Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and Facebook are four dangerous games to play, commonly thought of as prime examples of social media. Aristotle, based on the views expressed in *Nichomachean Ethics*, would find social media sites to perpetuate temporary friendships of utility, as they influence a focus on posting “worthy” content and “likes” from others rather than cultivating actual relationships.

*Nicomachean Ethics* is a collection of lecture notes based on Aristotle’s lessons on the different types of friendship and friendship in society. Poorly translated as “happiness,” Aristotle first addresses the idea of Eudaimonia, or human flourishing. This is the pursuit of a life full of worthwhile activities done well and in accord with virtues and reasons (Aristotle 1). The focus of the lectures eventually shifts to friendship, where Aristotle discusses three main categories of friendship: pleasure, utility, and character (Aristotle 121-122). Character friendship is the ideal of the three and based upon reciprocated good will, where people “... wish goods to each other for each other’s own sake” (Aristotle 122). Friendships of pleasure and utility prove similar to one another, as the people do not love one another for the other’s sake, but because they provide something emotionally or physically. Moreso, if they stop being useful or pleasing, the friendship is easily dissolved (Aristotle 121). Although Aristotle’s lectures were given thousands of years ago, many of his ideas prove prevalent today. Friendships of utility are heavily present in today’s society, with social media usage being the perfect example.

“Six to nine is prime IG posting time.” I heard this short rhyme years ago, yet it continues to play in my head when I consider posting a photo on Instagram. Based on “statistics” from word of mouth, Instagram and various other social media platforms experience their highest usage volumes in the evening, so posting during these times supposedly allows one’s photo to gain more likes, as more people see it. Social media defines people by numbers: followers, likes, friends, rates. Although society may not be entirely founded upon ratings like in *Black Mirror*, it can not be denied that these factors are considered when looking at potential friends, significant others, or oneself. Influenced by this desire to achieve better numbers, people usually are not picky when it comes to who they are friends with online. Whether it be a best friend, third cousin twice removed, or even a complete stranger who claims to live in the same town, all could easily be accepted as a friend with the click of a button. When one becomes invested in social media, they allow oneself to define and be defined by numbers. Henceforth, these “friends” on Facebook or “followers” on Instagram can often serve the purpose of merely raising one’s statistics. After all, if one has over one hundred Facebook friends, is it practical to assume that they know each friend on a deep level and maintain a healthy relationship? Perhaps for a small percentage of these Facebook friends, this deeper, healthier relationship is present, but not all. Then, there are people with over a thousand Facebook friends, and the possibility of them knowing each and every one is improbable. We do not accept friend requests in hopes of gaining new friends. Oftentimes, no effort is made to build a bond after the initial acceptance. As is often the case, we accept them for the sake of appearing to have friends, for increasing our number of likes, perpetuating the notion that having more followers must make us more interesting humans.

Speaking in generalities, people tend to post the exciting, positive moments in their lives. They post about the fun they have, or the amazing things that happen to them. As defined by the lecture notes, this friendship illustrates how “Those who love each other for utility love the other not in his own right, but insofar as they gain some good for themselves from him” (Aristotle 121). People post what paints them in the best light, and with those who make them look the best. This idea of wanting to look one’s best pushes the friendship of utility into relations with social media, and I am completely guilty of submitting to this friendship, at times. In my personal experience, it began with four simple words: “Let’s do a photoshoot!” Either a friend or I suggest it, then we grab a good camera, drive to a visually appealing location, and take posed “candid” shots. Once uploaded to a computer, the photos are scrutinized until one or two are decided to be the best, then posted to every social media site possible. Done with the trivial goal of getting a perfect photo to post in mind, social media encourages that we document our fabulous experiences with those around us or use others to appear as interesting people. Even if they do consider the ones they are with to be good friends or not, many will soon begin figuring how they can achieve the perfect photo that can show what a good time they are having with others. The concept can be further illustrated through Snapchat, as people genuinely request that others or myself film them doing something and then post it on our Snapchat stories so everyone, or a specific person, can see. This aspect of utility-based friendships in social media boils down to a simple concept: everyone wants to look like they have friends.

One must then consider: does this fit Aristotle’s idea of Eudaimonia? Is the act of befriending people on the internet for the sake of gaining likes or followers a way of human flourishing, where worthwhile actions are performed in virtue (Aristotle 1)? This can be answered through another question: where is the virtue in social media? Social platforms encourage thinking in terms of numbers on a screen, breeding the idea that others are needed to increase one’s online statistics to appear better. Aristotle would recognize that these are friendships of utility, as many use their followers as means of gaining likes rather than actually building a relationship. These friendships are built upon numbers and procuring content that makes one look better, not actually striving to be better.