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Virtue and Flourishing in
Our Interpersonal Relationships

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"Some philosophers say that true happiness comes from a life of virtue." So says Hobbes to Calvin, as Calvin is about to throw a snowball at Susie. Calvin stops, and proceeds to test this hypothesis. He cleans his room, shovels the driveway, makes his mom a card, and generally is a good boy. But he finds himself frustrated. The next chance he gets, he pegs Susie with a snowball, declaring, "Someday I'll write my own philosophy book." Hobbes agrees, noting, "Virtue needs some cheaper thrills."[1]

The position that with virtue comes true happiness is one that has its roots in Aristotle. Aristotle believed that true happiness—what he calls eudaimonia—consists in the exercise of virtue. The virtuous person, he holds, is one who possesses the virtues and has the practical wisdom to know when and how she ought to exercise them. She has "the [virtuous] feelings at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, in the right way" (Aristotle, 1962, sec. 1106b 17–23). When the virtuous person does all this, and exercises virtue, she experiences a distinct form of pleasure; pleasure that, on Aristotle's account, completes the activity. The picture we get from Aristotle one that associates true happiness with the development of one's capacities; where one's reason and passions are working in harmony; where one's skills are being tested and where one is succeeding.

And, of course, this all sounds great. But we can't shake Hobbes's insight: "Virtue needs some cheaper thrills."

Contemporary moral philosophers have spent much time analyzing Aristotle's position, which we can understand in terms of the "eudaimonistic thesis". The eudaimonistic thesis holds that a necessary condition of true happiness is possession and exercise of the virtues. One fundamental idea emerging from discussion of this thesis is that there are different kinds of happiness. (Notice the cartoon speaks of "true" happiness). The kind of happiness Aristotle had in mind, and that is likely associated with virtue, is not the subjective, pleasing or joyful attitude that ordinary language references as "happiness". This is why most philosophers refer to the Aristotelian understanding of happiness as "eudaimonia" or "flourishing" rather than happiness. True happiness, on this understanding, consists in living well—in developing a stable and enduring kind of well-being. Once we recognize that there can be different senses of happiness, the question now becomes whether or not there is some sense of happiness that is correlated with virtue in the way suggested by the eudaimonistic thesis. Here, unsurprisingly, philosophers disagree. Some think this is clearly true—at least once we recognize

the difference between "true" happiness, and the fleeting, whimsical forms of happiness that revolve upon feeling some kind of pleasure (e.g., Annas, 1998; Taylor, 2002). Others worry that it is true only when we do some fancy philosophical footwork and create an understanding of happiness that is far removed from our ordinary understanding of it (Conly, 1988; Haybron, 2007; Cahn, 2004). We so preserve the thesis, but at the cost of making it irrelevant. If virtue is related to a kind of happiness that I cannot identify with, or appreciate as a state that I want to be in, then I find myself in the same position as Calvin, at the end of his virtuous turn: frustrated, and ready to peg someone with a snowball.

My own approach to these issues is to recognize that the eudaimonistic thesis is, at its heart, an empirical claim. It claims that being virtuous is a necessary aspect of the development of some important kind of happiness. To be true as an empirical claim, it must be the case that virtue is associated with a kind of happiness that is clearly recognizable as something that we want, that we can appreciate as a good state for us to be in, that we can identify as a state of our own well-being. And this, of course, is an empirical claim: in our ordinary experiences, is it the case that virtue is necessary to developing this kind of state?

This is a very large, and very important, question. In this paper, I chip away at one piece of this question by exploring virtue's role in mediating our relationships with others. Caring about others and treating them well is clearly part of being virtuous (no matter how we construe the virtues) and I think it is also one aspect of being virtuous that we can see to be an important part of our happiness—at least, in our non-skeptical moments. As a first step towards examining the empirical validity of the eudaimonic thesis, we ought to consider whether or not it is true that being virtuous is necessary to our happiness insofar as it enables us to develop the kind of relationships we need in order to develop true happiness.

There are three parts to my discussion. I begin with a brief reflection on what I take to be some ordinary views about the extent to which we need to treat others well and the limitations associated with this perspective. I then explore in detail psychological research detailing the nature and extent of our social needs. This research, I argue, gives us good reason to believe that genuine virtue is requisite to the satisfaction of our social needs. I conclude by assessing what the above reflection tells us about the eudaimonistic thesis and the connection between virtue and happiness. I argue that it shows that virtue is necessary for positive functioning, yet not sufficient for true happiness. I then offer some reasons for thinking that this is as it should be, that this gives us the right understanding of the connection between happiness and virtue.

The Skeptical Stance

Even in our most cynical moments, it is hard to deny that we need others—not just to make our lives easier, but on a more fundamental level, to help us develop as persons. We know, from a distance, about the devastating effects extreme social isolation has upon the cognitive development of individuals. We also know, from personal experience, how interacting with others allows us to develop personally—how brainstorming with another can help us to formulate new ideas; how learning about another's culture can give us deeper appreciation of our own, and so on.

But I suspect that even the best of us can't shake the lurking suspicion that we can get what we need from others without necessarily treating them well. After all, it is one thing to recognize that we need others, and another thing to argue that this means we ought to treat others well in the sense typically required by virtue—to respect them and, even, to care about them. And we can think of all sorts of examples attesting to this. We can think of the person who is warm and caring to his friends and family and who would do anything for them, yet cruel to those outside this close circle. We can think of the shrewd yet popular businessman, who always has a smile on his face and a dollar in his pocket for the homeless, yet who does not care about others or respect them in the slightest. The photo-op and the consequent reputation are the things that drive him, not a concern for the welfare of others. If these individuals, and the many others like them, can get what they need from others without developing the care and respect for them that is distinctive of virtue, then we genuinely ought to be skeptical of the eudaimonic thesis.

Two beliefs drive this skepticism. The first is the belief, illustrated by the good friend, yet terrible stranger, that we can get what we need from only a few, so that we can by and large get away with treating poorly those who are outside of our narrow circle. The second is the belief, illustrated by the "flourishing" businessman, that we can get what we need from others without actually caring about them. These beliefs are pervasive; even those of us who find that they are false in our own experiences likely are hesitant to deny the possibility of the claims they espouse.

In an effort to prove these beliefs mistaken, in what follows I explore what social psychological has to say about the extent and nature of our social needs. I begin by reviewing empirical research regarding our social needs and specifically our "need for relatedness". I then explore the extent to which we need others and show that we cannot satisfy our need for relatedness solely through engagement with a narrow circle of companions. I go on to explore the nature of our need for relatedness and show that satisfying our need for relatedness involves not only behaving in certain ways towards others, but also developing appropriate attitudes towards them.

The Need for Relatedness

The fact that we need to relate positively to others comes as no surprise; social interaction is widely acknowledged to be essential to psychological health and well-being. Psychologists describe this aspect of our social needs in terms of the need for relatedness, which is an innate psychological need that drives us to seek out certain kinds of experiences (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2002).[2] We will explore later exactly what kinds of experiences this need drives us towards, but for now we can understand them quite generally in terms of experiencing belongingness with individuals and with our community (Ryan & Deci, 2002).[3]

As is the case with all innate psychological needs, negative consequences result when we fail to engage in the experiences towards which the need drives us. Some of the negative consequences are unsurprising and transparently connected to their cause: We are depressed; we begin to think poorly of ourselves and anxious at others. But others are more surprising and occur without us even being aware of them: our problem-solving capacity slows down and we face difficulties controlling our emotions. To reach a full understanding of what we are up against, let's take a detailed look at some of these consequences.

Psychological implications. The psychological implications of failing to relate well towards others are long and many. Whereas social inclusion clearly has positive effects on one's levels of happiness and life-satisfaction and appears to be one of the few objective criteria of these subjective accounts of well-being (Baumeister, 1991), social exclusion appears to be a primary cause of negative feelings such as anxiety, grief, depression, jealousy, and guilt and is also correlated with significantly higher rates of mental illness and suicide (e.g Rothberg & Jones, 1987; Trout, 1980).[4]

While these studies stress the significance of belongingness within a community, other studies demonstrate the significance of developing close, personal relationships. For instance, there is considerable evidence demonstrating that married couples are both physically and emotionally better off than divorced or never-married people. One study by Bloom, White, and Asher (1978) shows that the incidence of mental illness, as evidenced by mental hospital admissions, is highest among divorced and separated people and lowest amongst married people. The figures are astonishing; as Baumeister and Leary report, they show that "mental illness is at least 3 and possibly up to 22 times higher among divorced people than among married people" (1995, p. 509). These demonstrated psychological effects of failing to relate well to others run so deep that many approaches to psychotherapy have as a goal fulfilling an individual's need for relatedness through the therapist/patient relationship (Baumeister & Leary,

1995, p. 510).

Physical implications. The psychological effects of satisfying our need for relatedness are probably the first ones we tend to think of, likely because of their tangible contributions to our subjective experiences of happiness and life-satisfaction. But we should not mistake these effects as the primary, nor even most significant, effects of satisfying or failing to satisfy our need for relatedness. At least as important as the psychological effects are the physical and cognitive effects of failing to satisfy one's need for relatedness. The causal factors of these effects are more difficult to trace: when a single patient dies of cancer, for instance, the last thing we would think of is the impact her social isolation has had on the development of her disease. Yet, patients who are married survive cancer at higher rates than patients who are single (Goodwin, Hunt, Key, & Samet, 1987). They also have better functioning immune systems (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1984), lower mortality rates (Lynch, 1979) and are better able to bear the effects of stress (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988).[5] These beneficial effects of social inclusion are not limited to the development of the close, personal relationships specific to marriage. Social integration in general has similar effects on health; numerous studies demonstrate a positive correlation between social integration and decreased morality rates (Berkman & Syme, 1979; House, Robbins, & Metzner, 1982; Vogt, Mullooly, Ernst, Pope, & Hollis, 1992).

Although one explanation of the correlation between social integration and health is that positive social relationships are instrumental in providing coping support that mitigates the physical impact of stress, Cohen and Wills (1985), among others (Schwarzer & Leppin, 1989, 1991), find that there is in addition a distinct "generalized beneficial effect" of social integration that occurs whether or not a person is under stress. This effect demonstrates that being a member of a large social network enhances well-being directly, and not only because it provides opportunities to develop relationships that can serve to provide coping support. They suggest "this kind of [direct] support could be related to well-being because it provides positive affect, a sense of predictability and stability in one's life situation, and a recognition of self-worth" (Cohen & Wills, 1985, p. 311).

Cognitive Implications. In many ways, the cognitive effects of satisfying or failing to satisfy the need for relatedness are fascinating and demonstrate in a surprising way the depth of our need. As many of these effects occur independently of any emotional reactions to one's failures to satisfy one's need, they also lend further credence to the root idea that the need for relatedness is a basic human necessity, which we cannot opt out of without suffering negative consequences.

In a series of studies, Baumeister and colleagues found that social exclusion impacts the executive functioning of the self (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005; Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005; Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002). Specifically, they found that individuals facing social exclusion both

performed poorly on cognitive tasks and found themselves unable to regulate their behaviors effectively. Let us consider each of these studies in turn.

In the first group of experiments, participants were told, after taking a personality test, that they were likely to spend their futures alone or with others (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005; Baumeister et al., 2002). Their grouping was random and was not dependent upon the results of their personality test. They were then faced with cognitive tasks, such as taking a portion of the reading comprehension section of the GRE. Participants in the "future alone" group performed the same on easy questions as the other group, but significantly worse than other groups on difficult questions, suggesting that their expectation of social exclusion interfered with executive functioning.

In the second group of experiments, researchers explored whether or not the threat of social exclusion would impact an individual's capacity to regulate her diet (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005). Individuals in these experiments were primed in the same fashion as the above experiments, with some participants being told they would spend their futures with others and some being told they would spend their futures alone. One set of participants were told to drink a healthy yet bad-tasting beverage; another set were told to taste-test cookies and instructed to eat only as many cookies as was necessary to judge their taste. Both of these tasks required self-regulation: the former required the ability to overcome the bad taste for the sake of the health benefits, and the latter required the ability to overcome temptation for the sake of health benefits. In both instances researchers found that those in the "future alone" group were less effective at self-regulation: they either drank too little of the healthy yet bad-tasting beverage or ate more cookies in comparison with participants assigned to the "future with others" group. Again, the differences were significant. Rejected participants, for instance, ate twice as many cookies as the accepted participants (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005, p. 65). Their anticipated rejection thus significantly lowered their capacity to self-regulate.

One illustrative aspect of Baumeister and DeWall's research is that the poor performance of those facing social exclusion did not correlate with emotional distress—those in the future alone group did not feel upset or anxious by their classification (2005, p. 59; 64). This shows that it was not the case that people felt distress over facing a future alone and so performed poorly as a result of their emotional distress. Rather, it suggests a direct link between the frustration of one's need for relatedness and impaired cognitive functioning. That this link forms absent emotional or cognitive awareness of it makes the negative consequences that result effects which are beyond our control, which we cannot prevent at will. When our need for relatedness is thwarted, we unavoidably suffer. This research so affirms the need for relatedness as a basic human necessity, objectively ascribable to human beings. We are, at our core, socially dependent upon others.

The entrenched nature of our social dependence reveals something telling about human nature. We all know that it feels good to engage in meaningful social interactions with others. But I also think many of us are tempted to think that we can get by pretty easily without relating to others. We may sacrifice the positive feelings that come through social interactions, but, after all, these are just feelings that we can turn off without suffering further consequences. As we are beginning to see, however, the psychological, physical, and cognitive implications of the need to relate well with others shows this attitude to be mistaken. Our need for relatedness is deeply rooted in human nature and inescapably so. Whether or not an individual admits it, she needs to relate well with others in order to maintain positive psychological functioning.

This section has demonstrated the deeply rooted nature of the need for relatedness and how failing to satisfy it affects us on psychological, physical, and cognitive levels. Suffice it to say, we need to satisfy our need for relatedness. We must now consider what kinds of interactions satisfy our need for relatedness. My specific focus will be on isolating the kinds of restrictions the need for relatedness imposes upon our interactions. Two questions guide this discussion. The first concerns *who* we need to relate to. This question tests the belief of the good friend, yet terrible stranger who thinks it is enough to act well towards only his close circle of family and friends. The second concerns *how* we need to relate towards others; this question tests the belief of the shrewd yet popular businessman who thinks it is enough that people like him—even though he does not invest himself emotionally in the needs and concerns of others.

Who do we need to relate to?

While recognizing the deeply rooted nature of the need for relatedness, we might reasonably inquire about the extent of this need and specifically, whether or not we can satisfy our need through developing relationships with just a few others.[6] Certainly, satisfaction of the need for relatedness is enhanced through the development of personal relationships with others: being and having a significant other (be it a romantic partner, a parent, a friend) with whom one can feel connected to and who makes one feel warm and secure. This is relatively unsurprising and does little to motivate any potential moral implications of the need for relatedness. Yet, as we will now see, further research regarding what we often take to be our most "insignificant" relationships turns up more surprising results with powerful moral implications. Specifically, it shows that failing to engage positively with those we simply *encounter* threatens the satisfaction of our need for relatedness. We thus must make an effort to engage with others both inside and outside of our narrow circle.

Studies exploring the need for relatedness show that its satisfaction can be

threatened through "cold" interactions with individuals we interact with yet with whom we have no close relationship. For instance, one study of elementary school children conducted by Ryan and Grolnick (1986) shows a significant correlation between perceived classroom climates and children's feelings of self-worth, competence, and control. These feelings were judged to be higher in classrooms where "teachers are seen as providing warmth and acceptance of the child" (Ryan & Grolnick, 1986, p. 552).[7] A separate study demonstrates the negative effect cold interactions with a stranger can have (Anderson, Manoogian, & Reznick, 1976). In this study, children were asked to free-draw pictures with different colored magic markers, a task they should have found interesting and enjoyable. Yet, when they drew in the presence of an experimenter who avoided contact with them, their levels of motivation dropped. Anderson and colleagues describe this situation as painful and uncomfortable for both parties, observing that "while the experimenter was (rather painfully) striving to avoid eye contact, conversation, or attending to the child's drawing, the child was striving equally hard to elicit some recognition or validation from the experimenter for what he was doing" (Anderson et al., 1976, p. 917). When, in different groups, the experimenter watched the children draw, his presence had no effect on their levels of interest and motivation.

While many different explanations of these results are possible, it is hard to ignore the demonstrated connection between operating in positive social environments and thriving. The children in the above experiment looked to the experimenter for recognition, for affirmation of themselves as individuals worthy of attention. Where this affirmation was lacking, they failed to exhibit signs of positive functioning. This consequence is not limited to children, although its appearance is likely more dramatic in children. Studies conducted on adults who are ostracized demonstrate that negative consequences (including lowered moods, lower levels of senses of belonging, control, self-esteem, meaningful existence) follow from being ignored and excluded, regardless of who (or what) is doing the ignoring.[8]

In one study, such effects followed from being ostracized by a computer (Zadro, Williams, & Richardson, 2004). Participants in this study took part in an internet-based game of ball-tossing. Experimenters divided participants into two groups: an inclusion group, who received one-third of the total throws, and the ostracized group, who received two throws early in the game, but none in the rest of the game. Members of each of these groups were then split between those told they were playing with other individuals at different universities and those told they were playing against a computer. Following the game, participants in the ostracized group reported significantly lower feelings of belongingness, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence, than those reported by participants in the inclusion group, regardless of whether they believed they were playing

against an individual or a computer.[9] Zadro and colleagues conclude from this study that the sources of ostracism do not matter; that we are so sensitive to being excluded that we respond negatively to the "slightest hint of social exclusion" (2004, p. 560).

The likely explanation of why we are so vulnerable to social exclusion, to which Zadro and colleague's discussion points, is that even an isolated instance of social rejection leads individuals to feel more vulnerable to future rejections (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005, p. 56; Zadro et al., 2004, p. 567). The problem is this: any sort of social exclusion impedes the satisfaction of individuals' basic needs and so diminishes their very capacity for positive functioning. Ostracized individuals find themselves lacking the capacity to rise above the rejection and to engage in the positive social interaction they require. A vicious cycle is generated by "even a seemingly limited social rejection or exclusion", culminating in the impairment of the self's executive functioning and capacity for intelligent thought and self-regulation (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005, p. 56).

Being ostracized, no matter the source, inhibits satisfaction of the need for relatedness. But what happens when one is the source of ostracism—when one ostracizes others? On the one hand, the case of the ostracizer is really just a species of the good friend, terrible stranger: the ostracizer, by systematically excluding others, actively deprives herself of opportunities to satisfy her need for relatedness, while setting herself up to be viewed poorly by those she excludes. But sometimes it seems that those who ostracize appear to enjoy and receive some benefit from their practice, particularly when they view themselves as part of a group unified by their poor treatment of others. Now, there is anthropological evidence suggesting that members of a group that ostracizes others *feel* more connected to the group (Gruter & Masters, 1986). However, this is a potentially misleading observation. After all, those who are part of a group that is ostracized likely feel connected to one another, but we would not want to say that they thereby satisfy their need for relatedness.[10]

Simply believing one is connected to others is not enough to satisfy the need for relatedness; that ostracizers possess this belief does not establish that they satisfy their need for relatedness. To determine whether or not ostracizers really satisfy their need for relatedness, we have to examine their physical, psychological, and cognitive functioning pre-, during, and post- ostracizing. There has been remarkably little research conducted on the effects of excluding others. This is because psychologists are understandably more interested in studying the effects of being excluded and also because of the ethical and logistical limitations of studying social exclusion in the experimental setting.[11] While conducting this line of research is challenging, there are some consistent conclusions emerging from the few attempts to do so. We know that subjects who are tasked with ostracizing others find doing so challenging (Williams & Sommer, 1997), even when they

primed to dislike those they are supposed to ostracize (Ciarocco, Sommer, & Baumeister, 2001). Ciarocco and colleagues also find that the participants who are required to ostracize perform more poorly afterwards on cognitive tasks (such as persisting at trying to solve unsolvable mental puzzles).

This is the kind of research we need to reach an understanding of the effects ostracizing has upon the satisfaction of the ostracizer's needs for relatedness. The preliminary results we have seen are consistent with the research on the nature of the need for relatedness discussed earlier. They are also, I think, consistent with most of our experiences. We are, after all, empathic beings. It is hard to ignore others and it is hard to exclude others. This is not to say that it is <u>easy</u> to act well towards others; but I expect most psychologically healthy adults can attest to how much easier it is to simply smile at someone, rather than to go out of one's way to ignore or exclude her, or to otherwise make her feel bad. We are driven to treat others well, much more so than we might have anticipated.

The conclusion we must embrace is that it is important to live on good terms with most of those we encounter: even if we have rewarding close relationships, when those around us are cold and impersonal, or fail to include us, the satisfaction of our need for relatedness is hindered. Moreover, as we have seen, the negative effects of this hindrance linger, making it difficult to compartmentalize seemingly isolated experiences of social exclusion. These findings give us good reason to regulate most—maybe, all—of our interactions with others. Just as the cold disposition of a stranger in the room can effect us negatively, so too does the cold stare of the person you cut in front of on the way to work; just as being left out of a game (by a computer!) negatively effects us, so too does being left out by any group, even a group of individuals you don't "care" about. We've got to conclude that the person who believes she can fulfill her need for relatedness solely by developing a narrow circle of friends and family is wrong.

The need for relatedness—along with our other psychological needs—is in this respect different from many of our biological needs. When we are hungry, we can eat a meal at home and then be content for several hours. Our need for nourishment is something that can be sated and then temporarily set aside. But our need for relatedness requires on-going satisfaction. And the more an individual engages in experiences which satisfy her need for relatedness, the more she will experience the positive effects that come with satisfaction of this, and other, innate psychological needs. Her executive functioning will operate at its highest level. She will be more effective in whatever she pursues.

How to relate to others?

Having determined who we need to related to, let us now turn to the second question, that of how we need to relate to others. This question is an important

one, as it allows us to consider just how robust the need for relatedness is, a factor that influences significantly our evaluation of the eudaimonistic thesis.

On the most general level, research suggests that what we need from others is a social environment that nurtures, provides warmth and security, and enables people to feel connected with one another (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000). While obviously this entails that we need for others to care about us, Baumeister and Leary, among others (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985; Ryff, 1989), find that much of the value of social interaction comes from not just from *being* cared, but also from *caring* about other people and becoming emotionally attached to them (1995, pp. 513–515). This suggests the importance of developing mutually affirming relationships, as opposed to one-sided relationships.

Several studies on one-sided relationships suggest that one-sided interactions will not satisfy the need for relatedness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell, 1993). Regardless of which side a person is on (the cared about, or the caring), both parties experience the relationship as an "aversive" one (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). We have also seen, in our discussion of ostracism, that those who do not care about others or respect them experience the decreased cognitive functioning symptomatic of a failure to satisfy one's need for relatedness (Ciarocco et al., 2001). All of this suggests that to satisfy our need for relatedness we need to develop actual attachments with others that include the presence of empathy and affection, as well as respect for others—an attitude that demonstrates our acceptance of others and our affirmation of their needs as ones that are important. Given that it is in this step—in the recognition of the need to develop mutually affirming attitudes—that the normative implications of the need for relatedness appear most transparently we need to consider seriously the extent to which mutuality is an essential characteristic of interactions which satisfy the need for relatedness.

While for most of us the rewards of developing these kinds of attachments are clear, we also can appreciate how tempting it is to engage in patterns of behavior that lack the mutuality detailed above, yet nonetheless have the outward appearance of it: we engage with others, but really only view their relationship to us in instrumental terms; we care about what others think, but may not care about them. On this picture, our actions are predicated solely upon a self-interested desire to be included and to garner the approval of the other, rather than upon any kind of desire for the other.[12] If it were possible for interactions so motivated to satisfy our need for relatedness, this possibility would threaten the eudaimonistic thesis. We thus must consider: does our need for relatedness require simply that we need to be included, or does it really require something more, such as the need to develop mutual attitudes of care and respect, as the research on one-sided relationships and ostracism suggests?

To answer, let us take a look at research regarding the development of self-esteem. All accounts of self-esteem hold that self-esteem is essentially dependent upon the responses of others; as we have seen, one influential account of self-esteem posits that self-esteem has evolved as a mechanism to ensure that we satisfy our need for relatedness by making it the case that we develop self-esteem only when we are interacting well with others (Leary, 2004). By studying the development of self-esteem, we can gain valuable insight into when and how the need for relatedness is satisfied. Specifically, we want to explore what kinds of behaviors and attitudes correlate with stable levels of self-esteem, which have the strongest correlation with satisfaction of the need for relatedness (Paradise & Kernis, 2002).

Stability, Internal Qualities, and Motivation

Ongoing research by Crocker (2002a; Crocker & Park, 2004), shows that stable levels of self-esteem tend to result from internal qualities related to one's behavioral patterns, such as the exercise of virtue or development of religious faith, rather than from the possession of external qualities, such as one's appearance and athletic success. The disparity arises because even though others may approve of external qualities, their approval generates a kind of self-esteem that is heavily contingent upon that approval. Crocker describes this kind of "contingent self-esteem" as follows:

> Contingencies of self-worth that are external rather than internal, or dependent on others rather than our own behavior, are much more vulnerable to threat on a day-to-day basis, and constantly require earning the approval of yet another person, winning yet another award, or outdoing yet another competitor (2002a, p. 600)

Crocker's research finds that this vicious cycle of approval-seeking arises when what we really want is to secure the approval of others. We think we can secure this approval by having the kinds of external qualities that we think others will approve of: the right hairstyle, the latest technological gadget, and so on. But because these external qualities are essentially comparative, we are completely dependent upon the approval of others to fulfill our needs. What matters to us are not the possession of the specific qualities, but the having of approval: we want the qualities because we think others will approve of us if we have them. This kind of cycle unsurprising leads to destructive behavioral patterns that inhibit one's well-being. For instance, those who base their self-worth on their appearance have higher incidences of alcohol and drug use, as well as eating disorders (Crocker, 2002a).

On the other hand, when we pursue internal qualities that we think are worthy of pursuit in their own right, independently of their contributions to our self-image, the threat of the vicious cycle lessens. We begin to develop an optimal, more stable form of self-esteem that, Crocker's research suggests, better reflects the satisfaction of one's need for relatedness (Crocker & Park, 2004). This form of self-esteem still depends on the approval of others, but this dependency plays out differently. We do not seek the approval of others; rather, we seek to develop qualities reflected through our behavior that we value independently of whether or not others approve of them and independently of the contributions they make to our self-image. Because we've essentially removed a concern for our self-image from the picture, we are better able to focus on obtaining the goals in question (Crocker et al., 2010). For instance, we can incorporate the feedback of others and make positive changes to our behavior, rather than seeing negative feedback as a personal assault and reacting defensively. Others will approve of our internal qualities, so long as they are admirable, yet overall our levels of self-esteem will be less contingent upon this approval, and so less vulnerable. If we find we are rebuffed on occasion, we are able to maintain firm ground in virtue of our commitment to the internal qualities—we do not find our self-esteem shattered, as is likely when the sources of self-esteem are external qualities wholly dependent upon the whims of others. The vicious cycle that arises when our self-esteem is based in external qualities is not likely to arise when our self-esteem is based in internal qualities. We thus are able to maintain stable levels of self-esteem.

The following picture emerges: Stable levels of self-esteem suggest satisfaction of the need for relatedness. While stable levels of self-esteem are interdependent, they do not result solely from "being approved of" and rather result from a commitment to internal qualities exhibited through one's behavior. What results solely from "being approved of" are contingent levels of self-esteem that correlate with destructive behavioral patterns. Thus, "being approved of" is not enough to satisfy our need for relatedness.

A Paradox of Self-Esteem?

Further strengthening this line of argument, and so demonstrating the need to develop caring attitudes towards others, is evidence that the active pursuit of self-esteem imposes significant costs to individuals. As Crocker and Park (2004) note, while pursuing self-esteem may bring short-term benefits, the long-term costs to the satisfaction of one's need for relatedness are significant. The standard explanation of this is that when people pursue self-esteem (e.g., by seeking the approval of others), their attention is diverted from the fulfillment of their needs (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Crocker, 2002b; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Crocker and Park take this explanation one step further, arguing, "in the pursuit of self-esteem,

people often create the opposite of what they need to thrive" (2004, p. 393). Our discussion of the vicious cycle of contingent self-worth gives us some insight into how this happens: the active pursuit of self-esteem places one's self-worth in the hands of others. We become highly vulnerable to their responses; this vulnerability often leads us to engage in self-protection techniques to protect ourselves against potential rejection. These responses in turn prevent us from making the requisite corrections to our behavior; they thus ultimately preventing us from develop qualities worthy of other's approval (Crocker & Park, 2004, p. 400; See also Tennen & Affleck, 1993).

An example will help: Dana is a college student who bases her self-esteem in her grades. She pursues high grades to obtain the approval of others and sees the grades as a reflection of her self-worth. Because she is so caught up in the pursuit of her self-image, she engages in many strategies to protect herself in the face of rejection—strategies that ultimately thwart her academic development. For instance, in the face of the rejection that comes with a poor grade, she refuses to believe the poor grade is in fact a reflection on her and chooses to instead believe that the professor has not graded her fairly. As a result, Dana is unable to learn from the experience. In her eyes, the poor grade was not her fault, so there is no reason for her to seek extra help, or to study harder.

In this example, we see that Dana's specific motivation (gain self-esteem through getting good grades) serves to thwart her learning process. Were her ego less involved; were she motivated not to attain self-esteem, but to learn, then she would have been able to recognize her failures and to make the requisite adjustments to her learning process. This research finds that this is the case in most instances where individuals pursue self-esteem: when individuals are motivated by self-esteem, they fail to develop it. Crocker and Park thus conclude that self-esteem should never be seen as a goal, but rather as a bonus that results from the successful attainment of other goals (Crocker & Park, 2004, p. 407).

Applying these results to the specific example of relationships, we can conclude reasonably that individuals who are motivated by a desire to attain the approval of others will fail to satisfy their need for relatedness for it is a self-defeating motive: seeking someone's approval leads individuals to act in ways that inhibit the kinds of behavior generates the approval requisite to self-esteem; the approval that is reflective of satisfaction of the need for relatedness. The goal of "being approved of" thus generates a motivational state that is incompatible with satisfying one's need for relatedness. Rather, to best satisfy the need for relatedness, one's motive ought to focus on the person and the activity in question, as opposed to a separable outcome that is wrapped up on one's own self-image—be it the outcome of obtaining approval, or obtaining some other advantage from the relationship. The kind of relatedness towards which we are driven, one in which we experience closeness and connectedness with others, arises only when we care about others

and respect them. We satisfy our need for relatedness to the degree to which we set aside our own interests and develop genuine feelings towards others.

All of this suggests what most of us have known all along: that in order to develop fulfilling relationships, we must be motivated for the sake of the person, or for the sake of the relationship, rather than for the sake of securing some outcome of that relationship. We ought to be motivated by care for the other, or by respect for the other. Other things equal, this kind of motivation clearly secures satisfaction of the need for relatedness (Crocker, Olivier, & Nuer, 2009); the stable levels of self-esteem that result from this mode of behavior are a bonus.

Needing Others and the Eudaimonic Thesis

We have seen now from many different angles that a lack of mutuality inhibits satisfaction of our need for relatedness. *Interacting* is not enough to satisfy our need, especially interacting for the sake of obtaining the approval of another. Rather, what we clearly require is positive social interaction marked by a mutual level of care and respect and that this is how we interact with most of those with whom we do interact. Requiring the development of mutually affirming attitudes helps to ensure that we will develop the kinds of relationships we need; that we need these relationships for the development of our well-being justifies the weight many moral theories tend to place on treating others well and viewing them as ends in themselves.

Is this enough to vindicate—at least partially—the eudaimonistic thesis? The eudaimonistic thesis, recall, holds that being virtuous is a necessary component of true happiness. I've argued that we ought to understand this thesis as an empirical claim, where "true happiness" must be something that individuals can recognize as a state that is valuable for them. The above research shows that we will suffer on psychological, physical, and cognitive levels if we do not fulfill our need for relatedness by developing mutual attitudes of care and respect towards most of those we encounter and by behaving well towards them. But does it show that we cannot obtain true happiness without developing these attitudes (and so by being virtuous in this respect)?

The immediate consequence of failing to exhibit virtuous attitudes towards others is the frustration of our need for relatedness. Let's think a little about what this means: the need for relatedness is an innate psychological need that drives us to seek out certain kinds of experiences. As we've seen, this drive operates beyond our conscious control: we cannot just turn it off. We can ignore it, of course, but what happens when we ignore it is that the drive is continually stifled. We end up in a situation akin to one in which someone is constantly striving for something and failing to attain it. It is unsurprising that—as we've seen in detail—someone in such a situation of continually defeated strivings suffers on

multiple levels.

The kind of negative effects we have seen to occur when the need for relatedness is frustrated are ones that prevent individuals from "positive functioning". Positive functioning occurs when one's drives are fulfilled—when an agent's innate psychological needs point her towards certain kinds of experiences and when she engages in these experiences. I think the value associated with a state of positive functioning is best understood through analogy with the value of health. On its own, it has an intrinsic value: it is important for its own sake, just as one's biological health is important for its own sake. There is a value to being in a state where we are not depressed, where we find ourselves motivated, where our cognitive operations are clicking away unfettered. This value is important on its own, independent both of the goods positive functioning allows us to attain and of our affirmation of it as valuable, just as there is independent value to having a body not inflicted with disease. Often times we may not recognize or appreciate the value of positive functioning until we try to seek further goods or, alternatively, until we lose it, finding ourselves depressed and unable to focus, but there is value nonetheless.

Is positive functioning a plausible construal of "true happiness"? Clearly, it is an important aspect of true happiness, but I do not think that positive functioning is *in itself* a plausible candidate for true happiness. True happiness involves, I think, a combination of both functioning well *and* feeling good about the way in which one's life is going. While some might find the latter to be most important, the truth is that we need positive functioning in order to develop the kind of stable and enduring sense of well-being associated with any plausible interpretation of "true happiness". When we lack positive functioning, it may be possible to experience short bursts of pleasure or other joyful feelings, but in between those moments, we will struggle just to get by. We will fight off depression and anxiety; we will fumble at the ordinary tasks in life; we will find it difficult to pursue our goals. It is implausible to think that true happiness can lie in these kinds of isolated moments interjected in between this otherwise very grueling kind of life—at the end of the day, these fleeting feelings are not the only things that count.

Conclusion

We are now in a position to assess the validity of the eudaimonistic thesis, at least insofar as it applies to our interpersonal relationships. The eudaimonistic thesis holds that being virtuous is necessary to the development of true happiness. If I'm right about what follows from research on the extent and nature of our need for relatedness, then it seems that exercising virtue in our interactions with others is necessary towards positive functioning. As positive functioning is

one important aspect of developing true happiness, then—in this sense—virtue is necessary for the development of true happiness. The eudaimonistic thesis is thereby validated.

Of course, there is a catch: we have not shown that exercising virtue guarantees that one will develop true happiness. We thus have not proven Calvin's skeptical stance *wrong*. True happiness, I have argued, consists in both positive functioning and developing good feelings about one's life. While virtue is necessary to the former and, assuming normal social conditions, can guarantee the satisfaction of our need for relatedness, we cannot be sure that when we function well, we will feel a sense of well-being as a result. While the two are often correlated (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2006) and as I've suggested, positive functioning is requisite to developing a stable and enduring sense of well-being, whether or not we feel good about how our life is going depends on all sorts of factors that are very much beyond our control. Whether or not we feel good about how our life is going depends upon the nature of our goals and the extent to which we've been able to satisfy them; it depends upon whether we've been fortunate enough to find success in our chosen careers and in our chosen life paths. The young gay man feeling stifled in his small conservative community may not develop an enduring sense of well-being no matter how virtuous he is; the infertile women with deeply vested interests in procreating may never come to feel true happiness—no matter her virtue, there may always be a hole in her heart.

Virtue cannot guarantee true happiness. Believing otherwise, we can now see, was Calvin's mistake. Calvin assumed that being virtuous would *on its own* deliver true happiness. This is why he finds himself frustrated. And while Hobbes is likely right in his assertion that "virtue needs some cheaper thrills" (as long as those cheap thrills don't come at the cost of virtue), there is no need for Calvin to rewrite the philosophy books. The eudaimonistic thesis gets it right, even if it doesn't guarantee that virtue leads to true happiness.

And I think this is the right way to think about the relationship between virtue and happiness. When we think about morality and what its aim and scope ought to be, it is important to recognize its limitations. It is a mistake to see the end of morality as ensuring that the virtuous develop true happiness, for whether or not the virtuous are able to develop true happiness is highly contingent upon luck and circumstance and something so contingent ought not to serve as the end goal of morality. When we declare something to be contained within the aim and scope of morality, we moralize it: we attach moral guilt and moral blame to its attainment, and hold it up as constitutive of our moral ideals. But where these ideals include aspects that are as beyond our control as is true happiness, then we have presented as an ideal something that is not one we reasonably can expect individuals to attain. At the same time, we are holding her morally responsible for her failures.

It is more reasonable, I think, to understand morality—and here, virtue—as having as its goal enabling us to develop the baseline of well-being, i.e., enabling us to develop positive functioning. This not only has the advantage of being something that is uniform across individuals, but also has the advantage of being something we can reasonably expect of others. The person who develops mutual attitudes of caring and respect towards those she interacts with *will* satisfy her need for relatedness; we will—in this respect—develop positive functioning.

So, philosophers are not completely off-base in asserting, "True happiness comes from a life of virtue." Virtue *is* essential to the development of true happiness. Recognizing the validity of the eudaimonistic thesis is important; establishing virtue's connection with true happiness not only serves as a promising incentive for others to develop virtue, but also helps us to understand the nature and scope of virtue itself.

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Notes

[1] The above describes the "Virtue needs some cheaper thrills" cartoon in the Calvin and Hobbes series reprinted, in Watterson (2005). Annas (1998) also discusses this example in a philosophical context.

[2] Baumeister and Leary (1995) call it a "need for belongingness".

[3] It is worth emphasizing that the need drives us to engage in experiences and is thus satisfied only by those experiences. *Experiencing* belongingness can be very different than *believing* we belong: the adolescent girl may believe she belongs, yet find herself feeling lonely and despondent nonetheless.

[4] Baumeister and Tice (1990) find such a strong correlation between the development of anxiety and threatened or actual social exclusion that they take anxiety itself to derive from our need to belong and to have as its purpose signaling distress when the satisfaction of one's need is threatened.

[5] See Baumeister & Leary (1995, pp. 508–509) for discussion of these effects and more.

[6] Snow considers a similar case: "a person whose virtues allow him to have the close personal relationships needed for high levels of happiness, but whose other-regarding virtues do not extend beyond his family and members of his ethnic group" (2008, p. 238).

[7] While this study focuses in particular on the relationship between perceived classroom experiments and the need for autonomy, Ryan and Deci later attribute the effect evidenced in this study to a satisfaction of the need for relatedness (presumably, in addition to the need for autonomy). See Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 71).

[8] See Williams (2007) for extensive review of this literature.

[9] Although, those who were ostracized by the computers reported higher levels of anger than those ostracized by strangers.

[10] In one of the few studies that explores the psychological effects ostracism has on the individuals who ostracize, Zadro and colleagues (2005) do report that individuals who are part of a group that ostracizes others experience greater belongingness; however, they measure this belongingness according

to participant's self-reported assessments of the degree to which they "felt a strong connection with the other two people on [the] train" and "felt included in the conversation" (Zadro et al., 2005, p. 130). This measure shows that the ostracizers believed they belonged. As we've seen, though, this belief is not sufficient to satisfy the need for belongingness. (Remember the isolated and depressed yet popular teenager.)

[11] See Zadro et al (2005) for discussion.

[12] Crocker and colleagues (2010) would describe the difference between these two motivational pictures in terms of ego-involvement; the former represents an egocentric motivation, in which the goal is ultimately wrapped up in the promotion of one's self-image, while the latter represents ecocentric motivation, which is characterized by compassion, and in which the ego is absent.

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