Public Abstract
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Aristotle on Happiness: A Comparison with Confucius
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It is not an exaggeration to say that most of us desire a good life. Some people think that the good life involves the pursuit of pleasure or the attainment of wealth, but some believe that the good life involves more than that. The good life involves living in such a way that person becomes a good person; it includes character development. Whatever the good life looks like specifically, people would probably generally agree that the good life and happiness share an intimate relationship. What constitutes happiness?

Many answers have been offered by philosophers and non-philosophers in defining happiness. Once persons reach goals and possess goods they think will make them happy, though, oftentimes they are still not happy. Perhaps this is because we are mistaken about what happiness is and how to achieve happiness. Aristotle, however, offers what I believe is a more accurate conception of happiness. He defines happiness, in part, in terms of the purpose of human beings. Everything in nature, according to Aristotle, has a purpose, and the purpose of human beings has to do with reasoning ability. The nature of happiness, as it turns out, includes intellectual activity, virtuous activity, and friendship.

Though Confucius does not focus on happiness per se, he emphasizes the importance of the good for humankind. Pursuing the good for humankind also involves pursuing acts that develop good character, including: performing virtuous acts, acting with ritual propriety of the Zhou dynasty, living according to the *dao* or way, and doing what is appropriate. Through the course of my writing, I explicate the nature of happiness, according to Aristotle, followed by a comparison with Confucius. Whether more fully understanding Aristotle's conception of happiness will change how people think about happiness, it adds substantial content to the conception of happiness.