concern human activities from the artistic, ethical and political till nature and cosmic order. Aristotle does not talk about rhythm in the context of happiness directly, his contribution in the development of concept of rhythm mainly concerns education, poetry and rhetoric:

⁷ Ibid, p. 146.

⁸ Heidegger M., *The Question Concerning Technology* // Heidegger M. *Basic Writings*, Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008, p.312

“For educational purposes we must employ all the tunes and all the rhythms or make distinctions.”⁹

In Arendt's work *The Human Condition* the concept of rhythm is mentioned fragmentary, but it marks dynamics of social structures and correlations between tools, work, labour and human activities:

“Machines have forced us into an infinitely quicker rhythm of repetition than the cycle of natural processes prescribed.”¹⁰

Rhythm changes from natural order to super-controlled force that binds the world of technologies with human existence and governs it. Rhythm modifies at times from harmonic to uncontrolled directions not only by growing dynamism and speed, but also by included elements. On the one hand rhythm confirms human soul's response to harmony of nature, education, art and movement; on the other hand, it justifies dynamics between human activities, work, tools and conditions. The rhythmic elements differ in every situation; in the XX-XXI centuries they are elements of functionality of constructed worlds: a position in professional networks, technology, conformity with strategic objectives, that are “things which owe their existence to man”. It does not mean that rhythms of internal constitution of human are not efficient in the life today but they are placed aside as unimportant. Hanna Arendt's answer is:

“The point was not that truth and knowledge were no longer important, but that they could be won only by “action” and not by contemplation.”¹¹

Hanna Arendt's cognition that *human is a conditioned being* justifies that rhythm of life is governed by constructed world, and rhythm of machines intensifies the natural rhythm of life.

“Men become the servants of their machines, but it does mean that, as long as the work at the machines lasts, the mechanical process has replaced the rhythm of the human body.”¹²

Human has become the element of rhythmic structures of the same kind as any other component, work, technologies, politics, power, etc. Human is included in the rhythm of functionality of the world where elements of rhythm show dynamics of human, and also discover a speed of the age and correlations of rhythmic pulsations of all included parts.

Arendt's division of life in *vita contemplative* and *vita active* corresponds to two central human concerns – the man of thought (contemplator) and the man of action (tool-maker, *homo faber*). For *homo faber* a capacity to transcend the total sum of his qualities that ensures creation of the great works of art would be the highest good that is possible to reach. Transcendence of inner qualities to created works concerns various strata of the inward and the outward. In this case *homo faber* becomes a creative genius

⁹ Aristotle, *Politics* (8.1341b)

¹⁰ Arendt H., *The Human Condition*. – The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, p. 125.

¹¹ Ibid, 1998, p. 290.

¹² Ibid, 1998, p.147.

and created works are essentially greater than him. The creation, not contemplation, could be considered as the most self-sufficient activity of the *homo faber*. Both creation and contemplation are capacities of transcendence; in the most general sense they are directed to reaching the higher realm than human is here and now. Faculty of transcendence makes resonance with a new becoming and opens a way for entering on a higher position than previously.

For Aristotle, it concerns not only the realm of creation of visible or audible things but also flourishing of more contemplative and prudent soul – neither creation of artwork nor any other types of actions, but goodness contributed to one single final aim is in the centre of his focus.

“Having the ideal good as a pattern we shall more easily know what things are good for us, and knowing them, obtain them.”¹³

Human dominates over the conditions and, in such away, justifies that rhythm between the choice and conditions, and the upper aim does not destroy natural order. Otherwise, human as a conditioned being indicates differences between human nature and human essence; neither human nature nor the qualities of the individual, but the conditions determine human lives.

“The human condition is not the same as human nature, and the sum total of human activities and capabilities which correspond to the human condition does not constitute anything like human nature.”¹⁴

Arendt suggests that such conditions of human existence as life itself, natality and mortality, worldliness, plurality, and the earth are not possible to change; they are fundamental conditions that exist constantly at all the times and do not explain what human is.

“Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.”¹⁵

Such conditions as labour and work are created by human activity and form rhythm between the inward and the outward that is limited in place and time. The essence of human unites the inward and the outward, the internal and the social including three fundamental human activities, labor, work and action. The most concise definitions of the everlasting and fundamental conditions are given by Arendt at the beginning of *The Human Condition*: “Men live on the earth and inhabit the world.”¹⁶

Employing Arendt’s cognitions, it is seen how the rhythmic movements form correlations between human and their conditions uniting birth and death with human made social order consisting of three main components: (a) Labour that is situated on the same level as biological life applicable to any other living being. (b) Work that

¹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (1096b29-1097a21)

¹⁴ Arendt H., *The Human Condition*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, p.9-10.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 1998, p.8.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 1998, p.7.

justifies human faculties of creation, reasoning. (c) Action that relates to plurality of individual functions. These three parts indicate a new beginning for human that is very different from the ancient approach.

For Aristotle, beginning of self-sufficiency means to do certain things, a deliberate right choice and an aim to the state of knowledge, wisdom and contemplation. Self-sufficiency concerns not a life of isolation of oneself alone but as a social being – life together with others. Aristotle develops the opinion that human that has no need entering in partnership with others must be either a lower animal or god.¹⁷ Proportional relations between the individual and the social, the inward and the outward form the shape of rhythm of harmonic life. Harmonious rhythm between virtue and possibility to realize it, conformity between social and individual are the common stances for happiness.

Conclusions

- The opinion that happiness is a reasonable activity of soul invites to think about it as a dynamic state that includes different rhythmic elements: (a) For Aristotle they cover realm from human constitution and their activities till ethical virtues, social order and cosmos. (b) For Hanna Arendt the rhythm of life remains in the realm of social structures uniting human with instruments, things and the conditions. Therefore, such concepts of Arendt's philosophy as: human – conditioned being, activity – plurality, labor – work, *laboran – homo faber*, *vita contemplative – vita active*, the primary conditions of life as *natality and mortality* show a different social environment than life in antiquity.
- In the ancient polis the rhythm of life unites the inward and the outward elements: human soul and body, education, art, the social order of polis, cyclical movement of cosmos and nature, thus, making correlations among various strata: a choice to live appropriate life, self-flourishing and deliberation, organization of the polis in harmony with the structure of human soul and rhythm of cosmos. In the XX-XXI centuries rhythm of life is based on a human's position in networks and conformity with strategic objectives, in such a way, showing that happiness depends not only on inner constitution of human, but also on man-made conditions of life and knowing how to be in the right place in the right time.
- Deliberation and personal attention are necessary for reaching happiness – without the attention and choice the shape of rhythm of life demonstrates an empty movement from one point to another – it does not indicate either happiness, or misfortune and senselessness.
- The problem of possibility to reach eudaimonia today gives an impulse to view rhythm not only as an artistic, political or social element securing the required order, but also as a methodological tool for seeing common points of inconsistent

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a

cultures and various social environments, even situations when philosophical texts are not devoted to the concept of rhythm directly.

- Aristotle is devoted to “human nature” – reaching of happiness, principles of ethics and the right choice depend upon understanding of human nature. Arendt suggests that the tradition which was based on “human nature” has broken down – philosophy needs a concept of “human condition” that gives fresh theorizing on our present situation. On the one side, humans create their conditions; on the other side, humans receive their conditions from the world.
- Regardless of differences between the ancient polis and the global society, in both of them individual happiness is viewed in connection with the social order or global structures where people find themselves on crossroads, and their choices determine their further lives. Aristotle’s ethics gives a very clear view on happiness and harmonic life; Arendt’s writings about happiness employing ancient cognitions refer to global changes of social environment of the XX-XXI centuries: a consumer society of *homo faber*.
- The kind of happiness depends on relations between virtue and human capacity to realize this virtue: if these relations develop harmoniously, human can reach the corresponding kind of happiness. Human can be happy in accordance with his own character excellence as well as respecting the rhythm and order of the surrounding social environment. Subsequently, corresponding communication and rhythm between the social and the individual is a common point for characterization of different philosophical approaches to happiness, in this case, characterization of happiness in philosophies of Aristotle and Hanna Arendt.

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