

The Socratic Account of Virtue's Relation to Happiness

1. Introduction

“There could hardly be a man who would not wish to do well” (*Euthd.* 278e6).¹ Socrates believed that the goal of every human life is to do well, and that to do well is to achieve eudaimonia. There are two distinct, apparently contradictory passages in the *Euthydemus* that clearly lay out the problem of whether Socrates thinks virtue is sufficient for happiness, or if one needs other things in order to achieve it. Speaking of a list of putative goods he had earlier agreed upon with Cleinias, at *Euthydemus* 281d Socrates says, “if ignorance controls them, they are greater evils than their opposites, to the extent that they are more capable of complying with a bad master; but if good sense and wisdom are in control, they are greater goods.” At *Euthydemus* 281e, however, he says “of the other things, no one of them is either good or bad, but of these two, wisdom is good and ignorance bad.” In this paper I hope to clarify Socrates’ opinion about non-moral “goods” (whether they are in fact goods, and if they benefit one’s soul) and answer the controversial question — does Socrates believe virtue is sufficient for happiness?

There are two main debates I will concentrate on amid the larger question of whether virtue is sufficient and/or necessary for happiness in Socrates’ view. The first is between Terrence Irwin and Gregory Vlastos, both of whom agree that

¹ Cooper, John M., ed. *Plato: Complete Works*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

All subsequent passage translations will be from this source.

Socrates thinks virtue is sufficient for happiness, but disagree over their interpretations of the sufficiency thesis. Vlastos thinks that virtue is the most important component of many components of happiness (and is of value in itself), whereas Irwin believes virtue is instrumental towards happiness (it is only valuable because it brings happiness), and that there are no external goods. In the second debate, Donald J. Zeyl and George Rudebusch (separately) argue against Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith's belief that virtue is not sufficient for happiness. Additionally, Naomi Reshotko argues that there is not adequate textual support that says Socrates believed in a logical connection between virtue and happiness, but rather there exists a contingent, nomological connection between the two. She argues that this relationship is reason enough to convince those who wish to be happy to be as virtuous as possible. After summarizing each view I will conclude by showing why Reshotko's views on the subject are most compelling, and why I believe Socrates did not think virtue sufficient for happiness. There are circumstances that could erase the happiness of an already virtuous person, and there are other things one needs besides virtue in order to remain happy. Knowledge of good and evil is the best way to achieve happiness, and therefore virtue is the closest a human being can get to assure him or herself happiness, even if the two lack a logical connection.

2. Is Virtue a Component of or is it Instrumental to Happiness?-

In Terence Irwin's article titled "Socrates the Epicurean?" he argues that Socrates thinks virtue is instrumental for happiness. He invokes Aristotle's

definition of eudaimonia from the *Nicomachean Ethics* 1, that “people all identify happiness with the highest good, but disagree about what happiness is (1095a17-22).”² Irwin next lays out Socrates’ argument in the *Euthydemus* of why the sufficiency thesis is correct. Socrates assumes that happiness is what we all want (*Euthd.* 278b3-6), we attain happiness by acquiring goods (279a4-7), and said goods include bodily and social advantages, possessions, and good fortune (279a4-c8). He does recognize there are disputes about including the virtues and wisdom in this description, but does end up including them (279b4-c2).³ Therefore to be happy, one must possess all the goods there are — but Socrates says that wisdom is the only good, and therefore is all that is needed to make a person happy. He also equates wisdom and virtue; so virtue is sufficient and necessary for happiness. Irwin must show that virtue alone secures an individual happiness, and there is nothing else needed. So next he clarifies Socrates’ argument in the *Euthydemus* for why virtue is sufficient and necessary for happiness and why external goods are not really goods:

1. It is possible to use the external goods well or badly (280b7-c3, d7-281a1)
2. Correct use of them is necessary and sufficient for happiness (280d7-281e1)
3. Wisdom is necessary and sufficient for correct use (281a1-b2)
4. Therefore wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness (281b2-4)

This is the conclusion Socrates needs, but he continues to support 1,2

² Irwin, T. H. 1986. "Socrates the Epicurean?" *Illinois Classical Studies* 11, 85-112; reprinted in H. H. Benson (ed.), *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, 200.

³ *Ibid*, 201.

5. Each external good used without wisdom is a greater evil than its opposite, and each good used by wisdom is a greater good than its opposite (281d6-8)
6. Therefore each external good and evil is in fact neither good nor evil (281e3-4)
7. Therefore wisdom is the only good and folly the only evil (281e4-5)⁴

This argument appears valid, but Irwin points out a few weaknesses in Socrates' line of reasoning. At (3) and (4), there are two possibilities regarding the subject's supply of external goods. The subject can either possess an adequate amount of external goods (to use either well or poorly, resulting in happiness or not), or, regardless of the amount or state of the external goods the subject may possess, virtue is still sufficient and necessary for happiness. For Socrates' argument to be valid, the latter must be assumed. However, Socrates does not adequately address the problem of the subject having *no* external goods — is it still guaranteed that virtue is sufficient for eudaimonia?

This brings about an important point in Irwin's position that allows the argument to remain valid, that of Socrates' adaptive account of happiness. An adaptive account of happiness means that the individual accepts whatever circumstances they are in, the goods (material and not) that they possess, and adapts their desires to fit — no absence of external goods will negatively effect their happiness. If a desire is unachievable or impractical, it will be dismissed. Knowledge of good and evil (i.e. virtue) is necessary and sufficient to have an adaptive account of happiness, because the virtuous person will know that the adaptive account of happiness assures happiness.

⁴ *Ibid*, 203-204.

Irwin sees problems with Socrates' position. Because external goods do not augment happiness, they should not be sought after. There are, however, passages that suggest Socrates values external goods, for example in the *Gorgias*:

Socrates: Now is there any thing that isn't either *good*, or *bad*, or, what is between these, *neither good nor bad*?

Polus: There can't be, Socrates.

Socrates: Do you say that wisdom, health, wealth and the like are good, and their opposites bad?

Polus: Yes, I do. (467e3-8)

And in the *Apology*: "Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence brings about wealth and all other public and private blessings for men" (30b2-4). However, Irwin counters with Socrates' overt denial of these statements at *Euthydemus* 281e3-5: "Isn't it that, of the other things, no one of them is either good or bad, but of these two, wisdom is good and ignorance bad?" Irwin concedes that Socrates' adaptive account of happiness may allow the virtuous person to seek some external goods if they are trying to satisfy a desire, but in the end it will make no difference for that person's happiness if they succeed in attaining that desire or not.⁵

The adaptive account of happiness explains what to do with unreasonable desires, but there are no instructions when two equally possible sets of desires are present. Ethical grounds are not the only thing to consider in making a choice, and Irwin's example that he can be equally happy if he becomes a politician, musician, athlete, or just a lazy person who lies in the sun and tortures bugs shows that there

⁵ *Ibid*, 212.

must be other factors at play in choice than virtue. The position Irwin attributes to Socrates, plainly, is implausible, at best.⁶

In Gregory Vlastos' book, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, he explains the three basic options for the relationship of virtue to happiness — virtue can either be entirely instrumental for happiness (and not valuable for its own sake), constitutive (an important, but not the only part) of happiness and valued for its own sake, or virtue *is* happiness, and therefore the only thing in life worthy of desiring.⁷ Vlastos argues that Socrates viewed virtue as a component of happiness, one of many elements, yet radically different than the rest.⁸ A major tenet of Socrates' ethical philosophy is his principle of the Sovereignty of Virtue. "You are wrong, sir, if you think that a man who is any good at all should take into account the risk of life or death; he should look to this only in his actions, whether what he does is right or wrong, whether he is acting like a good or a bad man" (*Apology* 28b5-9). The Sovereignty of Virtue is the idea that when choosing how to live, it only matters whether one course of action is more virtuous than the other, and one should always

⁶ "At this point we might argue that if the adaptive account of happiness leaves Socrates open to such objections, we have good reason for doubting that he accepts it." It appears that even Irwin does not believe in his argument, but says that "we have no good reason to believe either of these things" (that Socrates realizes these objections and the problems they bring up), 215.

⁷ Vlastos, G. 1991. *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 204.

⁸ In Daniel Russell's book "Plato on Pleasure and the Good Life," he agrees with Vlastos in this sense that wisdom "uses" things in order to make one happy — "My career, friends, family, good looks do not determine or augment my happiness, if I am wise; I determine my happiness, by giving my career, friends, family, good looks the right place in my life." He thinks Socrates had an "additive conception of happiness," and happiness relies on things other than wisdom that wisdom makes available.

choose the more virtuous path. According to this belief, nothing *by itself* is good other than wisdom, and nothing *by itself* is bad other than ignorance. Everything else (besides wisdom or ignorance) is only good if its possessor is wise, and is only bad if its possessor is ignorant.

Next, Vlastos discusses the identity thesis, which says that virtue *is* happiness. Support for the identity thesis is best found in the *Crito*:

Socrates: And, my admirable friend, that argument that we have gone through remains, I think, as before. Examine the following statement in turn as to whether it stays the same or not, that the most important thing is not life, but the good life.

Crito: It stays the same.

Socrates: And that the good life, the beautiful life, and the just life are the same; does that still hold, or not?

Crito: It does hold. (48b2-9)

According to Vlastos, the identity thesis “oversatisfies the requirement for the sovereignty of virtue,” because it does not differentiate between what should be done when two options are equally moral. This is best shown in his example about the clean bed versus the dirty bed. If virtue is one and the same as happiness, there should be no difference between sleeping in a dirty bed and sleeping in a clean bed, because one is not more or less virtuous than the other, but certainly one is more conducive of happiness. Vlastos extends the example further. If one spent their life in a concentration camp, but was able to remain a virtuous person, they should be as happy as they are virtuous.

The solution Vlastos finds for this problem with the identity thesis is his version of the sufficiency thesis. Virtue is sufficient and necessary for happiness, but

there are many other, less significant components of happiness (including non-moral goods) that contribute as well. Concerning non-moral goods, Socrates says, “in disjunction from virtue each would be worthless” (*Euthd.* 279a-b), but with wisdom they are valuable to happiness. Vlastos says that Socrates believed the sufficiency thesis to be true, but not the identity thesis. Happiness and virtue are not identical, but one will be happy if and only if one is virtuous.

Vlastos takes the *Gorgias* to be an authentic Socratic text, and thus an important passage in Vlastos’ defense of the sufficiency thesis is *Gorgias* 507c1-6:

So, it’s necessarily very much the case, Callicles, that the self-controlled man, because he’s just and brave and pious, as we’ve recounted, is a completely good man, that the good man does well and admirably in whatever he does, and that the man who does well is blessed and happy, while the corrupt man, the one who does badly, is miserable.

Vlastos’ interpretation is as follows:

1. If one were perfectly virtuous, necessarily, one would be happy (virtue necessarily entails happiness).
2. If one were wicked then, necessarily, one would be miserable (wickedness necessarily entails unhappiness).
3. Virtue and happiness are necessarily interentailing.⁹

Happiness is the final goal of our lives, yet there are intermediary, lesser goods that help us make decisions towards our happiness when the present options are equally virtuous. As Vlastos puts it, “we are happier with than without them, but only if we use them aright, for they are not good just by themselves.”¹⁰

⁹ *Ibid*, 222-223.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 231.

I do not believe that either Vlastos's or Irwin's position of the sufficiency issue is the right one because I do not think virtue is sufficient for happiness. However, in their dispute over the issue of non-moral goods, Vlastos's view is the more plausible of the two. Irwin thinks that there are no goods except virtue, which is only valuable in that it brings us happiness (it is an instrumental good). The pursuit of non-moral goods is unnecessary when one has virtue, because with an adaptive account of happiness, desire for any external goods that are inaccessible will be dissipated. Therefore the virtuous person will not participate in trying to acquire non-moral goods because one's level of happiness is the same with or without them. Vlastos believes there to be many goods, of which virtue is by far the most important. Without virtue none of the other goods would be valuable, but with virtue they *can* positively impact one's happiness, and must be taken into account when considering everyday choices.

It is implausible to claim that regardless of the choice of how to spend one's life, one will be exactly equally happy as long as he possesses virtue. Irwin would disagree that non-moral goods are worthwhile, but he must recognize that there are some desires that cannot be modified even with an adaptive account of happiness. While many material desires can be forgotten when realized they are impractical, things like hunger and thirst cannot be removed because one does not have money for food or drink.

3. Sufficiency or Insufficiency?

The second debate I will cover is between Donald J. Zeyl and George Rudebusch (separately) against Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith. The former say that virtue is sufficient for happiness, and that having a virtuous soul is all that is needed to insure virtue. The latter maintain that having virtue alone is not enough to be happy, and other factors are necessary as well.

Donald J. Zeyl's forthcoming (yet widely distributed) article "Socrates on Virtue, Pleasure, and the Human Good" is mainly his rejection of Brickhouse and Smith's position in their 1994 book, *Plato's Socrates*. Zeyl writes to show that Socrates thought virtue sufficient and necessary for happiness. One of his main problems with Brickhouse and Smith's view is the difference they point out between having a virtuous soul and participating in virtuous activity.¹¹ They say a life of activity guided by virtue is necessary and sufficient for happiness, but there are circumstances in which the virtuous person is unable to live a life of activity guided by virtue, without which life is not worth living.¹² Because Brickhouse and Smith say that virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness but also maintain that having a severely and incurably diseased body is sufficient for misery, they must also believe that having a virtuous soul (a diseased body can still have a virtuous soul) is not sufficient for virtuous activity. They refer to *Crito* 47d8-e5:

Socrates: Come now, if we ruin that which is improved by health and corrupted by disease by not following the opinions of those who know, is life worth living for us when that is ruined? And that is the body, is it not?

¹¹ See *Gorgias* 507b5-c5

¹² Brickhouse, T. C. and Smith, N. D. 1994. *Plato's Socrates*. New York: Oxford University Press, 115.

Crito: Yes.

Socrates: And is life worth living with a body that is corrupted and in bad condition?

Crito: In no way.

Gorgias 505a2-5 also suggests the same view: “Yes, for I don’t suppose that it profits a man to be alive with his body in a terrible condition, for this way his life, too would be a necessarily wretched one,” and 512a2-4: “So he concludes that if a man afflicted with serious incurable physical disease did not drown, this man is miserable for not dying and has gotten no benefit from him.” Zeyl contends that these passages can only be considered in the context of a discussion of having incurably diseased bodies *and souls*. Following 47d8-e5, comes *Crito* 47e6-48a5:

Socrates: And is life worth living for us with that part of us corrupted that unjust action harms and just action benefits? Or do we think that part of us, whatever it is, that is concerned with justice and injustice, is inferior to the body?

Crito: Not at all.

Socrates: Is it more valuable?

Crito: Much more.

And after 505a2-5 and 512a2-4 is *Gorgias* 512a4-9:

But if a man has many incurable diseases in what is more valuable in his body, his soul, life for that man is not worth living, and he won’t do him any favor if he rescues him from the sea or from prison or from anywhere else. He knows that for a corrupt person it’s better not to be alive, for he necessarily lives badly.

Zeyl says that because these passages show the soul's health "trumps" that of the body, if a person is virtuous, no matter how diseased their body may be, life is still worth living.¹³

Zeyl gives an example about two equally sick people. One is a regular Athenian citizen, whose life consists of vying for good reputation, money, and honor, but now just lies in bed, lamenting his condition and hoping for death. The other is Socrates, who is severely ill and disabled, but is able to manage his pain with the help of painkillers. He is still able to engage in philosophy, whereas the other person does not care at all about philosophy or the health of his soul. According to Brickhouse and Smith in their 1994 work, both are miserable and neither has a life worth living. Zeyl says that there is a variable range of opportunities and capacities for virtue, and maintains that if a virtuous person is cognizant and able to express ideas, they can still influence the moral lives of others, or if they are unable to do that, they are still able to pray and live a life of commitment to the gods. The virtuous person's capacities and opportunities for virtue can be drastically diminished by the condition of their body, although as Zeyl claims, never completely defeated. Hence, being virtuous is always sufficient for virtuous activity. And if virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness — possessing a virtuous soul is sufficient for happiness.

¹³ Zeyl, Donald J. "Socrates on Virtue, Pleasure, and the Human Good." Unpublished, appears in the *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Arizona Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*. 2003, 3-4.

In the chapters on virtue and happiness in George Rudebusch's book, *Socrates, Pleasure, and Value*, he seeks to show that Socrates thought virtue sufficient for happiness, and that the texts do support this statement. He also argues against Brickhouse and Smith's analysis (in *Plato's Socrates*) that there are circumstances in which virtue is not sufficient for happiness. The first passage he examines is *Crito* 47d8-e5: (1) Bodily disease can make life not worth living, (2) To live a life not worth living cannot be happiness, and (3) Thus, the happiness of even a virtuous person can be destroyed. However, Rudebusch does not think that (3) follows, because the virtuous person with a corrupted body can choose not to live, which Socrates would say would not harm him.¹⁴ So Rudebusch adds a premise to sustain the logic — (4) The virtuous person will choose to stay alive when the choice is a future with a body corrupted by disease. However, Socrates would not accept (4)¹⁵, so Rudebusch adds an improved conclusion, (5) The virtuous person might be forced (for example by torture or religion) to live with a body corrupted by disease.¹⁶

To refute the above reasoning, Rudebusch introduces the Greek term "*bioton*," which means, "to be lived." There are two ways in which a life is not *bioton* – it is miserable and therefore not worth choosing, or it is miserable whether it is chosen or forced to be lived. Rudebusch says the *Crito* passage maintains the former definition, and therefore the argument above is invalid. If a person chooses to live

¹⁴ "No evil comes to a good person either in life or in death" *Ap.* 41d1-2.

¹⁵ See *Crito* 47e6-48a5.

¹⁶ Rudebusch, George. *Socrates, Pleasure, and Value*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999, 116.

with a corrupted body, it may bring them unhappiness, but if a person unwillingly bears the burden of a diseased body, they may not necessarily be unhappy (Socrates chose punishment instead of quitting philosophy and was not harmed, but if he had been unwillingly punished, he would have been harmed). The only way these *Crito* and *Gorgias* passages entail the insufficiency of virtue is if *bioton* is defined in the second sense, which Rudebusch argues is not in the context of the conversation.

Rudebusch agrees with Zeyl (although not explicitly) that Brickhouse and Smith's claim that the possession of a virtuous soul is insufficient for acting virtuously is false. Rudebusch also disagrees with Brickhouse and Smith over several passages that he says support the sufficiency reading. "The just soul and the just person will live well" (*Rep.* 1 353e10-11), and "the good and noble man and woman is happy" (*Gor.* 470e). Brickhouse and Smith point out that both of these passages are referring to ordinary people, lacking serious disease or other bodily conditions that would prevent them from acting virtuously. Rudebusch counters that these passages are within a discussion that *does* address such hindrances. Later in the *Gorgias*,¹⁷ Calicles talks about involuntary afflictions, and how a life of philosophy can expose one to punishment such as fines, prison, and death — things that can make a life miserable and therefore not worth living. Socrates did not think these punishments would actually harm a virtuous person, and certainly did not think that his life of philosophy was not worth living. Later in *Republic* 1, Thrasymachus argues

¹⁷ See *Gorgias* 483a-b, 484c-d, 485d, and 486a-c.

that the unjust person will enjoy advantages over the just and virtuous person in business and governmental affairs.¹⁸

Rudebusch's and Zeyl's positions are flawed because having a virtuous soul does not mean that the agent is always able to choose and act in the most choiceworthy way possible, only to the best of their present ability (which might just not be good enough to achieve or sustain happiness). Even if one has a perfectly virtuous soul, and knows what action should be chosen — with certain bodily restrictions, such action may simply be impossible. Virtue may be the best way to achieve happiness, but it does have its limits, and even those who spent their entire lives becoming as virtuous as can be may end up dismembered, infected with a horrible disease, etc. — and hence unable to act as an unaffected virtuous person would. However, Zeyl and Rudebusch seem to me to be clearly right that at least *some* level of virtuous activity will always be possible for a virtuous person. Hence, Brickhouse and Smith's account (in their 1994 book) of the relationship between virtue and virtuous activity was wrong.

4. Virtue is Insufficient

Socrates brings up many "other goods" besides wisdom in the *Euthydemus* wealth, health, power, good looks, noble birth, etc. However, it is questionable whether or not Socrates believes they can increase one's eudaimonia, and if they can help one to "do well" (278e-281e). In a conversation with Cleinias, the pair appears to agree that wisdom is not just making things valuable that already exist, but also

¹⁸ See *Republic* 1 343d-e.

actually producing the things themselves. The same claim is made in the *Apology*: “Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence brings about wealth and all other public and private blessings for men” (*Ap.* 30b2-4).

Therefore, Socrates can believe one of two things: that virtue makes things good or virtue makes good things. In an example about health, Socrates tells Charmides that in order to stop getting headaches, Charmides must live a more temperate life (one that does not involve late-night drinking). By “curing” the problems in his soul (becoming more temperate with regards to his decisions), he will in turn cure the problems with his health.¹⁹ However, healing the soul does not always cure bodily afflictions, and this is the beginning of a series of objections to the idea that virtue produces all good things. Virtue cannot make one physically attractive or born into a good family — these things are out of the agent’s control. This is also not meant to imply that non-moral goods are genuine goods for all people, and it is more than probable that someone may think that something is beneficial to them and be mistaken. For example, one might think that material possessions will increase his/her happiness only to find a void unfilled by superficial objects and an empty wallet.

The virtuous person is not guaranteed a good outcome — there is the possibility of not being able to influence a bad situation (hearing about a mass murder halfway across the world), but being virtuous is the best a person can do in order to ensure a good result.

¹⁹ See *Charmides* 156b-157c.

Zeyl argues that possessing a virtuous soul (even with grave impediments on one's ability to act as one would wish to act) is sufficient for happiness because even the smallest amount of virtuous activity is enough to ensure happiness. Rudebusch also believes virtue is sufficient for happiness, because "the possession of virtue entails its activity," which in turn brings happiness.²⁰ However, the virtuous person is not omniscient or omnipotent, and therefore although they may know what the most virtuous action possible is, they may themselves be deficient in the resources required to achieve it. Acting virtuously is using one's available resources in the best way possible, and if wisdom is present, one may be able to discover additional means (but as well may be unable). In *Plato's Socrates*, Brickhouse and Smith say that virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness, but having a virtuous soul is not sufficient for happiness because possessing virtue is not sufficient for acting virtuously. In fact, neither having a virtuous soul nor virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness, because the only activity a virtuous person may be able to engage in may still be inadequate for them to achieve or sustain happiness—Socrates understood very well that bad things could happen to good people.

5. Reshotko – Why Necessity and Sufficiency are Not Necessary

In Naomi Reshotko's book *Socratic Virtue*, she argues that questions about sufficiency or necessity of virtue for happiness are irrelevant to Socrates' task. However, there is a nomological relation between virtue and happiness and thus the desire for happiness should compel one to act virtuously. A nomological relation

²⁰ Rudebusch, George. *Socrates, Pleasure, and Value*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999, 119.

denotes something that is taken to be true because of observations about the world, rather than explainable through theoretically proven knowledge. As Reshotko puts it, “virtue doesn’t need to be necessary or sufficient for happiness in order to be pursued. It simply needs to be the only game in town.”²¹ When modern-day scholars try and impart a logical or analytical label on how Socrates related virtue and happiness, they are depositing a post-Kantian moral framework where it is inapplicable.

Socrates clearly states that a person with expert knowledge is more likely to incur a better outcome in a situation than an ignorant person (*Euthd.* 279e-280a). Furthermore, a better outcome will result in more happiness for that person. Therefore, the pursuit of knowledge is the best way to insure happiness. This is shown at *Euthydemus* 282a1-7:

Since we all desire to be happy, and since we appeared to become happy by using things and using them correctly, and since it was knowledge which supplied correctness and good luck, then it seems that every man should prepare himself in every way so that he will be as wise as possible.

This passage does not, however, resolutely imply that happiness is *guaranteed* by virtue — Reshotko does address the fact that there are elements in some circumstances that are beyond the agent’s control. However it is the wise person, and never the ignorant one, who will make such a situation (where there are external, uncontrollable factors at play) a good one, or at least as good as it can be.

²¹ Reshotko, Naomi. *Socratic Virtue Making the Best of the Neither-Good-Nor-Bad*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2006, 139.

According to Socrates' two principal tenets of moral philosophy, 1. Virtue is knowledge, and 2. Happiness is the ultimate human good — in order to secure some sense of control over one's future goal (happiness), knowledge is the best and only way to get there. If virtue is the most assured way to increase happiness, and everyone wants to be happy, then the connection between virtue and happiness need not be logical or analytic (sufficient or necessary) —it simply is the path that the motivated individual will pursue.

6. Summary and Conclusion

The opinions I have described are compelling, but inherently conflicting — and because the two debates are answering different variations of the same question, I will treat them separately. In the Irwin/Vlastos debate, if virtue is in fact sufficient for happiness, Vlastos goes one step further in claiming that although non-moral goods are worthless without wisdom, when they are used with wisdom, they *can* enhance happiness, even if only to a minute degree.

Reshotko brings a unique perspective to the table. By discounting the notions of sufficiency and necessity as part of the equation, she plainly and elegantly demonstrates that even without the contemporary terminology, virtue is *the* way to get to happiness. Yet Reshotko fails to tackle an important issue —the fact that the happiness of a virtuous person can be destroyed. Although the virtuous person is always more likely to make a situation, action, or object into a good one — after happiness has been achieved, it is still liable to be erased.

I have shown that Socrates did believe that the happiness of a virtuous person could be removed. Even virtuous people are unable to *always* control the situations they find themselves in, and an action must be chosen above others not just because it is the least wretched, but because it is worthwhile for a reason (what a virtuous person would do in the situation, all other things equal). The text does not support the claim that Socrates thought virtue alone was enough to ensure happiness. Knowledge of the most virtuous action does not imply the virtuous agent can carry it out.

For Socrates, there is not a logical connection between virtue and happiness, but there is, however, a nomological connection. The absence of a necessary or sufficient connection between virtue and happiness does not mean that being virtuous is not the best thing human beings can do to assure themselves happiness. There is no guarantee that virtue will result in happiness; just as in the natural world there is no way to be sure that fundamental physical laws insure a certain outcome. Random interruptions occur that do not necessarily violate such laws, but change the presumed result. There are circumstances in which a virtuous person's happiness can be expunged, and Socrates accounts for these possibilities.