

**Candidacy 2 St. Thomas Aquinas**  
**Treatise on Happiness**  
**Translation by John A. Oesterle**  
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**Question 4: What is required for happiness?**

**Article 1: Is delight required for happiness?**

Three concepts:

Pleasure

Delight

Happiness

I will not attempt to write this article as anything more than a reflection based on my own subjective reaction to St. Thomas's "Treatise on Happiness". Quotes are taken from "Treatise on Happiness - Saint Thomas Aquinas" translated by John A. Oesterle: University of Notre Dame Press edition 1983

To understand the purpose of this article I needed to understand my own concept of these words. My concept of pleasure versus delight: pleasure is more sensual than delight. Pleasure is less of a surprise. Delight is fresh and new. The difference could simply be explained by the feel and texture of pearls and gold in contrast to the sparkle and surprise of a diamond.

I understand that happiness as defined by St. Thomas is the perfect happiness in the vision of God – heaven. This is a reality that I am unable to comprehend without first understanding what happiness means in the here and now and even more specifically what happiness means to me.

Delight and pleasure are in the moment. Happiness is a long-term state of being. Even though a person may experience times of great sorrow and tragedy he or she can know happiness and rest in the peace of happiness. Even though a person may experience times of enjoyment and pleasure he or she will be aware of the pain of the constant feeling of sadness.

Argument 1:

Augustine says that "vision (*vision of God*) is the entire reward of faith," But the prize or reward of virtue is happiness, as Aristotle shows. Therefore, nothing besides vision is required for happiness.

Reply:

When a reward is given to someone, the will of the one rewarded is at rest, and this is what delight is. Delight is therefore included in the very notion of a reward given. - page 41

"The will of the one is at rest, and this is what delight is". Compare this statement to the activity of an artist who has used his or her imagination and skill in creating a painting. The will of the artist is expressed by the vision and work he or she puts into a painting. The "will at rest" is the delight of the finished project that expresses his or her vision. An artist finds happiness in the work and the process of

painting a picture, but the delight is experienced when the painting is finished. Delight adds to the happiness.

Argument 2:

Happiness is “the most self-sufficient of all goods” as the Philosopher says. But that which needs something else is not self-sufficient. Since, then, the essence of happiness consists in the vision of God, as we have already shown, it seems that delight is not required for happiness.

Reply:

The very sight of God causes delight. Hence he who sees God cannot be without delight. --  
page 41

“The very sight of God causes delight”. A person can be happy but beyond happiness is the surprise one can experience in recognizing this fact. The delight is being able to say, “I am happy. What a wonderful gift this is.” This is how delight works in our lives. How much greater that delight will be to recognize the reality of the vision of God.

Argument 3:

“The activity of felicity,” or happiness, “has to be one that is not impeded,” as is said in the Ethics. But delight hinders the action of the intellect, for “it destroys the judgment of prudence,” as is said in the Ethics. Therefore, delight is not required for happiness.

Reply:

The delight accompanying the activity of the intellect does not hinder it but, rather, strengthens it, as it said in the Ethics, for what we do with delight we do with greater care and perseverance. But a delight that is extraneous to the intellect’s activity is a hindrance. Sometimes it is because it distracts our attention, since, as we have said, we are more attentive to things that delight us; and when we are very intent on one thing, of necessity our attention is withdraw from another. Other times it is a hindrance because it is contrary; thus, a sensual delight that is contrary to reason hinders the judgment of prudence more than it hinders the judgment of the speculative intellect.  
pages 41-42

Delight does not hinder happiness when the delight is not separated from happiness. We take delight in those activities that compliment and complete our happiness. A person may find great happiness in his or her role as a parent. The delight of his or her children as they grow and develop compliments this happiness.

However, if a parent begins to find delight and pleasure that leads away from the happiness of his or her family it will become evident that it is this kind of delight that impedes the happiness of the person’s role as a parent.