THE STRUCTURE OF HAPPINESS

by

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Abstract

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The concept of happiness has long been of philosophical interest, and it continues today to play an important role in contemporary discussions of morality and well-being. Although the concept of happiness has been analyzed by various contemporary philosophers, little progress has been made in reaching a consensus over its meaning. As a result, there are several distinct concepts that the term denotes within the philosophical literature.

I shall examine the contemporary literature on happiness, and arrive at a definition that is both theoretically useful and accords with common usage. I shall defend a life satisfaction view of happiness, which identifies it as a psychological state of the subject. Saying that you are happy only commits you to the minimal claim that you are satisfied with your life, implying nothing about your moral background or behavior, or about the quality of your life, independent of your own perceptions.

Following my analysis of happiness in Chapters 1 and 2, I shall examine its connection with two other evaluative notions with which it is often conflated. In Chapters 3, I shall focus on the connection between happiness and moral goodness, and in Chapter 4, I shall discuss the relationship between happiness and well-being. In both cases, I shall argue that happiness represents an independent evaluative dimension.

The tradition in ethics is to amalgamate happiness, well-being and morality, and to deny the possibility of their independent occurrence. One achieves the good life by maximally realizing all three elements; the subject strives to be virtuous, and she is made happy through her pursuit. Many contemporary philosophers believe that happiness, well-being and moral goodness must rise and fall together, and they assume if someone fails to realize any one element, they must lack all three. However, what has been neglected is how these elements can come apart. Through my analysis of happiness, I shall argue against the traditional view, suggesting instead that happiness is independent of both moral goodness and well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

The Structure of Happiness

The concept of happiness has long been of philosophical interest, and it continues today to play an important role in contemporary discussions of morality and well-being. Although the concept of happiness has been analyzed by various contemporary philosophers, little progress has been made in reaching a consensus over its meaning. As a result, there are several distinct concepts that the term denotes within the philosophical literature. I shall carry out an in-depth study of the concept of happiness. Through an examination of the contemporary literature on happiness, I shall arrive at a definition that is both theoretically useful and accords with common usage.

There is a tradition in philosophy of imposing artificial constraints upon happiness, which distort its meaning. I shall argue against all theorists who supply "happiness" with any sort of persuasive definition. We have a perfectly viable word in our lexicon that is adequate for the job it performs; modifications of its meaning are misleading and unnecessary. If one is interested in "happiness," which is a folk psychological notion employed by ordinary people, persuasive definitions are unhelpful, and they result in an analysis of a concept that barely resembles what we commonly call happiness.

I shall employ the criterion of descriptive adequacy to adjudicate among rival theories of happiness.[1] According to this criterion, the best theory will be most faithful to our ordinary concept and our ordinary experience, where that experience is given by what

[1] This criterion comes from L. W. Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8-20.

we know about happiness, both our own and that of others. Therefore, our preanalytic convictions and intuitions about happiness will provide the data that candidate theories must fit.[2]

I shall proceed by analyzing the common usage in order to uncover the natural boundaries of the concept of happiness. My examination will reveal that happiness is primarily a psychological phenomenon. To say that someone is happy is to say that she is in a certain state of mind, which does not imply anything about her moral background or behavior, or about her quality of life independent of her own perceptions. I shall argue that saying you are happy only commits you to the minimal claim that you are satisfied with your life, for if someone detested every aspect of her life, she could not reasonably say "But I'm completely happy." I shall not discuss the specific components of people's happiness, nor people's accuracy at predicting what will make them happy. I am primarily interested in the nature of happiness: what it is and how it is related to well-being and moral goodness.

Following my analysis of happiness in Chapters 1 and 2, I shall examine its connection with two other evaluative notions with which it is often conflated. In Chapter 3, I shall discuss the relationship between happiness and moral goodness, including the possibility of the happy immoralist. I shall argue that happiness and morality are independent dimensions that we can use to evaluate a person's life.

In Chapter 4, I shall discuss various theories on the nature of well-being. Theories of well-being propose to tell us what it is for someone's life to go well, or for someone to have a good life; this is also referred to as prudential value. The question I shall ask is whether someone can achieve well-being without happiness. Though some

[2] Ibid., 10-11.

theorists argue for the independence of happiness and well-being, many others believe that happiness is at least a necessary condition for having a good life. After reviewing both positions, I shall argue that neither side provides a satisfactory response to this question, and more importantly, no theory provides a coherent view of the nature of well-being. I believe this result indicates something deeply problematic with the concept of well-being.

The tradition in ethics is to amalgamate happiness, well-being and morality, and to deny the possibility of their independent occurrence. One achieves the good life by maximally realizing all three elements; the subject strives to be virtuous, and she is made happy through her pursuit. Many contemporary philosophers believe that happiness, well-being and moral goodness must rise and fall together, and they assume if someone fails to realize any one element, she must lack all three. However, what has been neglected is how these elements can come apart. Through my analysis of happiness, I shall argue against the traditional view, suggesting instead that happiness is independent of both moral goodness and well-being.

1. Aristotle's Theory of Happiness

Although this project will focus on the contemporary literature, the motivation behind many contemporary philosophers' intuitions about happiness, well-being and morality traces back to the Ancients. Therefore, I shall begin with a discussion of Aristotle's views on happiness, which will provide the necessary background against which to view this project.[3]

[3] I should note that I do not intend to address the debate over how to interpret Aristotle's views, and the translations I will discuss are not meant to represent a consensus view within the historical literature. My

Aristotle begins the *Nicomachean Ethics* with the statement that "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good."[4] Aristotle goes on to identify the highest good as happiness. He says "Verbally, there is very general agreement [as to the highest of all goods achievable by action] for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and doing well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ, and many do not give the same account as the wise."[5]

In this quote, Aristotle uses the Greek word 'eudaimonia' in place of 'happiness'. There has been some debate over the translation of 'eudaimonia', and some theorists argue that something like "human flourishing" is a more suitable choice for its translation. This translation issue is relevant to my project because I am interested in theories of "happiness," and not "human flourishing," whatever that may be. If Aristotle is not talking about the same concept as all the other theorists (happiness), then Aristotle's views on "eudaimonia" are completely irrelevant to this discussion.

I shall assume that the interpretation of 'eudaimonia' as something other than happiness is mistaken. Both Richard Kraut and Julia Annas argue that 'eudaimonia' represents happiness. Although Aristotle's conception of happiness is quite different from our own, it is happiness that he is talking about, and not some other concept. According to Annas, the "ancient non-philosophical evidence" clearly shows

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focus is only on the content of the views they attribute to Aristotle, and all other issues will be set aside.

[4] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1045a1-2.

[5] Ibid., 1095a17-22.

"*eudaimonia* at the very least connotes a satisfactory life about which the agent has positive feelings."[6] This is precisely what 'happy' connotes in ordinary language.

Kraut describes living happily as having certain attitudes towards your life and measuring up to certain standards, and he believes this is also how Aristotle uses 'eudaimonia'.[7] According to Kraut, the main difference between our conception of happiness and Aristotle's is the standard used when evaluating lives. Aristotle's standard is "more objective and stringent," while our own is "more subjective and flexible."[8] However, Kraut believes the attitude one has towards her life is the same in both cases. When Aristotle uses the word 'eudaimonia', he applies it to people who are in a certain state of mind, "the very state of mind we say people are in when we call them happy."[9] Therefore, Aristotle's views on "eudaimonia" can be viewed as a "challenge to the way we go about judging people to be happy."[10]

Aristotle offers the following argument to support the identification of happiness with the chief human good. The chief human good, whatever it might be, must meet the following two criteria: (a) it is the most complete of human ends, meaning it is desirable solely for its own sake (and so, it is the ultimate non-instrumental good), and (b) it confers self-sufficiency (meaning it is for its sake we want other things). Of all the suggestions for what could be the highest good, including wealth, honor, and pleasure, only happiness meets both of these criteria. Therefore, it must be the highest good.[11]

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[6] Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 330.
[7] Richard Kraut, "Two Conceptions of Happiness," *The Philosophical Review* 88 (1979): 167.
[8] Kraut, 167.
[9] Ibid., 168.
[10] Ibid., 169.
[11] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15.

Aristotle's conclusion that happiness meets both criteria is supported by reflecting on people's ordinary attitudes towards happiness. Regarding the first criterion, it does seem wrong to say that someone could be seeking happiness instrumentally; it is difficult to understand how someone could want happiness for any reason other than its own intrinsic properties. The second criterion says that happiness, when offered as an explanation for action, puts an end to all chains of reasoning. This is also supported by ordinary usage, for if someone explains why she does something by saying, "Because it will make me happy," no further reasons are necessary.

However, this argument only establishes that happiness is the chief human good; it does not provide much content to the notion of happiness. Aristotle acknowledges this: "Presumably, however, to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude, and a clearer account of what it is still desired. This might perhaps be given, if we could first ascertain the function of man. . . for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function."[12]

Happiness must involve living and doing well. Since human beings are essentially rational, the "human good turns out to be activity of soul exhibiting excellence, and if there are more than one excellence, in accordance with the best and most complete."[13] Therefore, living well involves engaging in virtuous action undertaken for its own sake. The happy person is someone who has fully developed and regularly exercises the various excellences of the soul, both intellectual and moral.

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[12] Ross, 1097b22-30.
[13] Ibid., 1098a15-17.

Excellence or virtue lies at the core of Aristotle's conception of happiness. Sarah Broadie describes Aristotle's theory of character excellences as "designed to emphasize the multiplicity of the areas of human life, every one of which offers a distinct kind of opportunity for the cultivation and exercise of the excellence proper to it, as well as distinct opportunities for ethical failure."[14] T. H. Irwin says the virtues of character "as a whole display the impartial concern for others that is often ascribed to morality."[15] Therefore, to achieve happiness on Aristotle's view, one must realize the excellences of character that require one to engage in moral behavior. Aristotle is clearly conflating happiness with moral goodness by making virtuous behavior a necessary part of the happy person's life.

Aristotle also conflates happiness with well-being. L. W. Sumner argues that Aristotle's use of 'eudaimonia' represents a person's well-being because it refers to a complete state of being and doing well.[16] I agree with Sumner's interpretation. Aristotle identifies happiness with the chief human good, so being happy would involve having the best possible life available to a human being. Clearly, Aristotle thought such a life would be good for the person living it, and this is precisely our concept of well-being. In giving his account of happiness, Aristotle is sketching what it is for a person to attain well-being.

Since moral virtue is necessary in order to achieve happiness, and achieving happiness means we have lives that are prudentially valuable, Aristotle's view implies that one can only achieve well-being by being virtuous, or morally good.[17] Therefore,

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[14] Broadie, 22.
[15] T. H. Irwin, "Aristotle," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Ed. E. Craig (London: Routledge, 2003).
[16] L. W. Sumner, "The Subjectivity of Welfare," Ethics 105 (1995): 781.
[17] L. W. Sumner, "Is Virtue Its Own Reward?" Social Philosophy and Policy 15 (1998): 20-21.

Aristotle conflates happiness with both well-being and morality. Just as moral goodness is, by definition, part of a happy life, so is well-being.

Aristotle identifies the chief human good, happiness, with the virtuous activity of reason in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, in Book VI, he tells us that theoretical reasoning is superior to the practical reasoning that guides the moral virtues, and in Book X, Aristotle denies that morally virtuous action is the ultimate aim of the happiest life. Instead, the best life is devoted to theoretical contemplation. Given the conclusion of Book X, which identifies happiness with the life of contemplation, one may be tempted to question the significance of the moral virtues in the happy person‘s life. If the moral virtues are actually irrelevant to the contemplative life, and this is the road to happiness, then one may object to my criticism that Aristotle conflates happiness with morality. For the contemplative life will be truly happy independent of whether this person is morally virtuous.

Let me first reply that I do not think this interpretation is justified. It seems implausible that Aristotle would devote so much discussion time in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to moral virtue if it were completely irrelevant to the good life. However, even if one were tempted to argue along these lines, my point about Aristotle’s conflation of happiness with well-being should still stand. For Aristotle identifies the life of contemplation with the highest possible human good. Clearly, this life would increase her well-being, for it is the best possible life we can strive for as human beings. Even if the virtues were not a necessary component of the happy person’s life, Sumner’s point about Aristotle’s theory of happiness being a theory of well-being would still apply.

However, the question as to the role of morality in the happy life remains open. There are two competing interpretations of Aristotle's view of happiness within the literature. One interpretation views happiness as an inclusive good, while the other identifies it solely with contemplation. Although theorists are divided on this issue, both interpretations maintain the necessity of the moral virtues in the happy person's life. I will briefly review both interpretations in order to demonstrate why the objection to my claim that Aristotle conflates happiness with morality is mistaken.

According to the inclusivist reading, happiness has several components, of which, contemplation is just one. Although the contemplative life is best, contemplation alone is not constitutive of "the human good" (happiness). This is because humans are not purely intellectual beings. Therefore, our chief good must reflect our whole nature, and not just the intellectual part. The moral virtues are among the components of happiness, and as such, are to be valued for their own sakes.[18]

Gabriel Richardson Lear argues for the alternative interpretation, which identifies happiness with contemplation. According to this view, contemplation is the highest non-instrumental good attainable by human beings. It is the sole source of value, and everything else, including moral virtue, is to be valued for its sake. However, Richardson Lear explains that the morally virtuous actions of the happy person will also be worth choosing for their own sakes "for insofar as they succeed in approximating theoretical truthfulness, they inherit excellent contemplation's intrinsic value."[19]

She explains Aristotle's emphasis on moral virtue in Books II-V of the *Nicomachean Ethics* through an analysis of "kalon" or the fineness of action. She argues

[18] Irwin, section 21.
[19] Gabriel Richardson Lear, *Happy Lives and the Highest Good* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 123.

that, according to Aristotle, "actions are fine when their determination by the human good makes the agent's commitment to his good visible."[20] Since Aristotle thinks the highest good for humans is the perfect use of reason, morally virtuous acts must be fine because they express the agent's devotion to this use of reason. Although Aristotle does not explicitly discuss contemplation as the highest good in his description of the moral virtues, Richardson Lear argues that it is implicit in his account because "in grasping the practical truth on particular occasions, the morally virtuous person approximates and thereby acts for the sake of contemplation."[21]

However, Richardson Lear does not think it necessary for the morally virtuous person to recognize consciously the reason why her virtuous acts are valuable. The agent may think she is acting virtuously for its own intrinsic properties, and fail to realize that virtuous action reflects the value of contemplation. All that matters, according to Richardson Lear, is that from a broader perspective, virtuous actions point to the value of some good beyond themselves, and this good is what makes them fine and worth choosing for their own sakes. Therefore, morally virtuous activity is chosen for the sake of contemplation, regardless of whether this is recognized by the agent.[22] According to Richardson Lear, "The glorious thing about morally virtuous actions, in Aristotle's theory, is that they tend to maximize eudaimonia [happiness], or contemplation, while themselves both approximating it and celebrating it".[23]

Therefore, on either interpretation of Aristotle's theory of happiness, the moral virtues play an integral role. Aristotle's theory of happiness is a perfect example of a

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[20] Ibid., 125.
[21] Ibid., 125.
[22] Ibid., 146.
[23] Ibid., 205.

conflation of three distinct evaluative dimensions - happiness, well-being and moral goodness. According to Aristotle's theory, the happy life will automatically be prudentially valuable and morally good, and a life that lacked either of these components could not possibly be happy.

Although Aristotle's theory of happiness represents an ideal, I believe it sets the standard for happiness too high. On this view, nothing less than perfection as a human being is required for one to be truly happy. If we adopted this standard in our ordinary attributions of happiness, people would rarely qualify as happy. Given the difficulty in gauging the exact state of development of someone's moral character, we would have no way of clearly applying this notion, and we could never confidently call anyone happy. I question the value of having such a word in a language. The word 'happy' would be of little use to us if it involved such a high standard, for it would rarely be applicable.

I believe Aristotle's theory also results in a misrepresentation of ordinary people's motivations and behavior. Modern society is replete with examples of happy immoralists, people who knowingly break the moral law, and who are unaffected by it. As Bernard Williams notes "There is also the figure, rarer perhaps than Callicles supposed, but real, who is horrible enough and not miserable at all but, by any ethological standard of the bright eye and the gleaming coat, dangerously flourishing."[24] We frequently make sense of people's behavior by referring to their belief that such behavior will increase their happiness, even when that behavior is immoral or self-destructive. If we cannot explain their motivation in terms of happiness, how can we make sense of why they act immorally?

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[24] Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 46.

Aristotle clearly conflates happiness, well-being and morality in his theory of happiness. I believe this fundamentally misconstrues ordinary people's behavior and motivations, resulting in a theory that is severed from reality. This conflation also changes the meaning of the word 'happy', further separating the moral philosopher from the ordinary person. Recognizing the independence of happiness, well-being and morality arms us with much greater explanatory power and enables us to discuss a wider range of actual cases. One aim of this project is to show that moral philosophy is better served by abandoning this traditional view.

In the next two chapters, I shall discuss contemporary theories of happiness. Aristotle's views on happiness still exert considerable influence today, as is shown by the tendency of many contemporary theorists to conflate happiness with the good life. I shall conclude with my own theory of happiness, which I will use to address various misunderstandings about happiness.

CHAPTER ONE

What Is Happiness?

Theories of happiness cluster around two main theses. One equates happiness with pleasure, while the other views happiness as a kind of satisfaction. Of those who hold the satisfaction view, some equate happiness with the actual satisfaction of desires, while others identify happiness with the feeling that usually accompanies the satisfaction of desires. I shall raise objections to each account and then present my own view of happiness.

1. Happiness as Pleasure

Some theorists believe that happiness can be equated with pleasure or with a strongly positive balance of pleasure over displeasure. Some[25] simply use the two words 'happiness' and 'pleasure' interchangeably, while others[26] offer more extensive arguments as to why happiness and pleasure ought to be equated. They all agree that

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[25] See Richard Brandt, "Fairness to Happiness," *Social Theory and Practice* 15 (1989): 33-58; Richard Brandt, "Happiness," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 413-414; James Griffin, "Is Unhappiness Morally More Important Than Happiness?" *The Philosophical Quarterly* 29 (1979): 47-55; James Griffin, *Well-Being* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Jamie Mayerfield, "The Moral Asymmetry of Happiness and Suffering," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 34 (1996): 317-339; Elijah Milligram, "What's the Use of Utility?" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29 (2000): 113-136; David L. Norton, *Personal Destinies (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); and Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *Analysis of Happiness, (*Melbourne International Philosophy Series, vol. 3, Warszawa: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1976).

[26] See Richard Campbell, "The Pursuit of Happiness," *The Personalist* (1973): 325-337; Thomas Carson, "Happiness and Contentment: A Reply to Benditt," *The Personalist* 59(1978): 101-107; Thomas Carson "Happiness and the Good Life," *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 9 (1978): 73-88; Thomas Carson "Happiness and the Good Life: A Rejoinder to Mele," *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 10 (1979): 189-192; Thomas Carson, "Happiness, Contentment and the Good Life" *Pacific Philosophy Quarterly* 62 (1981): 378-392; Wayne Davis, "A Theory of Happiness," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 18 (1981): 111-120; Wayne Davis, "Pleasure and Happiness." *Philosophical Studies* 39 (1981): 305-317; and John Wilson, "Happiness," *Analysis* 29 (1968): 13-21.

'happiness' refers to a mental or psychological state of the individual, an account they believe is supported by common usage.

David Norton's reductive definition of happiness is "pleasure in the long run" or simply extended pleasure.[27] He thinks that saying someone is happy is to say an individual has experienced a favorable balance of pleasures over some period of time. He defines pleasure as the feeling that attends the gratification of desire. Therefore, happiness can be explained in terms of the extended gratification of long-term desires. He does not think that pleasures are objective or intrinsically good. Taken abstractly, they are valueless, and only acquire their value as desires when they are consonant (or dissonant) with an individual's nature.

Common usage supports the claim that being happy involves feeling good overall. Brandt, however, notes that you can be happy without being joyous or in ecstasy. He says a feeling of modest contentment will do, so long as it is not marred by defeaters like grief, despair and depression. To say someone was happy during a certain period of time is to say that the time period was composed predominantly of pleasant moments or enjoyments.[28]

Richard Campbell agrees with Brandt's characterization, arguing that a person who enjoys few or none of the activities that she is engaged in cannot be leading a happy life, while the person who enjoys almost all her activities cannot fail to achieve at least a minimum degree of happiness. He thinks at least some enjoyment of current activities is a necessary condition of happiness, while thorough enjoyment of almost all of one's activities is by itself sufficient.

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[27] Norton, 218.
[28] Brandt, "Fairness to Happiness," 41.

Wayne Davis draws the distinction between occurrent and dispositional forms of happiness.[29] One is occurrently happy when one is feeling or experiencing happiness. Occurrent happiness can be identified with pleasure. Dispositional happiness is being predominately happy in the occurrent sense; one has a happy life. Davis argues that happiness and pleasure are extensionally equivalent, even though the two terms are not synonymous. He believes two separate vocabularies are used to denote the same psychological state, one centering on happiness and the other on pleasure.

Carson's hedonistic account of happiness is committed to the thesis that "all pleasures contribute to one's personal happiness whether or not they are good; similarly, all pains and unpleasant experiences detract from one's happiness irrespective of their value."[30] He refers to his account as hedonistic, because it equates happiness with pleasure. Adopting his terminology, all of the accounts I have discussed so far can be classified as hedonistic. Therefore, all are committed to the thesis that all pleasures contribute to happiness, and all pains and unpleasant experiences detract from it.

Although I will follow Carson and others[31] in classifying this group as hedonistic, I believe this terminology is somewhat misleading. Hedonism is the view that pleasure is the good. Therefore, calling a theory of happiness hedonistic implies that happiness ought to be elevated to the status of "the good." However, one may wish to define happiness as pleasure without making this additional metaphysical (or ethical) assumption. It is not clear how many of the theorists we are calling hedonists would endorse this stronger claim about the status of happiness as a human value.

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[29] Davis, "Pleasure and Happiness," 305-317.
[30] Carson, "Happiness and the Good Life," 78.
[31] See also Daniel Haybron, "Happiness and Pleasure," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62: 501-528; and L. W. Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Furthermore, I believe that hedonists about happiness should not endorse the claim that "happiness is the good," given their commitment to capturing common usage of the word. The ordinary use of 'happy' refers to a person's mental state. It does not carry with it any implications about the value of that state, independent of its value to that individual. It certainly doesn't require all happy people to be leading morally exemplary lives.

For example, we may chastise the child who does something wrong by saying to her "You shouldn't be so happy; what you did was very bad." Although she is happy, we certainly don't believe it is good that she is happy. We call many people happy on the basis of certain behavioral cues, without knowing anything about their background or moral beliefs. I may be made happy by the thought that someone who hurt me will suffer tremendously. If happiness were "the good," these statements would be incoherent.

I shall discuss the precise relationship between happiness and morality in Chapter Four, where I shall argue for the stronger claim that there is no necessary connection between them. All I have tried to show here is that the common usage does not support the view that the happy life must be the good life. The hedonist about happiness can coherently maintain the identity between happiness and pleasure without denying the importance of other values, such as moral or aesthetic. I shall only assume the hedonist is committed to Carson's thesis, and will not assume anything more about the status of happiness or pleasure as human values.

Hedonism about happiness should be distinguished from two better-known doctrines, ethical hedonism and psychological hedonism. Brandt defines ethical hedonism as a view about what one ought to pursue, which says that only pleasures are

intrinsically desirable, i.e., only pleasures, when taken in themselves (abstracted away from the surrounding context), are good.[32]

Ethical hedonism is not a moral theory about which acts are morally right; it says nothing about our obligations to promote what is good. Ethical hedonism only tells us which states of affairs are intrinsically good, namely, those that produce pleasure. Traditional utilitarianism is a moral theory that endorses ethical hedonism. It combines the generic principle of utilitarianism (an act is morally right if it will maximize the goodness in the world), with the ethical hedonist thesis (only pleasure is intrinsically good), thereby generating the conclusion that one ought to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.[33]

The hedonist about happiness will be committed to ethical hedonism only if she has specific beliefs about the nature of happiness, namely, that only happiness is intrinsically good. This will commit her to ethical hedonism, because in equating happiness with pleasure, she would thereby equate happiness with what is intrinsically good.

However, one can identify happiness with pleasure without making any additional metaphysical assumptions about the nature of happiness and its intrinsic goodness. The hedonist about happiness can certainly maintain the identity between happiness and pleasure, while still recognizing other values.

I have already argued that the hedonist about happiness is better off not making claims about the metaphysical status of happiness, given her desire to capture common usage. She should reject ethical hedonism for similar reasons. As Brandt notes, "many people have at least thought either that some things other than pleasure are intrinsically

[32] Richard Brandt, "Hedonism," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 432.
[33] Ibid., 432.

good or that some kinds of pleasure are intrinsically bad. In the face of this, it is not easily claimed that 'intrinsically good' simply *means* pleasant."[34] The hedonist about happiness can agree with Brandt's point, for she is not committed to any specific views about the intrinsic goodness of happiness or pleasure. Therefore, one can be a hedonist about happiness without embracing ethical hedonism.

Psychological hedonism is an account of human motivation. Although there are many different varieties of psychological hedonism, they share the view that "actions or desires are determined by pleasures or displeasures, whether prospective, actual or past."[35] Psychological hedonists believe that as agents, we always act in a way that will maximize our pleasure overall.

If the hedonist about happiness accepted psychological hedonism as a theory of motivation, she would be committed to the view that all actions are aimed at maximizing happiness. Clearly, the hedonist who identifies happiness with pleasure is not automatically committed to viewing happiness as the driving force behind all our actions. The hedonist about happiness can certainly recognize motives, other than happiness, as causally efficacious.

I believe the hedonist about happiness should not endorse psychological hedonism, for as a theory of motivation, it seems patently false. People sometimes act to promote the good of others at the expense of their own happiness. The firefighter who enters the burning building may act out of a sense of duty or moral obligation. The woman who quits her job to move back home and take care of her ailing parents does not necessarily act to promote her own happiness. Such counterexamples clearly indicate

[34] Ibid., 434.
[35] Ibid., 433.

that people can be motivated by various considerations, which are independent of their happiness.

Yet the psychological hedonist must reject these explanations, and reinterpret such cases as motivated by a desire to maximize the agent's own happiness. This is implausible, given that in such cases, the agent's happiness is precisely what is being sacrificed. However, even if psychological hedonism were a tenable view of human motivation, it is still a distinct doctrine from hedonism about happiness.

The meaning of 'pleasure' must be clarified before we can evaluate the hedonist's claim about happiness. Reflecting on the ordinary use of the term, we say that something is pleasant when it is enjoyable, or when one has enjoyed herself during that experience. Brandt notes that in recent years, a considerable body of philosophical literature has been devoted to the analysis of 'pleasant'. He suggests the following characterization that I believe captures what most people mean when they use the word. We say someone is enjoying herself (she has a pleasant state of mind) when, at the time of her experience, she likes the activity for itself, meaning she does not wish to change it, and would avoid changing, should some change be impending.[36]

Brandt's characterization of pleasure has been referred to as the dominant view within the literature, and it is shared by a number of prominent philosophers.[37] Fred Feldman claims this dominant view actually derives from Henry Sidgwick's views on pleasure, in *The Methods of Ethics.*[38] Sidgwick argues that pleasures do not share a

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[36] Ibid., 432-433.
[37] Fred Feldman, "On the Intrinsic Value of Pleasures." *Ethics* 107: 448-449. See also William Alston, "Plesaure," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 432; and William Frankena, "Value and Valuation," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 229-232.
[38] See Feldman, 448-449.

common phenomenological element, such that they all feel alike. Rather, feelings of pleasure are united because of the favorable attitude the subject takes towards them. The subject's attitude is that she desires that the experience continue, and she finds it enjoyable on the basis of its felt quality. Following Brandt, Alston and Frankena, I shall adopt this characterization of pleasure.

The hedonist about happiness is committed to the thesis that "All pleasures contribute to one's personal happiness, and all pains and unpleasant experiences detract from one's happiness".[39] I believe this thesis is false, and, therefore, the hedonistic conception of happiness should be rejected.

The two main lines of attack will involve examples in which people are experiencing pleasure without increased levels of happiness (or even with an increase in *un*happiness), and examples of people increasing their happiness without experiencing an increase in pleasure (or even with an increase of pain or displeasure). If these counterexamples are plausible, then the mental state of happiness must be something independent of the experience of pleasure.

The first example contradicts the hedonist's thesis by showing that all pleasures do not contribute to happiness. Ordinarily, eating chocolate cake is a very enjoyable experience for me. The act of eating the cake is a pleasure, because it is an experience towards which I have the requisite favorable attitude: I like the experience, and I always wish to prolong it, whenever I allow myself to indulge.

However, I have just started a new diet, and I am trying hard to improve my eating habits. My goal is to lose a certain amount of weight and adopt a healthier lifestyle. Unfortunately, this lifestyle does not include eating chocolate cake. If I indulge

[39] Carson, "Happiness and the Good Life," 78.

in the pleasant experience of eating the cake, I shall become unhappy and regret not having more willpower. The experience of eating the cake will not be different. The taste will be just as appealing and enjoyable. Yet the pleasure will not lead to happiness, but to unhappiness instead.

If I resist the temptation, and refuse to eat the cake, I will be happy. Successfully working towards my weight loss goal will make me happy. This indicates that my happiness is completely independent of any experience of pleasure. In this case, it is actually the denial of pleasure that contributes to my happiness.

Furthermore, the act of restraint is, in itself, an *un*pleasant experience. I wish I could eat the cake, especially when I see everyone else enjoying it. The hedonistic thesis says this unpleasant experience should decrease my happiness, yet it does not. It contributes to my happiness instead.

Therefore, happy mental states cannot be identical with (or reduced to) pleasant states. Many pleasurable experiences do not contribute to happiness, and some unpleasant ones do. The hedonistic account of happiness is far too simplistic. Happiness is more complex than just an occurrent mental state one enjoys, or wishes to prolong. Happiness involves a more global attitude that one has towards her life. Happiness takes into consideration how one's immediate experiences fit into one's life as a whole. Although this attitude may be influenced by pleasant or unpleasant experiences, it should not be identified with such immediate experiences.

Another example will illustrate this point. A person participates in a golf tournament in which she is greatly outmatched by the other competitors, and she ends up finishing in last place. The experience of losing is itself rather unpleasant, yet it does not

make her unhappy; it doesn't even decrease her happiness significantly. She feels quite satisfied with her performance and is glad she tried to compete. She had no expectation of winning. Although the experience of losing was unpleasant, she remains happy just the same.

Happiness and pleasure are intuitively different. With sensory pleasures, we aim at the experience itself. We eat the ice cream because of the sensations we feel. Happiness is a deeper emotion that goes beyond the immediate sensory experience. We are made happy by events that are of some significance to us, whereas events that have little or no significance can still be pleasant. For example, my happiness when you give me roses differs from the pleasure I get from smelling them. The pleasure is an immediate sensory experience, whereas the feeling of happiness comes as a result of my perception that you care for me.

L. W. Sumner makes a point about the nature of pain that helps to explain the temptation to adopt a hedonistic conception of happiness. As he notes, "pain is typically, though not necessarily, accompanied by feelings of fear, anxiety, anger, indignity, depression or despair."[40] The ordinary use of 'happy' is incompatible with these negative feelings. Alternatively, pleasures are associated with positive feelings. If pains cause feelings that annihilate happiness, one may conclude that pleasures must produce happiness, or that happiness is pleasure and the absence of pain.

The main problem with this assumption is that common usage of 'happy' permits attributions of happiness in the absence of pleasure and in the presence of pain. So the two terms cannot be identical. Consider the woman who has recently learned that she is

[40] Sumner, 102.

pregnant. After trying to conceive for nearly a year, she had almost given up hope of having a child. Now she is ecstatic over the news she will be a mother.

She happens to suffer from severe morning sickness. This experience of nausea and the constant need to vomit plagues her for months. She is unable to eat and feels uncomfortable most of the time. To say she is not enjoying her pregnancy is an understatement. It is the most unpleasant experience, which she regards with a very unfavorable attitude. Yet she has never been happier in her life. More importantly, calling her happy is appropriate, and entirely in accord with common usage.

In other cases people are willing to make considerable sacrifices for their loved ones, including undergoing major surgery in order to donate vital organs. Often the donor faces considerable recovery time, which may be quite painful. Must we assume, on that basis, that the donor is unhappy, or that she would have been much happier had she not undergone the surgery? Clearly, the donor was warned about the risks and benefits beforehand, yet she still agreed to undergo the procedure. One explanation is that the donor is made happy by the thought of being able to save her loved one's life. Nothing is contradictory about describing the organ donor as happy, despite her considerable pain.

Daniel Haybron objects to the hedonistic view of happiness because it makes happiness an "essentially episodic and backward-looking phenomenon."[41] All hedonistic happiness can inform us about are the kinds of experiences the subject has already had. It offers us no picture into the future and no assurance of stability.

The hedonistic view of happiness misrepresents the function of our ordinary concept of happiness, which does tell us something about that person's view of her life

[41] Haybron, 510.

and current mood. Knowing that someone is happy tells us how she is feeling now and provides some insight into her immediate future. For if she knew about some impending doom, she probably wouldn't be happy right now; she'd be worried about the future. Yet pleasure functions in exactly the opposite way. To know someone has recently experienced something enjoyable tells us nothing about her present or future experience but only about her past.

Knowing that a person is happy also enables us to make certain behavioral predictions that we could not make based on knowledge of her experiences of pleasure. If I know you are happy about a promotion you received at work, then I can expect you to be in a good mood when I see you. I certainly don't expect you to come home dour and depressed. Alternatively, if your son is flunking out of school, and I know how much you value education, I can expect you to be unhappy upon hearing the news of his failure.

People are made happy or unhappy by significant events in their lives. In many cases, their happiness is not due to the presence (or absence) of pleasurable experiences. Knowing that you had a good meal last night, or a massage today, does not warrant any assumptions about your current mood or state of mind. As Haybron notes, happiness "tells us not just about subjects' histories, but also about their current condition and propensities for the near future. It is forward-looking."[42] Therefore, the hedonistic view misrepresents our ordinary concept of happiness.

Although we should reject the hedonistic account of happiness, the hedonist does get several things right. She is talking about the right subject matter. Happiness is a mental state, and often we find that state to be pleasant. I do not wish to deny that pleasures often play a significant role in a person's happiness. But it is false that the state

[42] Ibid., 510

of happiness can be reduced to a state of pleasure. The counterexamples show that identifying happiness with pleasure fails.

2. Happiness as Satisfaction

Among the theorists who identify happiness with satisfaction, some believe happiness is nothing more than the fulfillment of desires.[43] I shall refer to this account as the "simple satisfaction view," because it provides little explanation of the psychological state of happiness itself, independent of its reduction to the satisfaction of the agent's desires. Endorsing this reductive view of happiness would presumably also commit one to the idea that a person's level of happiness is proportional to the number of desires satisfied, or that happiness is to be achieved by seeking to maximally satisfy one's desires.

The identification of happiness with the satisfaction of desire is prevalent within the literature. However, the identification is rarely justified by formal argument and is often simply stated as if it were indisputable.[44] I shall review several versions of the simple satisfaction view, all of which identify happiness with desire satisfaction. I shall then raise objections to show why this account is too simplistic to adequately represent the concept of happiness.

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[43] See David Gauthier, "Progress and Happiness: A Utilitarian Reconsideration." *Ethics* 78 (1967): 77-82; Diane Jeske, "Perfection, Happiness and Duties to Self." American Philosophical Quarterly 33 (1996): 268; Anthony Kenny, "Happiness." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 66 (1965-66): 93-102; Steven Luper, *Invulnurability: On Securing Happiness* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996); Masatoshi Matsushita, "Happiness and the Idea of Happiness," in *The Good Life and Its Pursuit*, ed. Jude Dougherty (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1984), 47; Elijah Milligram, "What's the Use of Utility?" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29 (2000): 113-136; Robert Solomon, "Is There Happiness After Death?" *Philosophy* 51 (1976): 189-193; and Richard Warner, *Freedom, Enjoyment and Happiness: An Essay on Moral Psychology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

[44] See Gauthier, Jeske, Matsushita, Milligram, and Solomon. For more complex versions of the simple satisfaction view, see Kenny, Luper, and Warner.

Masatoshi Matsushita, in an article comparing Eastern and Western cultural values, states, "We define happiness as the fulfillment of desires. When we are hungry, we desire to eat. If we succeed in eating, we are happy. When we want to love, we are happy if we find the right mates, etc. So happiness is the fulfillment of desires."[45]

Diane Jeske, in an article on the Kantian theme of duties to self, says "an agent is happy when she promotes what has subjective value for her."[46] Jeske identifies happiness with "subjective value or (informed) desire-satisfaction," which means that a person is happy when she is realizing all or many of her subjective ends.[47] In an article on utilitarianism, David Gauthier also endorses the simple satisfaction view of happiness. He states, "we may think of the happy man as the man who is able to satisfy his wants, or acquisitive desires."[48]

Anthony Kenny and Robert Solomon both agree that 'happiness' refers to a state of mind involving satisfaction and contentment, but they identify that state of mind with having one's desires satisfied. Solomon introduces the distinction between an agent's "being satisfied" and "feeling satisfied". Being satisfied requires the actual realization of the agent's desires, but this does not necessarily imply that the agent will experience any felt satisfaction, because her desires can be fulfilled without her knowledge.

Feeling satisfied, on the other hand, involves having "no noticeable presently-felt unsatisfied desires."[49] This state may be achieved without the actual realization of desires, and only requires the desire be extinguished. Feeling satisfied can occur through the use of drugs or by simply relinquishing the desire. Solomon assimilates happiness to

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[45] Matsushita, 47.
[46] Jeske, 268.
[47] Ibid., 270.
[48] Gauthier, 79.
[49] Solomon, 191.

being, not feeling, satisfied. "Happiness is not merely the satisfaction of one desire but the satisfaction of one's desires, not all or even most, but perhaps the most important of one's desires."[50] Kenny adds that the agent must believe that such satisfaction is likely to endure.

Steven Luper believes happiness has two components for ordinary people. The first is the satisfaction of desires, and the second is the "*appreciation* of that satisfaction."[51] Luper's account is more complex, for he requires not only the satisfaction of desire but also the conscious recognition of that satisfaction by the agent. Warner's theory closely resembles Luper's account; however, he adds one more condition of happiness, namely, that the agent view whatever she desires as being worthy of desire.

All theorists who accept the simple satisfaction view of happiness are committed to the following thesis: A person's happiness consists in (or is identical with) the satisfaction of at least some of her (more important) desires. That is, a person's happiness level will be determined by the quantity of desires she is able to satisfy, with more satisfied desires leading to an increase in happiness, and less to a decrease. I believe this thesis is false, and I shall provide counterexamples that show how a person's happiness can be completely unaffected by the number of desires she has satisfied (or the amount left unsatisfied), leading to a rejection the simple satisfaction view as a theory of happiness.

The popularity of the simple satisfaction view is surprising, given the number of obvious counterexamples that come to mind. No contradiction is involved in imagining someone who has had all of her desires satisfied, yet fails to be happy. Nor is anything

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[50] Ibid., 192.
[51] Luper, 37-38.

amiss with saying, "I got what I wanted, but I am still not happy." Since such examples are surely possible, we already have reason to doubt the identification of the fulfillment of desire and happiness.

In an article on happiness and pleasure, Jean Austin recognized this situation, noting "I may want something but not like it when I have got it." She then concludes that "to like what one has got, rather than to get what one wants, is a necessary, though not perhaps a sufficient condition of happiness."[52]

I shall begin with a counterexample that shows how someone may have his desire "actually fulfilled" yet fail to be happy. Consider the case of Joe, a writer who has sent his manuscript to ten publishers. His most important desire is to have his book accepted; however, he is becoming more doubtful with each new rejection he receives.

Unbeknownst to Joe, the tenth publisher has decided to accept his book proposal. Unfortunately, the letter informing him of the good news has gotten lost in the mail, so although his desire has been fulfilled, this achievement has had no affect on his state of happiness. Joe still feels anxiety combined with mild depression over all the rejections. The simple desire satisfaction view fails, because it equates happiness with the actual fulfillment of desire. This example shows that it is the agent's perception of that fulfillment that counts towards happiness, not the act of fulfillment itself. Joe's desire has been realized, yet he fails to be happy.

The simple satisfaction theorist could offer the following reply: This objection does not affect the more sophisticated theories of Luper and Warner; in addition to the actual satisfaction of desire, they also require the agent's conscious recognition and appreciation of that satisfaction. Since Joe does not know that his desire has been

[52] Jean Austin, "Pleasure and Happiness." *Philosophy* 43 (1968): 56.

satisfied, he cannot appreciate that satisfaction, and so he fails to meet one of their requirements of happiness. Therefore, Luper and Warner's accounts issue the correct judgment on Joe's case, deeming him unhappy.

My reply is to present another case, which disproves all simple satisfaction theories, including Luper and Warner. Sue is an aspiring actress who has always desired fame. After years of struggling, she gets a leading role on a soap opera and becomes an overnight sensation. Although she now has all that she wanted, including steady work, recognition, money and fame, she finds that she is not happy. As time passes, she grows increasingly more dissatisfied with her life. If happiness were identical with the satisfaction of desire, Sue would be extremely happy, for she presently has everything that she has ever wanted. Her unhappiness indicates that happiness is more than the fulfillment of what one desires.

Furthermore, Sue's unhappiness is neither mysterious nor inexplicable. She misjudged what sort of lifestyle would suit her. She thought she wanted money and fame, but upon attaining them, she realized she was much happier with her life of obscurity. She had more freedom then and more time to enjoy life, without being harassed by fans. She could not have anticipated these feelings about her new life. Only upon achieving fame did she realize how unimportant it was to her. This example highlights the truth of the old adage "Be careful what you wish for, it may actually come true."

All simple satisfaction views would imply that Sue is happy, despite her own testimony that she is not. The simple satisfaction theorist can provide no explanation for

Sue's unhappiness, given that she meets all of the criteria for happiness; her desires have been satisfied and she consciously recognizes that satisfaction.

Given that people are notoriously bad judges of what will make them happy,[53] a person may have desires that fail to correspond with what she will ultimately find pleasing or satisfying. In cases where the subject's desires go awry in this way, simply fulfilling them will not cause her to be happy, and may even contribute to her unhappiness. The simple satisfaction view will mishandle all cases like these.

Further counterexamples arise when the subject wants something for reasons independent of its contribution to her happiness. Brandt and Kim recognize the diversity in people's motivations, noting that when someone wants something, it does not imply that that thing is wanted *for itself*. "Among the things a person can want is that he himself do a certain thing, but we should notice that a person can be motivated, e.g., by considerations of duty, to do something we should not say he wanted to do."[54]

Such cases pose a problem for the simple satisfaction theory, because desire satisfaction may not only fail to correlate with happiness, but also lead to an increase in *un*happiness. Consider John, who decides to join the army because his country is at war. He does not want to join because he thinks it will make him happy; rather, he believes it is his obligation to volunteer to protect his country. He may recognize that he will probably dislike being in the army, given his weak constitution and low tolerance for pain

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[53] For information on psychological studies that demonstrate how people's thoughts on what will make them happy (e.g., wealth) often don't correspond to what actually does make them happy, and how actual experiences rarely live up to expectations, see Robert Frank, *Luxury Fever* (New York: Free Press, 1999); and Jonathan Freedman, *Happy People: What Happiness Is, Who Has It, and Why* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978). For psychological research on the systematic prediction errors people make with respect to their own tastes feelings, see George Loewenstein and David Schkade, "Wouldn't It Be Nice? Predicting Future Feelings," in *Well Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, ed. Daniel Kahneman, Ed Diener and Norbert Schwarz (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 85-102.

[54] Richard Brandt and Jaegwon Kim, "Wants as Explanations of Actions." *The Journal of Philosophy* 60 (1963): 426.

and discomfort. However, he still desires to join, even knowing that he may be sacrificing his future happiness as a result.

If John joins, thereby satisfying his desire, the simple satisfaction theorist must say that he will be happy, or at least experience some increase in happiness. John obviously meets all of the criteria stipulated by the simple satisfaction view; he appreciates that his worthwhile desire has been satisfied. Yet he isn't happy, and his unhappiness was caused by the satisfaction of his desire.

Another problematic case for the simple satisfaction view occurs when the subject has an evil or lascivious desire, which she does not want to have satisfied. Just as there were pleasures one was made happier by avoiding, there are desires that would be detrimental to the subject, should they be realized. Brandt and Kim recognize this possibility, noting, "A person may know that he wants *p*, but think it a bad thing that he does and refrain from doing what he thinks will lead to *p*."[55]

For example, a priest may have a strong desire for one of his parishioners, but he may also recognize that this desire is wrong. Acting to satisfy this desire could cost him his job and his reputation, causing him to lose everything of value in his life. The simple satisfaction theory generates the wrong response to this case because it equates happiness with the satisfaction of desire; clearly, the priest's happiness is preserved by *not* satisfying his desire.

The defender of the simple satisfaction view may be tempted to modify his account in light of these objections. He might replace "simple desire satisfaction" with "*informed* desire satisfaction," whereby happiness is equated with the realization of only those desires the subject would want herself to retain, were she fully informed.

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[55] Ibid., 432.

The obvious problem with this modification is how to spell out "informed desire," such that it doesn't make it a tautology that informed desires lead to happiness. For example, if one attempts to describe the "informed desires" as those desires, the satisfaction of which will make the agent happy, the definition will be ad hoc, telling us nothing informative about either "informed desire" or happiness. If informed desires are defined in terms of happiness, one cannot then use "informed desires" to explain happiness. The resulting definition would be circular.

One could attempt to define the "informed desires" in terms of those desires, the satisfaction of which will be good for, or beneficial to the subject. Such a move would be informative, and not circular. However, this new definition is vulnerable to counterexamples; something may be good for a subject, yet fail to make her happy.

One obvious example is eating healthy foods that one dislikes. Joan may have a desire to eat broccoli because she realizes that it is healthy. Since the satisfaction of Joan's desire to eat broccoli will be good for her, it counts as an informed desire. However, Joan may not enjoy broccoli, and the act of eating it may actually make her unhappy.

I believe any attempt to define "informed desires" without explicit reference to the subject's happiness will be vulnerable to counterexamples like Joan's, where the satisfaction of the informed desire does not lead to happiness. The only alternative is to define the informed desire in terms of the subject's happiness, but this leads to a vicious circle. Therefore, appealing to "informed desire satisfaction" cannot help the simple satisfaction theorist.

I suspect the temptation to reduce happiness to the fulfillment of desire is due to the similarity of the emotions typically attending both. One often feels satisfied when one gets what one wants and dissatisfied when a desire is frustrated. The problem is that 'happiness' has uses that extend beyond getting what you want, as we have seen. We are often happy in the presence of displeasure, and also in the absence of having our desires satisfied.

I believe it is this feeling of satisfaction or contentment, and not the actual realization of the desire, that correlates with happiness. The theories we shall consider next all correctly identify happiness with satisfaction, but mistakenly introduce various normative constraints on the concept of happiness.

3. Happiness as Satisfaction: The Normative View

The theorists I shall discuss in this section[56] improve upon the theories I have already rejected by correctly identifying happiness with a psychological state of the individual, and not with some state of affairs in the world. This view of happiness is supported by common usage. For example, it would be difficult to understand someone who said "I am completely dissatisfied with my life, yet I am no less happy for it," or "I am satisfied with everything that is important to me, yet I am so unhappy." In either

[56] Jean Austin, "Pleasure and Happiness." *Philosophy* 43 (1968): 51-62; Irwin Goldstein, "Happiness: The Role of Non-Hedonic Criteria in Its Evaluation." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 13 (1973): 523-534; R. M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); Jonathan Jacobs, "The Place of Virtue in Happiness." *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 19 (1985): 171-182; Richard Kraut, "Two Conceptions of Happiness." *The Philosophical Review* 88 (1979): 167-197; Robert Nozick, *The Examined Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989); Robert Simpson, "Happiness." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1975): 169-176; J. J. C. Smart, "An Outline of a System of Utilitarian Ethics," in *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, ed. J. J. C. Smart and Bernard Williams (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 3-74; Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *Analysis of Happiness*, Melbourne International Philosophy Series, vol. 3 (Warszawa: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1976); and Richard Warner, *Freedom, Enjoyment and Happiness: An Essay on Moral Psychology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

case, we would suspect the person did not possess the concept "happiness," or had something pathologically wrong, because such statements are contradictory.

John Kekes views happiness as lasting satisfaction with one's life as a whole; he regards this as a central and noncontroversial aspect of happiness. He offers the following description of the happy person:

> Those who enjoy this satisfaction want their lives to continue by and large the same way; if asked, they would say that things are going well for them; their most important wants are being satisfied; they are doing and having much of what they want; they frequently experience joy, contentment, and pleasure; they are not divided about their lives; they are not often beset by fundamental inner conflicts; they are not given to lasting depression, anxiety, or frustration; they have no serious regrets about important decisions they have taken; nor are they ruled by such negative feelings as resentment, rage, envy, guilt, shame or jealousy.[57]

Several theorists in this section refer to "the satisfaction of desires" in their characterization of happiness.[58] Although I objected to the identification of happiness with desire satisfaction in the previous section, the theorists here are not vulnerable to those objections because their accounts aren't reductive. They don't treat the mere satisfaction of desires as sufficient for happiness, and they regard the agent's state of satisfaction as a necessary condition of happiness.

Although being in a state of satisfaction or contentment is necessary for happiness, the normative theorist would deny that it is sufficient. These theorists believe

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[57] John Kekes, "Happiness," in *The Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. L. C. Becker and C. B. Becker (New York: Garland, 1992), 644-650.

[58] See, for example, Richard Kraut, who describes someone as living happily when "he is very glad to be alive; he judges that on balance his deepest desires are being satisfied and that the circumstances of his life are turning out well," 170.

one must also meet certain normative requirements, which take into consideration factors like the causal origin of the subject's state of satisfaction. If the subject fails to achieve happiness in a way these theorists deem appropriate, then although she may believe that she is happy, she will not be. As Jean Austin explains, "To state that a man is happy is to assess his total condition, of which of course his own reactions to his condition are a part."[59] The normative theorist believes this assessment "must be in accordance with the standards accepted by the society in which he lives and precludes outrages to these."[60]

This view of happiness contrasts sharply with the view I shall argue for in the following section. I believe calling someone happy implies only that she is in a certain mental state; it says nothing about how or why she is in that state. I believe there is no necessary connection between a person's happiness and actual events occurring in the world. A person could be radically deceived and happy, so long as she is in the requisite state of satisfaction.

The normative theorist would object to my view because it provides no way to distinguish the happy person who is deluded, drugged, or in a virtual reality machine, from the person who has a justified reason for being happy. By severing the external connection between one's state of happiness and events occurring in the world, I am committed to viewing all of these people as equally happy.

One way to explain the difference between my view and that of the normative theorist is that I believe statements about happiness are akin to reports that describe a person's mental state. The normative theorist believes when someone says that she is happy, she is issuing an appraisal or making an evaluative judgment. Judgments involve

[59] Austin, 53.
[60] Ibid., 53.

meeting certain standards that don't apply to reports.

For example, if Joe reports that he is thirsty, you could not correct him by saying "No you're not, you've already had enough to drink." You cannot correct or falsify Joe's first-hand report, so long as he knows what 'thirsty' means, and he speaks truthfully. I believe happiness functions similarly, such that issuing an honest report that you are happy is sufficient for your being happy, so long as you possess the concept. Your happiness isn't something about which you can be mistaken.

When a judgment is issued, like "It's cold in here" or "That's a beautiful vase," certain standards are employed. One could challenge a judgment on the grounds that the requisite standard is not being met, thereby falsifying the judgment. The normative theorist believes one must meet certain standards in order to be happy. Although they differ on the nature and stringency of those standards, all normative theorists agree that a subject's report of happiness is not sufficient for her to be happy. I have referred to their view as "normative" because they believe happiness is governed by norms that can be invoked in order to criticize or correct a person's sincere report of happiness. One may believe that she is happy and be mistaken.

I shall divide the theories in this section into two groups, based on the stringency of the standards they invoke in judging happiness. I shall consider the group with the most restrictive evaluative standards first, attempting to show the incoherence of holding this view of happiness. I shall then argue that even the more moderate evaluative view of happiness is indefensible.

I shall begin with R. M. Hare,[61] whose writing on happiness provides a clear statement of the normative view. According to Hare, when one person calls another

[61] Hare's view is echoed in Austin, Goldstein, Simpson and Smart.

happy, "there is a rather complicated process of appraisal going on" because "the person who is making the judgment is appraising the life of the other person; but not entirely from the speaker's own point of view."[62]

When you say that someone is happy, you appraise her life using her standards and not your own. For example, if I am a chef, and you happen to hate to cook, you should attempt to adopt my view of cooking before you make a judgment about whether or not I am happy as a chef. To conclude that I am unhappy because you hate to cook is clearly ridiculous.

Hare realizes the speaker's interests may differ greatly from the person whose happiness is in question. If happiness judgments were made entirely from the speaker's point of view, Hare would have to accept the ridiculous conclusion from the chef example. Instead, he explains, "Deciding whether to call somebody else happy is an exercise of the imagination."[63] In judging your happiness, I must imagine myself in your shoes, with your tastes and preferences. Although the squire may like to hunt animals for sport, an activity I find distasteful, I can still recognize his happiness without implying that I would be happy living his life.

However, Hare does place a restriction on the type of preference that can be factored in when judging happiness. He only allows attributions of happiness to occur in cases where we, the speaker, approve of the subject's satisfaction. If the subject engages in an activity we find repulsive, but he finds quite satisfying, we should deny his happiness.

To support this contention, Hare introduces the case of the "mental defective," a

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[62] R. M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 126.
[63] Ibid., 126.

person who is only capable of appreciating the most basic pleasures and pains. If we imagine this person gets all that he likes, and avoids all that he dislikes, can we say that the mental defective is happy? Hare's reply is that we should deny his happiness because we can appreciate all that he is missing. "We should think how much we enjoy all kinds of things like playing chess, which he can never know; and so we should be inclined to say 'He's not really happy' or 'He's not happy in the fullest sense of the word.'"[64]

Therefore, according to Hare, a person's satisfaction with her life is not sufficient for happiness. The cause of that satisfaction must also be considered before we can say that she is happy; one must partake in the right sorts of activities. Hare's reasoning is: "Since what we have to do is to make an appraisal, not a statement of fact, we cannot content ourselves with merely recording how *he* appraises his life from *his* point of view; we have ourselves to make an appraisal, not merely to report on somebody else's appraisal."[65]

J. J. C. Smart expresses a similar intuition about happiness when he says, "To call a person 'happy' is to say more than that he is contented for most of the time . . . It is, I think, in part to express a favorable attitude to the idea of such a form of contentment and enjoyment. That is, for A to call B 'happy', A must be contented at the prospect of B being in his present state of mind and at the prospect of A himself, should the opportunity arise, enjoying that sort of state of mind."[66]

According to Smart, happiness is not a purely evaluative notion; it is also partly descriptive. Smart's reasoning is that it is absurd to call someone happy who is in pain, not enjoying himself or extremely dissatisfied with his life. To call someone happy is at

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[64] Ibid., 127.
[65] Ibid., 128.
[66] Smart, 22.

least in part to describe that person's state of mind. Smart says happiness involves enjoyment at various times the way a wet climate involves rain at various times. Therefore, it is a necessary condition of happiness that the subject "be fairly contented and moderately enjoying himself for much of the time."[67] Smart does not believe this condition is sufficient, however, because happiness is also evaluative.

Robert Simpson views doing or getting whatever it is you believe to be worthwhile as a necessary, but not sufficient condition of happiness. In addition to being successful at pursuing one's ends, those ends themselves must be worthwhile. Therefore, if one were to find satisfaction doing some meaningless task, one would not be considered happy because it is not a worthy end.

Simpson explains that "a man may be prepared to claim of himself that he is happy, that he has what he wants in life, and the evidence of his appearance and behavior may be entirely consistent with this . . . but such evidence alone will not entitle us to call him happy, if we can make no favorable objective judgment on the worthwhileness of the activities in which his energy is spent."[68]

I shall argue that statements of happiness cannot plausibly be seen as evaluative judgments that invoke certain criteria, like having "worthwhile" goals or desires. Although I shall direct my criticism at Hare, for he provides the most detailed account, my objections will apply to all normative theorists who share his view of happiness.[69]

The normative theorist views happiness judgments as partly descriptive, and partly evaluative. When evaluating happiness, Hare's examples indicate that there are two types of cases: there are cases where we adopt the values of the subject, and cases

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[67] Ibid., 22-23.
[68] Simpson, 173.
[69] This includes Austin, Goldstein, Simpson, and Smart.

where we find her values objectionable. In the case of the squire, who likes hunting and shooting, Hare says we should adopt his perspective, even though it may be different from our own, and declare him happy. In the case of the mental defective, Hare argues that, given his impoverished life, we should not say that he is happy.

The problem for Hare and the other normative theorists is how to differentiate between these two sorts of cases. If Hare is willing to grant the squire's happiness even though we wouldn't be happy if we had his life, the same should apply to the mental defective. Both have personal preferences that we, the speakers, don't share; however, as Hare readily accepts in the case of the squire, *our* preferences are completely irrelevant to the question of *their* happiness.

I believe drawing a distinction between these two kinds of cases introduces bias into happiness judgments that will result in all sorts of ridiculous conclusions. The same justification used by Hare to deny the happiness of the mental defective could be used to deny the happiness of any one of us. If a person chooses to remain single, or not to have children, the speaker would be justified in saying, "Look at what she's missing!" and, following Hare, deny her happiness. But why should the decision not to have children or not to get married necessarily make *her* unhappy, simply because it's a choice the speaker doesn't endorse?

Furthermore, what can we say about all of the cases that will straddle the line between the squire and the mental defective? How will we know whose values to adopt in cases involving a mental defective who only plays chess or who only eats fine food? What about the person who enjoys watching football or playing golf? Are such activities as worthwhile as hunting and chess, or do they push one into the mental defective's

category? How are we to determine when someone is really happy "in the fullest sense of the word," and when we should say, "He's not really happy"?[70] Hare offers us no guidance on this question.

Once you permit the speaker to revert to her own values in judging other people's happiness, you turn happiness into an idiosyncratic concept, which tells us nothing informative about the subject's own state of mind. Happiness judgments would become descriptions of the speaker's likes and dislikes, and would not reflect the subject or her values. This is a far cry from the concept of happiness with which we began.

Hare's example of the squire demonstrated why happiness judgments should not be made "entirely from the speaker's own point of view."[71] The squire *is* happy because "that is how *he* likes to live."[72] The squire example clearly shows why it is inappropriate to invoke the speaker's values when judging the happiness of someone else. Hare's analysis of the mental defective contradicts his insight with the squire, rendering happiness an arbitrary notion that is useless for practical purposes.

Hare's explanation for how to distinguish between the squire and the mental defective is grounded in the speaker's power of imagination. If I can successfully view the world through your eyes, as in the case of the squire, then I can appreciate how you could be happy doing things that I might not enjoy. The mental defective is supposed to have values and interests that are so impoverished that no one would even want to take on such a perspective. Therefore, we should conclude that he is incapable of being happy.

I believe Hare's reliance on "the powers of imagination" as a justification for distinguishing between these two cases is also problematic. Clearly, people will differ in

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[70] Hare, 127.
[71] Ibid., 126.
[72] Ibid., 126.

their ability to empathize, and this will lead to differences in their happiness judgments. If I cannot imagine how someone can enjoy killing small animals for fun, because I find this form of entertainment revolting, I would certainly not be able to say that the squire is happy. Hare has no problem jumping into the squire's shoes, so he readily grants the squire's happiness. Whose judgment of the squire is correct – mine or Hare's? Furthermore, why should the squire's happiness be determined by something as arbitrary as the speaker's power of imagination?

Hare may reply to this line of objection by explaining that "it is not lack of imagination that makes us unwilling to call him [the mental defective] really happy," but it is our *aversion* to doing so. It is this collective "aversion" that is supposed to justify why we should deny the happiness of some (the mental defectives), but not others.

Clearly, this line of defense does no more to help Hare's account than the reliance on people's fickle imaginations. Who says I will be averse to the "right things" (like the life of the mental defective) and not to the wrong ones (like hunting)? Hare is still left with the possibility of conflicting and idiosyncratic judgments of happiness, for the speaker will be influenced by her own beliefs and values when judging whether or not to be "averse" to those of the subject.

These problems plague all normative accounts of happiness. The "shared sentiment" on which behavior is deemed acceptable and which pitiable is not stable enough to ground happiness judgments. Without universal agreement over what is to count as a good life, or a worthwhile way to spend one's time, the normative theorist is left with no justification for attributing happiness in some cases, and denying it in others. By imposing such restrictive normative constraints on happiness, they are all guilty of

distorting our ordinary concept and rendering it useless.

We must now consider the remaining theorists[73] who hold a normative view of happiness, but who seek to impose upon it less stringent standards. I shall focus on Richard Kraut's view of happiness, which Deal Hudson refers to as "the most widely discussed contemporary philosophical treatment of happiness."[74] I shall use Kraut's theory as representative of the view held by the remaining normative theorists. I shall argue that even these more relaxed normative constraints on happiness are too restrictive, leading to the conclusion that all normative views of happiness should be rejected.

Like the other normative theorists we have considered, Kraut does not believe that happiness is purely descriptive. He believes reports of happiness also present positive evaluations of people's lives. Kraut argues against the view of happiness that he refers to as "extreme subjectivism," which says "happiness is a psychological state and nothing more; it involves, among other things, the belief that one is getting the important things one wants, as well as certain pleasant affects that normally go along with this belief."[75] Extreme subjectivism permits someone to be judged happy, even if her conception of reality is radically mistaken; Kraut finds this objectionable. He does not believe a person's sincere report of being happy is sufficient for her happiness.

Kraut believes when you call someone happy, you are issuing an appraisal, which implies that she meets certain standards. He believes the standards relevant to happiness should be relative to the subject and her goals. Kraut explains "for a person to be living happily, or to have a happy life, he must attain all the important things he values, or he

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[73] See Kraut, Jacobs, Nozick, Tatarkiewicz and Warner.
[74] Deal W. Hudson, *Happiness and the Limits of Satisfaction* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), 116.
[75] Kraut, 178.

must come reasonably close to this standard."[76] This is not the only condition of happiness, for "one must also find that the things one values are genuinely rewarding, and not merely the best of a bad range of alternatives."[77]

Kraut believes when you say that you are happy, you are issuing a positive appraisal of your life, implying that you are satisfied because you are doing or getting whatever it is that you see as worthwhile. Although being in this state of satisfaction is necessary for happiness, it is not sufficient because "one can feel happy with one's life even if one comes nowhere near this goal; one need only believe that one is meeting one's standard."[78]

To rule out such cases of misperception, Kraut introduces the additional condition that your belief that you are happy be justified. The normative element of Kraut's view emerges with this condition, because the question of whether someone is meeting her own standard can be judged by any third-party. The subject is not in a privileged position with respect to judging her own happiness. If she fails to meet her own standard, or to reach her goals, she will not be happy, regardless of what she believes.

For example, you may be perfectly satisfied with your life, viewing your marriage and career as successful; however you may be mistaken. Your husband may be having an affair, and your boss may be on the verge of firing you. Given these circumstances, Kraut would say your happiness was not justified; you are not actually living up to your own standards, you only believe that you are. Therefore, you are not happy, because you fail to meet your own standard of happiness.

Kraut is committed to denying the happiness of anyone who lacks a firm connection with

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[76] Ibid., 179.
[77] Ibid., 180.
[78] Ibid., 179.

reality. So anyone whose happiness is the result of deception, drugs, virtual reality machines, or who is simply misinformed, will fail to be happy.

Although Kraut believes you can be wrong about your own happiness, he does not view the standards themselves as capable of criticism. We cannot say that someone is not really happy because of an inappropriate choice of standard, or because she values the wrong things. Our criticism of a person's happiness is only possible on the grounds that she is failing to attain whatever it is that she values.

There are several contemporary theorists[79] who agree with Kraut's analysis of happiness. They share Kraut's intuition that imposing foreign standards on a person when judging her happiness is inappropriate; yet they explicitly deny that reports of happiness are sufficient for leading a happy life.

Robert Nozick expresses reluctance at calling someone happy if the judgment that she is happy is based on perceptions that are wildly wrong. "Someone whose emotion is based upon completely and egregiously unjustified and false evaluations we will be reluctant to term happy, however he feels. He should have known better."[80]

Wladyslaw Taterkiewicz expresses a similar view in his analysis of happiness, which he defines as lasting, complete and justified satisfaction with one's life. He adds in the qualification that "it is *justified* satisfaction,"[81] to rule out all cases of happiness that are based on illusion or deception. Although such people may be satisfied, according to Tatarkeiwicz, we should not call them happy.

I shall now explain why I believe even this more relaxed version of the normative view of happiness is problematic. Consider the following example: Jane sees herself as

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[79] See Jacobs, Nozick, Tatarkiewicz and Warner.
[80] Nozick, 111.
[81] Tatarkiewicz, 13.

happily married, and she counts the success of that marriage as one of her most important achievements. She believes she has a great life, and she is quite satisfied with it, overall. Jane has no major complaints or regrets, and she believes that she is meeting all of her goals. However, she is terribly mistaken. In reality, one of her most important goals is not being met, because she does not have a successful marriage; her husband is having an affair with another woman. Jane knows nothing of this, and she is in no danger of finding out. The important question is: What can we say about Jane's current state of happiness?

Kraut, along with the other normative theorists, would have to say that she is not really happy, because she fails to actually achieve what she views as constitutive of happiness (i.e., a happy marriage). They would view her happiness as unjustified. I disagree with this analysis. I believe she is happy right now, although she may not be happy when she learns the truth.

To support my contention, imagine that Jane has been killed in a tragic car accident, so that she never learns the truth. What would Jane's friends say about her life at her wake? Kraut seems to believe they would say, "Poor Jane, she thought she was so happy, but she really wasn't." I believe this is the wrong analysis, even if her friends knew the truth about her cheating husband. Instead, they would say, "Poor Jane, she was so happy, but her husband was such a louse. She had no idea." The fact that *she* was happy with her life is indisputable.

Consider the way other emotion words function in our language. If I see a shadow and jump in fear, and I then realize that it was nothing, did I not feel fear, at that moment? Of course I did; that is why I jumped. I am not afraid now because I realize

the fear was unjustified, but I cannot deny the fear I felt at that moment. People are affected emotionally by what they believe to be true. If someone close to me dies, I cannot feel sad before I am told of the death. If someone dents my car, I cannot feel angry before I learn what has happened. The same reasoning should apply to happiness. A person's happiness cannot be diminished or annihilated completely by facts she knows nothing about.

The emotions a person experiences are directly related to that person's beliefs. As her beliefs change, so may her level of happiness. But just as it is implausible to expect someone to grieve over a death they know nothing about, it is equally implausible to deny a person's happiness on the basis of facts she knows nothing about. If we are sure that Jane had no suspicions about her husband's antics, either consciously or subconsciously, prior to her death, we can be confident that her happiness was in no way affected by that truth. I am reminded of two old adages, "What you don't know can't hurt you," and "Ignorance is bliss."

There is a further problem with Kraut's account of happiness. He relies on the "fact" that we are or are not reaching our goals to determine whether we are happy. In Jane's case, it was the "fact" that her marriage was failing that defeated her happiness. But in many other cases, this "fact" is hardly discernable. Who is to say how well someone is progressing towards her goals, and whether that progress is sufficient to warrant her happiness? It seems obvious that the subject herself would be the best qualified and most relevant judge, yet Kraut explicitly rejects this option.

In order for Kraut's account to be tenable, there must be clear reasons for people's happiness that can be gauged by outside observers. How can Kraut handle cases where

the subject is working towards a goal that stretches far into the future, like pursuing a Ph.D.? The subject may see herself as slowly working towards her goal. To an outside observer, her progress may seem menial or even nonexistent. She appears to be floundering, or getting nowhere, but she is satisfied with her progress. Who is correct in such cases, where there is no obvious deception of the subject, but just a difference of opinion about whether she is "really" meeting her own standard?

Kraut needs for there to be a determinable "fact" about how well I am living up to my own standards, for this "fact" will determine whether I am happy or unhappy. But this misconstrues the whole concept of happiness, which is related to the subject's perceptions, and not those of an outside observer. Furthermore, even if there were a way to measure or gauge a person's progress, I believe most people could not give an exact specification of their goals or standards.

Consider another example: A woman is happy with her life because she believes she is doing a good job raising her children. According to Kraut, whether she is actually happy will be determined by how well she is achieving this goal. But her achievement of this goal is impossible to determine right now; it is something that will unfold as her children grow up and reach adulthood. What can we say about this woman's happiness? Must we deny it due to a lack of information? If the concept of happiness were this elusive, no one would ever know whether she was happy, or unhappy. Once again, the word would be rendered completely useless for practical purposes.

There is one final example that demonstrates the problems with normative views of happiness. There are some religious people who aim at piety, and the belief that they are achieving this goal makes them very happy. What can Kraut say about the happiness

of these religious people? If there is no God, these people are not "really" happy, but are merely deceived. Must we verify God's existence before we can issue a judgment on their happiness? Furthermore, even if we accept that there is a God, how can we possibly determine whether these people are living piously enough to warrant their happiness? The "goal" in this case is too elusive for a third-party to issue a judgment. Is their happiness, therefore, indeterminate? Kraut does not supply any sort of response to these difficulties.

Kraut's view of happiness permits the atheist to regard the religious person as deceived, and therefore, unhappy. Alternatively, the religious person will regard the atheist as deceived, denying his happiness. In neither case does the attribution of happiness have anything to do with the subject's own mental state. Clearly, this is not the way 'happiness' functions in our language.

Kraut recognizes the importance of the subject's own values to the question of whether she is happy. He rejects the idea that we can criticize the standards and goals people adopt, because "we have no defensible method for discovering each person's distance from his ideal lives."[82] I believe the same objection applies to the question of whether a person is meeting her standards, or reaching her goals. It is too difficult to determine how close someone is to actually realizing her ideals. Furthermore, our third-party opinion of her progress is irrelevant to her happiness.

If we are to adopt *her* standards when judging her happiness, as Kraut urges, then we should also adopt her perspective in judging how well she is reaching those goals. To do anything less would amount to hypocrisy. Therefore, we should reject all normative constraints on happiness. Statements of happiness are not appraisals or judgments, but

[82] Kraut, 192.

should be seen instead as reports of the subject's mental state.

4. Happiness as Life Satisfaction

I shall now present my view of happiness, and I shall discuss the work of several contemporary theorists who also hold a life satisfaction view of happiness.[83] The goal of this section is to reach a definition of happiness that is theoretically useful, by providing descriptive and explanatory power to characterize people's motives and behavior, but also accords with common usage. I believe we can learn a lot about the concept of happiness by reflecting on the ways in which people use the word.[84] As Robin Barrow notes, "the philosopher's task is, taking his cue from everyday assumption as enshrined in ordinary language use, to formulate a conception that is meaningful and useful."[85]

I shall defend a life satisfaction view of happiness, which says that a person is happy when she is satisfied with her life. Robin Barrow describes happiness in terms of having "a sense of enmeshment with one's world," while H. Meynell describes happiness in terms of being satisfied in relation to one's environment.[86] According to Roger Montague, "having no standing dissatisfactions, achieving goals (subject to

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[83] Robert Almeder, *Human Happiness and Morality* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000); Robin Barrow, *Happiness and Schooling* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980); Robin Barrow, *Utilitarianism* (Brookfield, VT: Edward Elgar Publishers, 1991); Theodore Benditt, "Happiness." *Philosophical Studies* 25 (1974): 1-20; Theodore Benditt, "Happiness and Satisfaction – A Rejoinder to Carson." The Personalist 59 (1978): 108-109; Richard Brandt, "Happiness," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 413-414; H. Meynell, "Human Flourishing." *Religious Studies* 5 (1969): 147-154; Roger Montague, "Happiness." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 67 (1967): 87-102; John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1971); Nicholas Rescher, *Welfare* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972); Nicholas Rescher, *Unpopular Essays on Technological Progress* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980); L. W. Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Elizabeth Telfer, *Happiness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980); and Georg Henrik Von Wright, *The Varieties of Goodness* (Bristol, England: Thoemmes Press, 1996).

[84] See also Robin Barrow, *Utilitarianism*, 67.

[85] Ibid., 68.

[86] Barrow, *Happiness and Schooling*, 74; Meynell, 151.

qualifications) and being positively pleased about the way things are going make a man happy in a constitutive sense of 'make.'"[87]

Being satisfied with something implies that the subject's hopes, expectations, and demands are involved. According to Benditt, "If a man says that he is satisfied with his accomplishments, he implies that what he has accomplished does not (significantly) fall short of his hopes and expectations, with the goals which he has, explicitly or implicitly, set for himself."[88]

One can be satisfied with something without being satisfied with every aspect of that thing. As Benditt notes, "one need only be satisfied with most of it, or with the important aspects of it, so that on the whole one's satisfaction with something sufficiently outweighs the dissatisfaction with it."[89]

Richard Brandt explains, "If a man is happy, he will not be subject . . . to gloom, anxiety, restlessness, depression, discouragement, and shame, for these feelings will not occur if he likes the total pattern of his life insofar as the parts he deems important are concerned." Similarly, Barrow believes that "happy people . . . are those who do not suffer from things such as despair, dismay, alienation, loneliness, frustration or disappointment; they are content with the world as they perceive it and with their lot in it."[90]

I agree with both theorists; however I offer the following qualification. Just as one can be satisfied with something overall, without being completely satisfied with every aspect of that thing, one may be happy with her life overall, without being

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[87] Montague, 98.
[88] Benditt, *Happiness*, 8.
[89] Ibid., 9.
[90] Barrow, *Utilitarianism*, 41.

completely happy about every aspect thereof.

Happiness is a degree concept, which refers to feelings that range in intensity from mild contentment to extreme joy. One does not have to experience feelings of glee or ecstasy in order to be happy. For some, happiness may only involve the experience of modest satisfaction or contentment. A person's happiness is proportional to how positively she views her life, the more favorable her impression, the happier she will be.

Although saying that two people are happy implies that they share the same state of mind, the degree to which they feel happy may differ, just as the happiness experienced by the same person on different occasions may differ. Some people never get too high or too low, preferring to keep all emotional reactions under control. Others swing wildly between happiness and unhappiness, experiencing joy and sorrow with each new event that occurs. Upon falling in love with someone new, a person may experience a kind of happiness she never knew before.

As Robin Barrow explains, "the happiness that you and I experience may be different in texture, or experientially, while nonetheless being happiness in exactly the same sense, just as the beauty of one woman may differ from that of another, while being no more and no less an instance of beauty in the same sense of the word."[91]

Happiness can also be compared to depression. Different people can be depressed for different reasons, and to different degrees, yet all are classified as depressed. Similarly, all happy people share a positive attitude towards life, although that attitude may differ in its cause and intensity.

Elizabeth Telfer describes happiness as a state of being pleased with one's life as a whole. According to Telfer, the happy person "does not want anything major in his life

[91] Ibid., 69.

to be otherwise; he is pleased with . . . what he has got; [and] there is nothing major which he has not got and which he wants."[92] Nicholas Rescher views an individual's assessment of his happiness as "a matter of his personal and idiosyncratic perception of the extent to which the conditions and circumstances of his life meet his needs and aspirations."[93]

It follows that someone who is unhappy can become happy by either changing her circumstances, or by changing her attitude towards her life (perhaps by changing her standards, expectations, or values). This highlights the importance of expectation to an individual's happiness. As Rescher notes, a person's happiness will be affected by how high she reaches in terms of her expectations and aspirations.[94]

John Rawls also holds a life satisfaction view, which views happiness in terms of the successful execution of one's rational life plan. "Someone is happy when his plans are going well, his more important aspirations are being fulfilled, and he feels sure that his good fortune will endure."[95] Given the diversity of people's natural abilities and life circumstances, Rawls acknowledges the potential diversity in what plans people will choose to adopt. According to Rawls, "being happy involves both a certain achievement in action and a rational assurance about the outcome."[96]

I agree with Rawls that being happy for some people is a function of moving towards their goals. However, I believe it is also possible for one to be happy in the absence of such clearly defined goals, as in the person who simply drifts through life. So long as the drifter is satisfied with her life, the mere absence of a well-defined plan

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[92] Telfer, 8.
[93] Rescher, *Welfare*, 43.
[94] Ibid., 43.
[95] Rawls, 480.
[96] Ibid., 481.

should not prevent her from being happy.

Rawls does acknowledge the case of the drifter, saying "The limit decision to have no plan at all, to let things come as they may, is still theoretically a plan that may or may not be rational."[97] However, it is unclear how Rawls' account can accommodate the happiness of the drifter, when he uses the proportion of the subject's aims that are being achieved to determine a person's happiness. The drifter lacks such goals, and therefore lacks a necessary condition of happiness, according to Rawls.

I believe Rawls mistakenly places the emphasis on the successful pursuit of one's goals, instead of on the subject's state of satisfaction, which may be completely unrelated to her achievements. As Montague notes, "there are unreflective people who do not even realize that their priorities are muddled, and others who muddle cheerfully."[98] There is no reason to presume these people, just like our drifter, cannot be happy.

I also object to Rawls' use of "rationality" in his characterization of happiness. I believe if a person truthfully says that she is happy staring at a blank wall, day after day, (an activity I assume it is not rational to pursue), there is no reason to deny her happiness, presuming she issues an honest report, and she knows what the word 'happy' means.

Rawls must deny her happiness, given the irrationality of her pursuit; yet I believe this assessment is incorrect. As outside observers, we may not be able to understand how anyone could be happy under such circumstances. Yet our opinions about how the wall-starer chooses to spend her time have no bearing on the question of her happiness. If she is satisfied with her life, there is nothing from a conceptual standpoint to prevent her from being happy.

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[97] Ibid., 363.
[98] Montague, 89.

Furthermore, imposing restrictions on what counts as a proper cause of a person's happiness will result in a slippery slope. For example, if you can deny the happiness of "the wall-starer," you open the door for someone else to deny the happiness of the accountant, on the grounds that his career choice is so dull, no one could possibly find such a job satisfying. Perhaps he likes his job, just as the wall-starer, because of a rare brain abnormality, likes staring at walls. I believe all third-party opinions about how people choose to spend their time are totally irrelevant to the question of their happiness.

G. H. Von Wright views happiness as liking your circumstances in life. "Happiness *is* not in the circumstances . . . but springs into being with the relationship . . . To judge oneself happy is to pass judgment on or value one's circumstances of life."[99] However, Von Wright does not believe that reports of happiness are evaluative judgments. Rather, they are true or false statements "to the effect that a certain subject values certain things, i.e., his circumstances in life, in a certain way."[100]

Happiness is best characterized as a mental state of the subject, not as a state of affairs occurring in the world. I believe there are no necessary material conditions of happiness. We can describe someone without contradiction as "Poor, but happy", "Wicked, but happy", or even "Alone but happy". If the subject has a favorable impression of her life, and reports her happiness, there is no way for an outside observer to dispute her claim. As Sumner explains, "happiness (or unhappiness) is a response by a subject to her life conditions *as she sees them*. It is a matter of whether she is finding the *perceived* conditions of her life satisfying or fulfilling."[101]

There are, however, certain states of mind that are incompatible with happiness.

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[99] Von Wright, 98.
[100] Ibid., 98.
[101] Sumner, 156.

As Jean Austin notes, one cannot be "Depressed, but happy", "Lonely, but happy", or "Frustrated, but happy."[102] All of these states imply that the subject has certain negative feelings about her life, which she would not have if she were happy.

The statement "I am happy" will be false only under two conditions: If the subject is lying, or if she does not possess the concept "happiness". In either case, a third-party is justified in denying the report of happiness. Under all other circumstances, I believe the subject's report of happiness is sufficient for her being happy. Reports of happiness are similar to pain reports in this respect. If the subject honestly claims to be in pain, and she knows what 'pain' means, she cannot be wrong.

Robin Barrow recognizes these two conditions, but he adds a third way for first-person judgments about happiness to be mistaken, which is when the subject is guilty of making a faulty comparison. According to Barrow, such cases occur because "I may claim to be happy when such a claim is *inconsistent* with my normal standards for judging myself to be happy, or I may claim to be happy now, but subsequently come to appreciate that what I then experienced was so much less in degree than I am capable of that it should not have counted as happiness."[103]

I am not convinced that we should accept Barrow's third condition. On Barrow's view, someone would be guilty of making a faulty comparison when her new experience of happiness is so radically different from her old experience that it is supposed to cause her to doubt her past reports of happiness. But happiness is a degree concept, meaning it refers to a range of states that vary greatly in their felt intensity. If all of the subject's past experiences of happiness were at the lower end of this spectrum, she may not have

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[102] See Jean Austin, "Pleasure and Happiness." *Philosophy* 43 (1968): 60-62.
[103] Barrow, *Happiness and Schooling*, 84.

realized how intense happiness can be. The subject's new experience will teach her something about her past experience, namely that it was not very intense; it should not cause her to doubt her past satisfaction. Rather, she can now appreciate the full range of experiences to which this word refers.

Consider a parallel example with depression. Sally has experienced depression several times in her life, but one day something horrific happens that causes her to go into a deep depression that is much worse than anything she had ever experienced. This new experience may open Sally's eyes up to how bad depression can be. Barrow's view implies that Sally's present experience could cause her to doubt whether she had ever experienced real "depression" before. I believe this diagnosis misdescribes the case. Rather, we should say that Sally's understanding of depression is broadened by her new experience, and now she better appreciates the range of states to which this term refers. There is no need for Sally to retract her past reports of depression, for there is nothing wrong with those reports. She was previously depressed, only to a much less degree than she is now. The same reasoning applies to happiness. Having a new, more intense experience will not falsify your past reports of happiness; it only broadens your understanding of how good or intense that emotion can be. Therefore, Barrow's posit of an additional way to be wrong about your own happiness is unnecessary.

One question that is frequently discussed within the literature is whether there are distinct concepts of happiness, or if there is simply one concept that is used in different ways. D. A. Lloyd Thomas believes 'happiness' stands for a group of related concepts. Taterkiewicz and McFall describe happiness as having distinct meanings or senses; while

Sumner, Telfer and Nozick speak of different types, kinds or dimensions of happiness.[104]

The following four categories represent the most frequently discussed "uses" or "senses" of happiness found within the literature: (1) Being happy with or about something, (2) Feeling Happy, (3) Having a happy disposition/personality, and (4) Being happy/having a happy life.[105] Obviously, this list is not exhaustive of *all* of the possible uses of 'happiness', which appears in countless collocations and phrases, including "the happy couple," "happy ending," "a happy accident" and "happy hour," to name a few. I will not discuss every possible use of 'happiness,' for, as Sumner notes,[106] that would be of little philosophical interest. Rather, I shall limit my discussion to the four main categories listed above.

The important question is whether these four uses correspond to distinct concepts, with distinct meanings or senses, or if they correspond to the same concept, with the same meaning, that is simply applied in different contexts. I believe there is one concept of happiness, which has one meaning that can be employed in various contexts. I believe the four distinctions drawn above simply correspond to four different uses of 'happiness'. In all four cases, happiness refers to a state of satisfaction in the subject. Regardless of whether that state is caused by some particular event (happy with/about) or from the contemplation of one's life (being happy/having a happy life), or is used to describe someone's general mood (happy disposition/personality), it is the same state that is being targeted in each case.

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[104] See Barrow, *Happiness and Schooling*, 62-63; Lynne McFall, *Happiness* (New York: Peter Lang, 1982), ch. 2; Robert Nozick, *The Examined Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), ch. 10; Sumner, 143; Tatarkiewicz, ch. 1; Telfer, ch. 1; and D. A. Lloyd Thomas, "Happiness." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 17 (1968): 97-113.
[105] Sumner, 143.
[106] Ibid., 143.

For example, the first use (being happy with or about something), is clearly an instance of the forth (being happy). The only relevant difference is that (4) has a wider scope and is applied to a person's life as a whole, but they both still refer to the same state of satisfaction. For example, "Being happy with your job" implies that you view it positively and that it meets (or exceeds) your expectations. "Being happy" means exactly the same thing, only you are referring to your life overall. I do not believe drawing a distinction between (1) and (4) is necessary, for it encourages the idea that there are distinct concepts of happiness, when really there is just one concept, which is used in different ways.

The same reasoning applies to the third use, having a happy disposition or personality. As Telfer notes, a happy temperament "is a disposition to be cheerful, to find things agreeable," which "suits its wishes to the circumstances more readily than average."[107] Clearly, a person with such a disposition will be more likely to find things satisfying because she has such flexible, undemanding standards. The more you expect, the harder it will be to achieve happiness. The person with a happy disposition is predisposed to have low expectations, or low standards; she will be more likely to "be happy". Clearly, having a happy disposition or personality is just another instance of (4).

The distinction between being happy and feeling happy, however, does require further discussion. Feeling happy implies "a (temporary) inclination to look on the bright side or find things agreeable," which is often explained in terms of being in a happy mood.[108] Telfer argues that the distinction between feeling and being happy is more than just one of degree; they actually differ in kind.

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[107] Telfer, 1, 11.
[108] Ibid., 1, 11. See also Sumner, 144.

I believe it is a mistake to draw a distinction between being happy and feeling happy.[109] Happiness functions similarly to other emotion words. It does not make sense to say that you feel scared, but then to deny that you are actually scared. To "feel" any of these emotions is experience them. If one "feels pain," then one is in pain, and if one feels sad, then one is sad. There is no principled way to separate the "feeling" from the "being". I believe the same is true of happiness, such that if one "feels happy" then one is happy.

Even Sumner, who accepts the distinction between being and feeling happy, recognizes this point. He says that feelings of happiness are generally short-lived; however, "they are capable (at least in principle) of enduring for some time, at which point they become difficult to distinguish from a settled sense of satisfaction with the conditions of one's life."[110] But in that case, feeling happy just is being happy.

From a phenomenological perspective, there is no noticeable difference between feeling and being happy. You say, "I feel *happy*," as opposed to feeling some other emotion, because you feel the way you normally do when you are happy. If there were a noticeable difference in the feeling itself, you would not refer to your state as "happiness," but would call it something else instead.

Since feeling and being happy are indistinguishable from inside the subject, the only way to differentiate between them would be from the outside. There would have to be an objective, independent standard to which you could appeal, in order to judge whether someone is "really" happy, or merely "feels happy". But we have already shown that the imposition of such standards is unjustified; happiness refers to the subject's state

[109] Robin Barrow also denies this distinction in *Happiness and Schooling*, 62-63.
[110] Sumner, 147.

of satisfaction. Without such standards, there is no principled way to differentiate between feeling and being happy. Therefore, if a subject feels happy, she is happy; her mental state is exactly the same in both cases.

Returning to the four uses of "happiness" commonly recognized within the literature, I have shown that (1) and (3) are really just instances of (4), and that there is no difference between (2) and (4). Since all of these "distinct" uses of happiness employ the same concept, I believe drawing a distinction between them is unnecessary. Once you have a proper understanding of happiness, which the life satisfaction view clearly provides, the question of how to apply the word to these different contexts is clear.

I have presented the life satisfaction view of happiness, which I believe provides the most coherent account of happiness and accords with common usage. In the next chapter, I shall use the life satisfaction view to clear up certain misunderstandings found within the literature. Once we have eliminated the controversy surrounding happiness, we can go on to examine its connection with two other evaluative notions, well-being and moral goodness.

CHAPTER TWO

Misunderstandings about Happiness

In this chapter I shall address several misunderstandings found within the contemporary literature on happiness. The first two sections will focus on two objections to the life satisfaction view of happiness.[111] I believe both objections are unfounded, and I shall argue that the life satisfaction view is the best available theory of happiness. In the third section I shall discuss a recent paper by Sarah Buss, who argues that unhappiness is irrational.[112] Finally, I shall revisit the issue of whether you can be wrong about your own happiness, focusing on the views of John Kekes.[113]

1. Life Satisfaction Devalues Happiness

Raymond Belliotti refers to the life satisfaction theory as "happiness-as-positive-state-of-mind position," because it views happiness as "merely introspective and descriptive, an accurate self-report of a person's positive state of mind," which "does not include a necessary normative element."[114] According to the life satisfaction view, "My self-conscious, good-faith recognition that I am pleased or satisfied with my overall

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[111] See Raymond Angelo Belliotti, Happiness is Overrated (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 69-72; Deal W. Hudson, *Happiness and the Limits of Satisfaction* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), ch. 3; and Daniel Haybron, "Happiness and Ethical Inquiry: An Essay in the Psychology of Well-being" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 2001), 124-187.
[112] See Sarah Buss, "The Irrationality of Unhappiness and the Paradox of Despair." *The Journal of Philosophy* 101 (2004): 167-196.
[113] See John Kekes, "Happiness." *Mind* 91 (1982): 358-376; and John Kekes, "Happiness," in *The Encyclopedia of Ethics*, ed. L. C. Becker and C. B. Becker (New York: Garland, 1992), 644-650.
[114] Belliotti, 69-72.

situation is sufficient for happiness."[115] Belliotti describes the desired conscious condition required for happiness in terms of extended joy, peace or exuberance.

Belliotti readily acknowledges that identifying happiness as satisfaction with one's life is the dominant view within popular culture and is supported by contemporary literature. He dislikes this view, however, because it permits people who exhibit unattractive life styles and suffer from severe psychological deficiencies to be happy; he questions the value of such a state.

Belliotti notes the difference between this modern conception of happiness and Aristotle's, which viewed happiness as the greatest possible good attainable by man, or the summum bonum. Aristotle's notion of happiness obviously involved much more than having a positive state of mind; it also required the subject to exhibit moral goodness and human flourishing through the development of her natural talents and abilities.

Belliotti argues that the modern conception actually weakens the value of happiness, because it divorces the mental state from its causal origins. By not placing any restriction on how one achieves her state of satisfaction, the modern conception is forced to grant the happiness of the deceived and the morally wicked, if they are satisfied with their lives. Belliotti argues that happiness-as-positive-state-of-mind will not necessarily be a great good and in some cases will not even be a good at all.

Belliotti charges the life satisfaction view of happiness with failing to recognize the most important human values. He offers the following science-fiction example to illustrate how this conception undermines the value of happiness:

> Suppose happiness is merely the experience of sustained joy or peace, and the means by which that experience is attained are irrelevant. Suppose the

[115] Ibid., 69.

> biochemistry of our brains can be manipulated to make us more likely to experience sustained joy. Perhaps a new pill, an enhanced form of Prozac or Lithium, can alter our brain biochemistry to simulate the desired conscious condition. Happiness is now within the reach of all. We take our medication, we are joyful and peaceful, all in the world seems right. Is this heaven? Not likely.[116]

The problem, according to Belliotti, is that who a person is, "what values he embodied, what creativity he exhibited, and what he did would not matter," for as long as he keeps taking those pills, he will feel satisfied with his life and will be happy.[117] Happiness that is achieved through the use of pharmaceuticals is clearly not a great good and it "dehumanizes and trivializes us."[118]

Deal Hudson also dislikes the life satisfaction view of happiness, which he believes has "trivialized the historical legacy of the term" and "encouraged the dissociation of 'happy' persons from both themselves and from their concrete surroundings."[119] He refers to the identification of happiness with a subject's state of satisfaction as "well-feeling," a view he considers to be "an active cause of self deception", "an unworthy and demeaning human aim," and "a tactic of social control."[120]

The concern expressed by Belliotti over our modern conception of happiness is echoed by Hudson, who believes "the totally privatized happiness of subjective satisfaction has encouraged the narcissistic individualism already documented in American culture." Hudson warns us that "the egoism encouraged by well-feeling can be

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[116] Ibid., 70.
[117] Ibid., 70-71.
[118] Ibid., 71.
[119] Hudson, 39.
[120] Ibid., 39.

put into service of collectivist projects seeking to ensure the happiness of society. The state only has to devise some means of providing its citizens a palpable sense of self-satisfaction and they can be conditioned to accept their loss of freedom."[121]

I do not believe the life satisfaction view of happiness commits one to accepting either of the dire conclusions Belliotti and Hudson envision, nor can it be used to justify them. I believe both theorists misunderstand the life satisfaction view. Furthermore, I believe both theorists fundamentally misconstrue the nature of happiness, which leads them to have such a negative impression of the life satisfaction view of happiness. Once these mistakes are addressed, I believe the life satisfaction view will be vindicated.

According to Belliotti, the proponents of the life satisfaction view believe "All that is required for happiness is the desired conscious condition" which he describes as a state of extended joy or peace.[122] I believe this characterization is misleading. The life satisfaction theorist does believe happiness can be caused in a multitude of ways, all of which may potentially result in the same happy state. For example, passing an exam, being lied to that one has passed the exam, or taking a pill to make one think she has passed the exam, would all be indistinguishable states. One would feel equally happy in each scenario.

However, just because one would feel the same in any one of these states does not mean we are committed to viewing all three as equally preferable. The life satisfaction theorist can issue judgments about states of happiness with different causes based on her other values, interests and preferences. For example, if she values hard work, she certainly would not accept taking a pill to achieve an artificial state of satisfaction. If she

[121] Ibid., 41.
[122] Belliotti, 70.

values helping others, she would not be content with merely believing that she was a morally good person; she would want to *be* a good person.

Belliotti and Hudson assume because several different means will lead to the same end state, the means themselves are irrelevant. This supposition would be true only if all we cared about was the end, which is our own happiness. The life satisfaction theorist is certainly not committed to this view of happiness and readily acknowledges the importance of other values, which can be used to evaluate the means.

Consider a parallel example involving the physical state of satiation. I will feel full whether I eat a bowl of ice cream or a bowl of fruit. If I had no other values independent of achieving a satiated state, then either means would be appropriate, because both would effectively lead to the desired end. However, if I value my health, then achieving the satiated state by eating the fruit would clearly be preferable. Just because either means will lead to the same end doesn't commit me to valuing both means equally. I can evaluate the means based on other values that are important to me.

The same reasoning applies to happiness. If all that matters is achieving happiness, then Belliotti and Hudson's conclusion would be justified, for the use of pharmaceuticals would be the easiest and most effective way to achieve happiness. Hudson's fear about the government inducing people to feel satisfied while robbing them of their freedom might even be justified on the grounds of promoting an increase in happiness. However, these conclusions rest on a view of happiness as the supreme, most important value.

I believe both theorists disparage the life satisfaction theory of happiness, because they retain the Aristotelian conception of happiness as the summum bonum. However,

the life satisfaction theorist is not committed to this metaphysical assumption about the status of happiness as a human value. No obligation requires the promotion of happiness, or the assumption that it is the most important goal of all people. Once you recognize the importance of other values, the objections raised by Belliotti and Hudson are shown to be completely unfounded.

Therefore, if we value being connected to reality and having a true perception of our lives, we would object to the use of drugs in achieving happiness. Even if the government could produce nation-wide satisfaction by poisoning the water supply, they should not do so, because as a collective body we have other values that are more important than simply achieving a state of happiness. Just as I decide what to consume in order to reach a satisfied physical state, so I decide how to achieve happiness. Clearly, the end state is not the only relevant consideration.

Hudson and Belliotti believe identifying happiness with satisfaction devalues happiness. They admire Aristotle's eudaimonistic conception, which guarantees the presence of other values, like moral goodness, in the happy person's life. Hudson charges "What has become the unacknowledged greatest good in the public mind - subjective satisfaction – has been shown since the last half of the eighteenth century to be a questionable moral and political end."[123]

The life satisfaction view does not equate happiness with the greatest good nor is it committed to viewing happiness as a proper moral or political end. Therefore, happiness isn't "devalued," because it is divorced from these other values. I believe questions of morality and questions of what will make a person happy ought not to be conflated. Happiness is a state that is of primary value to the subject; however, being

[123] Hudson, 17.

happy offers no guarantee that the subject will be kind to others or do things that will prove to be in her own best interest. She may choose to be immoral and engage in self-destructive behavior, because she finds it satisfying.

Furthermore, I believe the life satisfaction view of happiness is actually preferable to the view of happiness as the summum bonum, because it arms us with much greater explanatory power. Life is replete with examples of people who sacrifice their own happiness for their children, their ailing relatives, or even perfect strangers. If happiness really were the summum bonum, we could not make sense of the behavior of such people; they might even be considered irrational for not putting their own happiness above all else. I believe the view of happiness as the summum bonum is completely divorced from common usage and ordinary life.

Therefore, we have no obligation to pursue our own happiness, any more than we have the obligation to pursue the happiness of others. We may value happiness above all else, or we may place it on equal footing with moral and prudential values; this choice is personal. Once you recognize happiness as one value among others, it is clear that divorcing happiness from moral and prudential values will not lead to the degradation of society but instead will supply us with a more realistic understanding of people's motives and behavior.

2. Life Satisfaction is Arbitrary

The second objection to the life satisfaction view comes from Daniel Haybron, who argues that happiness cannot be reduced to being satisfied with one's life as a whole, because we lack stable, well-defined attitudes towards our lives. He believes "Most if not

all of us could, consistently with our values and desires, come to any number of widely divergent assessments of our lives."[124]

To support his contention that our attitudes towards our lives are highly arbitrary, Haybron cites several studies done by psychologists that show subjects' self-reports of happiness to be influenced by context. For example, contextual factors like being given a candy bar before questioning, being in an unpleasant testing room, and being in the presence of a handicapped person have some influence on how subjects judge the quality of their lives as a whole.

Haybron believes the most natural interpretation of the data is that "we simply make something up when called upon to report how satisfied we are with our lives."[125] He believes we do not have standards that we apply consistently and, therefore, the task of evaluating our lives is seriously underdetermined.

Haybron's objection to the life satisfaction view rests on the assumption that we must have stable, clearly defined standards in order to be satisfied with our lives. I believe Haybron's assumption is false and indicates his misunderstanding of what the life satisfaction view entails. The life satisfaction view is compatible with a dispositional view of satisfaction, as in Theodore Benditt's theory of happiness. According to Benditt, a person is happy at a given time if she is satisfied with her life at that time, where someone is satisfied with her life if she is disposed, when she considers her life, to feel satisfied.[126]

Clearly, the life satisfaction view of happiness does not require the subject to recognize consciously exactly what makes her happy at each moment. A person may not

[124] Haybron, 134.
[125] Ibid., 129.
[126] Benditt, 8.

even think about her life and yet be happy, so long as she is disposed to make the requisite judgments should she take the time to reflect.

Benditt believes that people don't usually make self-conscious assessments of their lives; however, when asked to make such an assessment, he believes most people could produce an easy answer. This is because "there are usually in any given person's life only a few very important areas which will weigh heavily in an assessment of that life; these include one's job or career, one's marriage or other family life, one's social relationships in general, one's standard of living and perhaps others."[127]

I believe Haybron's assumption that the attitudes towards one's life be "stable" is also objectionable, for a person's attitude may change as her circumstances change, or more importantly, as her perception of those circumstances changes. For example, you may never have thought about your health until you encountered serious problems. Your subsequent judgments of satisfaction with your life will reflect your new appreciation for being physically healthy, a factor you may not have considered previously. According to the life satisfaction view, a person's happiness will be a function of how positively or negatively she views her circumstances; it can certainly accommodate fluctuations in that attitude.

Haybron repeatedly states that most people lack the attitudes towards their lives required by the life satisfaction theory. However, he presents no direct evidence for this claim and admits it is only an assumption based on the empirical data. He believes if people had stable, robust attitudes towards their lives, they would report them to the researchers. Given the influence of the context on the subjects' responses, Haybron concludes these attitudes must be entirely absent.

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[127] Ibid., 13.

Haybron has made a rather bold assumption based on less than robust evidence. I believe his assumption is unjustified because, as the researchers themselves note, the effect of context on judgments isn't that substantial.[128] Haybron even admits that "self-reports tend to be quite consistent over time," "context sensitivities tend to wash out over large groups," and "self-reports correlate somewhat strongly with other relevant quantities such as reports of affect."[129]

Therefore, on an alternative reading, the empirical data actually support the life satisfaction view of happiness, because it demonstrates that people have the requisite attitudes towards their lives, which are being influenced by the researchers' manipulation of context. Haybron maintains his belief that we lack such attitudes, explaining "the fact that judgments are consistent over the long term may reflect only that we have consistent methods of fabricating them."[130]

Haybron's analysis is unsatisfactory, because it eschews the simpler and effective explanation in favor of something complicated like a "stable fabrication". I believe Haybron's interpretation of the empirical data betrays his theoretical bias against the life satisfaction view. I shall now discuss in further detail the studies Haybron cites to demonstrate why they do not in any way contradict the life satisfaction view of happiness.

Researchers have found that several contextual factors influence people's judgments of life satisfaction, including the order of the questions posed. For example, asking people first about their marriages and then about their satisfaction with their lives

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[128] See Haybron 133, for a list of empirical researchers who believe the context effects are "mere 'noise' or random error reflecting unusual circumstances that cause people to render unusual judgments."
[129] Ibid., 133.
[130] Ibid., 133.

generates a different response than when the questions are reversed. Subjects were also asked to recall positive or negative events from the past, and these too were found to exert some influence on their subsequent judgments of satisfaction.[131]

One explanation for these phenomena is that the information contained in prior questions affect the subject's response to questions about her judgment of satisfaction. For example, asking about past traumas and triumphs brings that information to the forefront of the subject's memory. She may not have even thought of this past event in issuing her judgment of satisfaction, had the researchers not primed her with the prior questioning.

The researchers conclude that the subjects' judgments of life satisfaction "crucially depend on the information that is accessible at the time of judgment and how this information is used in constructing mental representations of the to-be-evaluated episode and a relevant standard."[132] None of this data disproves the life satisfaction view of happiness, which predicts that people will issue judgments about their lives based on their perceptions. Clearly, those perceptions will be influenced by various factors, including what information is brought to the attention of the subject at that time. Regardless of how people arrive at their judgments of satisfaction, it is still the subject's perception of her life that determines her level of happiness.

Furthermore, in a study *not* discussed by Haybron, researchers asked respondents to report on their happiness as well as their satisfaction with their lives. When these two questions were asked on different questionnaires, both reports showed a high correlation.

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[131] See Norbert Schwarz and Fritz Strack, "Reports of Subjective Well-Being: Judgmental Processes and Their Methodological Implications," in *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, ed. Daniel Kahneman, Ed Diener, and Norbert Schwarz (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 61-84, for a discussion of various empirical studies recently conducted.

[132] Ibid., 70.

That is, the respondents' mean happiness ratings did not differ from their mean satisfaction ratings, "suggesting that they did not differentiate between these concepts."[133] Therefore, the average person identifies happiness with satisfaction; this result lends further support for the life satisfaction view of happiness.

The empirical research also probes the influence of mood on people's judgments of satisfaction. In several different experiments, researchers found reports of satisfaction were influenced by factors like finding a dime on a copy machine, spending time in a pleasant rather than unpleasant room, or watching the German soccer team win rather than lose a championship game.[134] Even the weather was found to have some influence on people's judgments about their lives: respondents reported being in a better mood and being happier on sunny rather than on rainy days.

I believe the life satisfaction theorist can readily acknowledge the influence of mood on judgments of satisfaction. As the researchers explain, "individuals in a happy mood are more likely to recall positive information from memory, whereas individuals in a sad mood are more likely to recall negative information. Hence, thinking about one's life while in a good mood may result in a selective retrieval of positive aspects of one's life, and therefore in a more positive evaluation."[135] Once again, it is the subject's perception of her life that is the determinant of whether she is happy.

Interestingly, the noted effect of weather on subjects' reports of satisfaction was eliminated when the subjects' attention was subtly drawn to the weather as a plausible cause of their current feelings. "Under this condition, respondents interviewed on rainy

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[133] Ibid., 64.
[134] Ibid., 74.
[135] Ibid., 75.

days reported being as happy and satisfied as respondents interviewed on sunny days."[136] By drawing the subjects' attention to the possible influence of the weather, the subjects were able to consciously disregard this factor as irrelevant, thereby eliminating its possible influence.

A person's satisfaction with her life is a function of how well she perceives herself as measuring up in the areas she deems important. The empirical studies indicate a person's perception can be influenced by context; however, I question the significance of this influence, since its effects can be eliminated completely, as is demonstrated by the study involving the weather. I believe that in some cases the influence of contextual factors is better compared to background noise, as opposed to providing real insight into a persons' satisfaction or happiness. The following example should illustrate this point.

A person's experience of eating in a restaurant will be influenced by countless factors, including the ambiance, her mental and physical state (including mood and hunger), the quality of the food, as well as the price. If this person is asked to evaluate her satisfaction with her meal on a particular occasion, she might attempt to block out all of those factors not directly related to the quality of the food itself in order to issue a fair appraisal.

Now imagine that a screaming baby is at the next table. Although she may try to focus on the food presentation and the taste, her judgment of satisfaction with the meal may be negatively impacted by the screaming baby, perhaps to the extent that it prevents her from enjoying the meal altogether.

I believe the same sort of effect occurs when the researcher manipulates the experimental conditions to elicit a change in the subject's perceived quality of life. The

[136] Ibid., 75.

subject isn't actually any more or less satisfied with her life, but as in the case of the restaurant, she is being distracted by all of the background noise. Just as the screaming child had little to do with the person's satisfaction with her meal, the influence of context over a person's judgment of satisfaction with her life has little to do with that person's happiness.

I believe the empirical data suggests we ought to disregard Haybron's objections, which appear to be largely unfounded. Clearly, judgments of life satisfaction are far from arbitrary, and the life satisfaction view still provides the best theory of happiness available.

3. Unhappiness is Irrational

In a recent article, Sarah Buss argues that our natural desire to avoid unhappiness is reasonable not only because it is an unpleasant psychological state, but also because it is "justified by a *formal* principle of rationality; for unhappiness is itself a form of irrationality."[137] Although she correctly employs a life satisfaction view of happiness, I believe the connection she posits between happiness and irrationality is problematic.

Buss' analysis rests on the assumption that happiness is linked with personal ideals, which represent what is good for a person. I believe she is guilty of conflating what should be distinct evaluative dimensions by incorporating the notion of goodness into happiness. I shall also argue that Buss' account fails even on her own conception of happiness, i.e., even granting her views on the nature of happiness, I believe she fails to prove that all cases of unhappiness are irrational.

Buss begins with a conception of happiness as a psychological state that involves

[137] Buss, 167.

the experience of satisfaction or contentment with one's life. According to this conception, happiness and unhappiness are moods or emotions of varying intensity that are directed at one's own condition. She correctly notes that happiness and unhappiness have both affective and cognitive components, such that "we are (un)happy *about* (or *with*) our condition; and (at least in most cases) we *believe* that our situation warrants the feeling of (dis)satisfaction it generates."[138]

Although a person can be either happy or unhappy without recognizing the precise cause of her emotion, Buss believes if one is happy, she must believe "things are good," and if she is unhappy, she must believe that "something is wrong."[139] I believe if "things are good" is taken to express a moral judgment, or a judgment that things are good for the person in the sense of being beneficial to that person, Buss' characterization of happiness is false. Someone can certainly be happy and believe that "things are good," while acknowledging that her acts lack both moral and prudential value.

Of course, it is possible for the subject's happiness to be caused by acts that have both moral and prudential worth, but her happiness need not be so caused. I would avoid using the words 'good' and 'wrong' in characterizing happiness and unhappiness, because they carry moral and evaluative overtones that encourage a conflation of morality and well-being with happiness. I believe this conflation is precisely what occurs within the remainder of Buss' analysis of unhappiness.

Buss believes being unhappy involves judging that your life falls short of whatever it is you see as constitutive of the good life. Although people will be made happy or unhappy by different things, Buss argues that "whatever the particular object of

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[138] Ibid., 169.
[139] Ibid., 169.

one's unhappiness may be, it makes one unhappy insofar as, and only insofar as, one takes it to fall short of one's current personal ideals. To be unhappy is to feel that things are not . . . as they must be if one's life is to be a truly good life."[140]

Buss appears to accept the Aristotelian conception of happiness that I have repeatedly argued against, which views happiness as a great good. Her tacit acceptance of this conception can be seen in her identification of happiness with personal ideals, which are supposed to represent each individual's conception of her good.

Buss' theory fails to account for the person who is happy with a life that isn't good at all. Consider the following case: We can imagine someone who has the choice of seeking employment or standing on a street corner, begging for money. This person is not homeless or destitute, but she is jobless. Finding a job would be difficult, whereas begging on the corner is much easier and quite lucrative because she pretends to be disabled. She is completely unaffected by the immorality of her deceptions, and she is made quite happy by the large sums of money she is able to con from good-natured people.

The beggar recognizes her own immorality, but does not care because she is happy. She realizes that she could have had a morally better life, but she does not want to change, for she is satisfied with her life as it is. Buss' account clearly builds too much into the notion of happiness by requiring the subject to have a life that she believes is "a truly good life."[141] Although the beggar's life fails to realize any moral ideals, she is still happy.

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[140] Ibid., 170.
[141] Ibid., 169.

Buss' account must deny that a person's happiness can be caused by things she does not view as good in any respect, yet this is a fairly common occurrence. Consider another example: I am a diabetic who knows I should not eat sweet things. The simple act of eating a cookie makes me very happy, especially since I rarely break my strict diet. Although I realize I should not indulge in sweets, because it does not contribute to my good, eating cookies still makes me happy. There is nothing special about happiness that ties it to a person's conception of "her good" or what is ultimately good for her. Buss' analysis is guilty of importing moral and evaluative components into happiness.

Buss' analysis of unhappiness is equally problematic. For example, a bank robber may experience unhappiness, when his plan to rob a bank is foiled. His unhappiness results from his inability to pull off the heist, an unquestionably immoral act. Buss must interpret the robber's current unhappiness as resulting from the judgment that his life "falls short of what counts as a good life" for him.[142] I believe this description is implausible. It requires the bank robber to view his blatantly immoral act as a necessary component of "the good life for him". The bank robber must be seen as being ignorant of the immorality of his act, for how else could he view this act as part of "his good"? Buss' analysis is unsatisfactory, because the bank robber is clearly not unhappy over his failure to realize his personal ideal. His unhappiness is due to the frustration of his desire to pull off the heist without getting caught. His views on what is constitutive of "the good life" are irrelevant to his unhappiness.

According to Buss, a person is unhappy when the reality of her situation falls short of her personal ideals, but her personal ideals still presuppose the hope that they will be realized. She believes "Unhappiness is essentially paradoxical precisely because

[142] Ibid., 170.

it is essentially the experience of having a goal that one cannot see one's way to (coming closer to) achieving."[143] Buss argues that all negative emotional states counting as unhappiness have this goal-oriented structure, essentially involving a person's expectations.

I believe Buss' analysis of unhappiness fails to explain some fairly common cases of unhappiness. For example, if your grandfather dies, after being quite ill for some time, the unhappiness you feel may have nothing to do with your goals or frustrated expectations. You never believed that your grandfather would live forever, and given his ailing condition his death was expected. However, you still experience unhappiness and a sense of loss, yet your unhappiness clearly lacks the goal-oriented structure Buss attributes to all forms of unhappiness.

Other cases of unhappiness may occur when people are emotionally affected by events that have little to no direct impact on their own goals. For example, Sue became unhappy when she read about the fighting taking place in the Sudan, where innocent people are suffering in a vicious civil war. Buss would have to explain Sue's unhappiness by referring to its negative impact on *her* goals or ideals. Buss would say that Sue must have hoped for a world in which such struggles do not occur, and she must see such a world as bound up with her personal good. Clearly, the events taking place half way around the world, where Sue has no personal or financial ties, have no direct impact on her life or her personal good. Yet she still experiences unhappiness at the thought of their suffering.

I have already criticized Buss' views on the nature of happiness and unhappiness, which I believe her theory completely misconstrues. I shall now argue against Buss'

[143] Ibid., 182.

views on the irrationality of unhappiness. I believe the unhappiness experienced by Sue and the person whose grandfather has died is clearly *not* irrational, and Buss' thesis that all unhappiness is form of irrationality cannot be maintained. I shall also argue that one *should* feel unhappy in cases where one fails to achieve her goals, and the experience of this emotion is completely rational.

Buss believes that being unhappy is different from many other forms of dissatisfaction, like having some desires unsatisfied or preferring things to be different, because the unhappy person's judgment that "something is wrong" results from not reaching her own personal ideals. To be happy, according to Buss, is to feel positively about the gap between reality and one's personal ideals; unhappiness is feeling negatively about this perceived gap.[144] Buss acknowledges that it is possible for people to differ in their tolerance of such gaps, and some people may be wholly indifferent to the perceived gap.

Buss notes that some things a person values may not be part of her good, because she recognizes the impossibility of ever satisfying them. For example, someone may value being the fastest sprinter in the world yet fail to adopt this goal as a personal ideal. She may realize that she could never achieve this goal, given her physiological make-up. Although she still values being the world's fastest runner, it is not a part of her conception of her good, which she has modified in light of her own possibilities. Buss says, "If our own conception of our own good altered every time we discovered that we were unrealistically optimistic in our appraisal of our possibilities, then we would have no immediate knowledge of what unhappiness is."[145]

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[144] Ibid., 170.
[145] Ibid., 173.

According to Buss, unhappiness occurs because we realize our actual situation falls short of our ideals, but we, unlike the sprinter, refuse to renounce our ideals. When people hold onto their dreams, while acknowledging the logical impossibility of those dreams coming to fruition, Buss believes they are in despair. She asserts that "in all cases, unhappiness as despair is a form of irrationality."[146] Later in the article, Buss makes the bolder claim that she suspects *all* unhappiness has the structure attributed to despair. "To be unhappy is to be in despair – even if it is not always (or even usually) to be in despair's deepest depths."[147] The support for this claim comes from the supposition that having ideals presupposes hoping they will be realized. Being in despair depends on hoping to realize what one knows is impossible to achieve: hence, the irrationality.

Buss presents the following example to support her view on the irrationality of unhappiness. Jane has studied classical ballet for many years and identifies herself as a dancer. Unfortunately, it is becoming clear to Jane that she is not good enough to continue as a ballet dancer. Buss describes Jane as at a crisis point in her life, because she can no longer maintain one of her personal ideals. Jane still hopes to be a ballet dancer, because being a dancer is bound up with her conception of her good. However, she also recognizes this hope as groundless, and the result of these conflicting conceptions is that Jane is quite unhappy.148

According to Buss, all unhappy people are unhappy because they are hoping for what they recognize as logically impossible,[149] and this contention is certainly illustrated

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[146] Ibid., 174-175.
[147] Ibid., 180.
[148] Ibid., 177-178.
[149] Buss describes despair as being paradoxical, because "despair at the unrealizability of one's ideals presupposes the belief in their realizability; in despairing that one's demands cannot be met, even while believing that it is reasonable to make them, one reveals the hope at the heart of one's ideals, and so one reveals that one has not yet really given up hope after all," 182.

by the Jane example. However, contrary to Buss' suggestion, this situation does not apply in all cases of unhappiness. Buss never acknowledges the possibility that someone may be unhappy over her failure to reach some goal *without* believing that this goal is logically impossible to achieve. Contrary to Buss, I believe such cases of unhappiness are actually more common than the extreme cases like Jane's. Many people who are unhappy over a failure to reach their ideals are clearly not in despair. Buss fails to recognize many possible emotions between happiness and despair; hence, not all cases of unhappiness have a contradictory or paradoxical nature.

Granted, extremes occur. It is possible for Jane to react just as Buss predicts, hoping for something she recognizes as clearly impossible to achieve. However, to say that this explanation is the only possible one for all cases of unhappiness is clearly an overstatement. Sometimes people fail to achieve certain ideals that were within their reach because they did not work hard enough or because of bad luck. Nothing is irrational about being upset over the failure to achieve a goal that you believe you could have attained.

The person who continues to persevere in the face of failure and is motivated by the unhappiness caused by her failure obviously does not fit Buss' model. We can imagine a student who receives a low grade on an important exam. She is very unhappy over her lack of success, but it would be a gross exaggeration to say that she is in despair. Although her unhappiness is caused by her failure to reach her goal, she is not longing for something that is a logical impossibility. The student is unhappy, because she realizes that her goal was completely attainable. She is unsatisfied with her performance, because

she expected more from herself. She realizes that had she only studied harder, she would have attained her goal.

Nothing is irrational about the student's unhappiness; it is totally warranted by her situation. If she knows she could have worked harder and achieved more, she should not feel satisfied with her performance. Yet her unhappiness clearly need not take the form of despair. This case demonstrates the vast middle ground between feeling happy or satisfied, and being in despair. Clearly, the student is unhappy, but she fails to exhibit the characteristics of someone in despair, and more importantly, she fails to be irrational. Let me acknowledge that some cases of unhappiness may be irrational. Perhaps the earlier example involving the person who valued sprinting would be such a case, had she insisted on holding onto the ideal of becoming the world's fastest runner. She is limited by her physiology, which renders her goal out of reach. If she persists in holding onto this ideal, she will end up in a state of despair and be guilty of the irrationality Buss describes. The rational thing to do in such situations where there is a logical impossibility of realizing one's goal is to modify those goals, lest one remain perpetually unhappy.

Although I acknowledge that such cases exist, I believe they do not constitute *all* cases of unhappiness. To be unhappy because one fails to reach an ideal that is viewed as attainable is obviously *not* irrational but completely appropriate. The expected reaction for anyone trying and failing to achieve a goal is to feel unhappy or dissatisfied. Such people need not be irrational.

Consider another example. Mary is a writer whose manuscript has not been accepted by any of the publishers to whom she has sent it. Obviously, she is unhappy

over this state of affairs, for she desires to be a published writer; indeed she *sees* herself *as* a writer. Buss would view Mary's unhappiness as a form of irrationality, for Mary has a goal that is currently clashing with reality. However, even granting that premise, why must we conclude that Mary is irrational? Why must a few failures mean that her ideal is logically impossible to achieve? Perhaps Mary will react to her feelings of unhappiness by rewriting the manuscript and resubmitting it to even more publishers. Perhaps with harder work she can get it accepted.

Buss' account also fails to recognize that unhappiness can be an effective motivator for some people. Feeling unsatisfied with one's lot in life need not condemn one to despair over the perceived gap between what one wants and what one has; it can inspire one to seek new avenues for attaining such goals. Buss' tragic view of unhappiness robs it of its potential benefit to the subject as an effective motivational tool.

Clearly, not everyone reaches their goals the first time they set out to achieve them, and sometimes luck plays an important role in how well you fare. Being in the right (or wrong) place at a certain time may have a big impact on whether you will be successful. For example, if you go out for an audition where you are competing against ten other very talented people, your odds of landing the job are pretty slim. Does this mean you should go home and cry over the gap between your dreams of stardom and the reality of your obscurity? Must you believe you will never make it and are doomed to failure every time you are unhappy? Certainly not! Although you may be unhappy because of this particular audition, you may still maintain hope that the result will be better at the next, and perhaps with a different set of competitors, it will. Nothing is irrational about maintaining hope in the face of failure, when one has appropriate goals.

Buss acknowledges that her account is vulnerable to the objection that "people are often unhappy, not because they believe they *cannot* realize some personal ideal, but simply because they believe they *have not* yet realized this ideal (as fully as they would like)."[150] That is, even if we grant that unhappiness presupposes hope, why should we think that it also presupposes despair? Several of my objections raise precisely this point against Buss; her response to this objection, however, is completely unsatisfactory.

She begins her reply by considering a case where the subject is unhappy about the gap between the ideal and the real. Buss assumes the subject wishes to close this gap but takes no action to do so. "This could be for one of two reasons: either she believes that she *cannot* close it, or she does not *want* to close it, all things considered."[151]

Either way, Buss concludes, the subject is in despair. If the subject *cannot* close the gap, obviously she is in despair and irrational. If she does not *want* to close the gap, "this must be because she believes the cost of doing so is too great."[152] But in this case the subject is not unhappy about her inability to close the gap; instead, she may be unhappy because of the high price of closing this gap. She is still in despair and irrational, however, for "she is unhappy that she cannot both realize her ideals and preserve the other good things whose sacrifice constitutes the high price she would have to pay in order to do so."[153]

The problem with Buss' reply is that it does *not* address the objection as originally posed. Buss starts from the assumption that the unhappy person is inactive and then goes on to discuss two possible scenarios. But this assumption does not follow from (and is

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[150] Ibid., 180.
[151] Ibid., 184.
[152] Ibid., 184.
[153] Ibid., 185.

not warranted by) the objection she is addressing, which simply views the subject as being unhappy about *not yet* achieving her goals.

The subject in the objection as it is originally posed does not fit either of the possibilities Buss suggests, for ex hypothesi, she believes she *can* close the gap between the real and ideal, and she wants to. The subject is unhappy, because she has not yet achieved this goal. Therefore, Buss' reply to the objection completely ignores the problem it poses.

I believe cases of unhappiness that result from the subject's perception of a gap that she does *not* view as impossible to close poses the most obvious counterexample to Buss' account, for they demonstrate how someone can be unhappy for rational reasons. In response to such cases, Buss must deny that such people are unhappy or give us reason to believe that such people really are irrational. Neither option is promising, and this highlights the inadequacy of Buss' theory.

I don't see why Buss assumes the unhappy person must be paralyzed, in addition to being unhappy. All of her examples of unhappiness involve people who are literally frozen by their failures, which seem to be irrevocable. Clearly, some forms of unhappiness may be overwhelming or leave one feeling helpless. But I believe it is incorrect to classify all forms of unhappiness as involving such despair.

Consider the following example. Claire recently got fired from her job in finance because of budget cutbacks. Although she was assured that her termination was not a reflection of her abilities, but simply due to a bad economy, Claire is still very unhappy. She values having a career and recognizes how far she is from her ideal. Although she is unhappy, she does not view this gap as insurmountable. She realizes it may be difficult

to find another job, and she may be forced to accept a decrease in salary; however, she believes eventually she will find another job.

Claire's unhappiness is clearly warranted by her situation, but unhappiness need not render Claire inactive or force her into passivity. She may be motivated by her dissatisfaction to be more aggressive in seeking another job. Her unhappiness, far from causing her to be in despair, may impel her to change her situation and achieve her goals.

We are unhappy when we feel dissatisfied with our situation. In some cases, we have the ability to act and improve our situations, thereby alleviating some of our unhappiness. Nothing is inherently tragic about feeling dissatisfied from time to time. Dissatisfaction can serve as a good source for motivation and may prevent one from becoming comfortable to the point of complacency. On Buss' view, unhappiness can never help us or be of any benefit, for it is a form of irrationality. I believe many instances of unhappiness are not only rational but also beneficial to the person experiencing the unhappiness.

Therefore, Buss' account ought to be rejected. I have found her characterization of both happiness and unhappiness to be objectionable, for she is guilty of making the Aristotelian mistake of conflating what should be distinct evaluative domains. By associating happiness and unhappiness with a person's good, she illegitimately imports into the notion of happiness moral and prudential values.

Furthermore, I have argued that all cases of unhappiness are not irrational. I have cited several examples where a person's unhappiness results from her failure to reach her goals, yet this reaction is entirely appropriate and rational. If such cases exist, then Buss' view that unhappiness is a form of irrationality should also be rejected.

4. Are Mistakes about Happiness Possible?

The final misunderstanding I shall address is whether the subject can be wrong about her own happiness. I have already discussed this issue in connection with normative theories of happiness, which sought to impose external standards on happiness judgments. I found the use of such standards to be unfounded, arguing for the subject's first-person authority over her own happiness. John Kekes also believes you can be mistaken about your own happiness, although his reasons do not invoke the existence of objective standards of happiness. Therefore, I shall revisit this issue by arguing against Kekes' view.

Kekes holds a life satisfaction view of happiness, because he identifies lasting satisfaction with one's life as a central component of happiness. Put simply, "a happy man is satisfied with his life. He would like it to continue the same way," and he would say that overall, his life is as he wants it to be.[154] Kekes believes this description of the happy person is derived from our common understanding of what it is to be happy.

According to Kekes, happiness has two aspects, one episodic and the other attitudinal. The attitude is satisfaction with one's life as a whole, and it is formed from the episodes of satisfaction one may experience by doing or having certain things that one wants. However, the attitudinal aspect is not just a collection of satisfying episodes, but rather "the attitude requires that the significance of the episodes be appraised in terms of one's whole life."[155]

Kekes clearly wants to distance himself from the simple satisfaction view of happiness, which I have already argued against. He states several times that the

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[154] Kekes, "Happiness," *Mind*, 360.
[155] Ibid., 358.

satisfaction of one's wants is not sufficient for happiness, for a person can have all that he wants, "and while he gets it, his soul shrivels" or he finds himself empty once his obsession is satisfied.[156]

Although happiness is probably incompatible with the complete frustration of all of one's wants, Kekes' notes that the precise relationship between the satisfying episodes and the attitude of being satisfied with one's life is "not simple."[157] Although Kekes believes that happiness essentially involves satisfaction, he recognizes that "there is no particular satisfaction indispensable to happiness, nor a dissatisfaction inevitably prohibiting it."[158]

Satisfaction of all of one's desires isn't even necessary for happiness, for many people want things that are of little consequence, and happiness is compatible with the frustration of at least some desires. Kekes believes it is a person's important desires that are intimately connected with her happiness. To understand what makes a desire "important" as opposed to inconsequential, Kekes distinguishes between first and second-order wants, and between first and second-order satisfactions.

First-order wants are related to those things you want to do or to have, while second-order wants involve wanting to have a life in which your important first-order wants are generally satisfied. Although a person may have many first-order wants, she has only one second order-want.[159]

Both first-order wants and satisfactions occur in the context of the episodic aspect of happiness, while the second-order want and satisfaction occur in the context of the

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[156] Ibid., 359.
[157] Ibid., 359.
[158] Ibid., 360.
[159] Ibid., 360.

attitudinal aspect of happiness. The two aspects are obviously connected in some way, for the satisfaction of one's second-order want should logically depend on the satisfaction of one's first-order wants. Kekes notes that, "the precise nature of this logical connection, however, cannot be given."[160] I suppose Kekes' reasoning here is that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to trace back which precise wants and satisfactions contributed to a person's judgment that she is satisfied with her life as a whole.

Kekes concludes that, "the satisfaction of one's second-order want is necessary to being happy."[161] Satisfaction of the second-order want requires the subject to have a life-plan, which reflects the kind of person the subject wants to be and provides a hierarchical ordering of all her first-order wants. Although one experiences first-order satisfaction with each satisfied first-order want, each episode also contributes to the formation of that person's attitude towards her life.

Kekes explains, "unless first-order wants are balanced in terms of his life-plan, a man will not achieve happiness, for he does not then know how to resolve inevitable conflicts between first-order wants, and thus how to go about satisfying his own wants."[162] Therefore, having a happy life requires satisfying one's second-order want, which depends upon both the satisfaction of many of one's important first-order wants and on the possession of a life-plan. A person experiences overall satisfaction with her life when she determines that enough of her important wants are being met, based on her standard of what it is important to do or to have.

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[160] Ibid., 361.
[161] Ibid., 367.
[162] Ibid., 367.

Kekes' view on the possibility of error in happiness judgments emerges when he considers whether the satisfaction of one's second-order want is also sufficient for happiness. He believes the satisfaction of one's second-order want is *not* sufficient, because a person's judgment that her first-order wants are satisfied may be mistaken. A person's sincere judgment that she is happy is not sufficient for happiness, because it "is open to rational evaluation. And the evaluation may be adverse."[163]

Although Kekes believes the subject determines the structuring of his first-order wants, Kekes also believes a person's commitments "can be justified and criticized independently of what he thinks or does."[164] Therefore, a person may believe she is successfully satisfying her important first-order wants and may feel satisfied as a result of this perception, yet she may still fail to be happy.

Kekes' believes error is possible in happiness judgments, because the subject can be shown to be mistaken on her own terms. A person's belief that she is satisfied with her life can be overruled on the grounds that her hierarchy of what is important is internally flawed or that the context in which her life is lived makes the achievement of second-order satisfaction impossible. Under either of these conditions, Kekes believes the person's happiness cannot last, and the person will eventually experience unavoidable dissatisfaction.

Internal defects in life-plans occur when the life-plan contains incompatible elements, or a goal that is humanly impossible to achieve, or is not well suited to the person who has it. The person who wants desperately to be an opera singer, but who simply lacks the talent to ever succeed, holds a defective life-plan. So long as she

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[163] Ibid., 370.
[164] Ibid., 369.

maintains this goal as an important want, she is destined to unhappiness, for she will never attain it; her life-plan is faulty. Although such people are "doomed to fail," Kekes believes mistakes of this kind can be pointed out to the subject. In response, the subject may "be able to change his life, or he may resign himself to lack of happiness."[165]

The second kind of error about happiness will occur when a life-plan is unrealizable due to its context, as when the life-plan goes against a society's legal and moral constraints, or is simply "out of step with one's times."[166] Perhaps the old-fashioned man, who wishes to marry a woman who will cook, clean, care for the children, and be otherwise subservient to him, is an example of a person with a life-plan that is unrealizable due to context. Although nothing is obviously defective about the internal structure of the old-fashioned man's plan, in modern American society most women believe they are equal to men and would not be willing to enter into a partnership with someone to whom they are expected to be subservient. Kekes believes that, "If a man wants to have a happy life, his life-plan should not be at radical odds with his society."[167]

Finally, Kekes discusses the possibility that the subject is mistaken about how well she is achieving her life-plan. She may experience episodic happiness because she believes her important first-order wants are being satisfied, but in reality she is being deceived. Kekes argues that she will fail to be attitudinally happy, because it is difficult to deceive people for long periods of time, and her episodic happiness probably won't be prolonged enough to warrant the attitude. Kekes believes deceived people are not

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[165] Ibid., 371, 372.
[166] Ibid., 372.
[167] Ibid., 373.

"really" happy, because they fail to achieve second-order satisfaction, which is a necessary condition of happiness.

According to Kekes, happiness requires the subject to be able to justify her standards rationally. Someone who holds a life satisfaction view of happiness like the one I have been arguing for can easily meet this requirement, for we believe the subject's sincere report is sufficient justification for her happiness. However, Kekes requires in addition that "it should be reasonable to believe and unreasonable to doubt that this judgment [of satisfaction with one's life] will continue to hold in the future."[168] Therefore, if the subject makes any of the mistakes discussed above, one would have sufficient reason to doubt the continuance of her satisfaction, and her current claim to happiness would be defeated.

Although I agree with Kekes about the subject determining her own standards of happiness, I disagree with his views on the possibility of error in happiness judgments. I believe it is an abuse of ordinary language to allow an outside observer to deny the happiness of a person who truthfully asserts that she is happy and behaves accordingly. I shall discuss several problems with the practical application of Kekes' view on correcting people's mistakes about their own happiness.

The first problem that arises is how to conceptualize a person's life-plan, such that it can be used as a litmus test for whether she is actually achieving happiness or is only under the false impression that she is happy. According to Kekes, the subject's belief that she is satisfied with her life is fallible, because we can show her to be wrong "on her own terms". Presumably, this error is made clear to the subject by referring to her life-plan, which is faulty in some way. I believe the problem is that most people do not

[168] Ibid., 373.

possess anything like the highly structured life-plans Kekes envisions, and the "plans" some people do have for ordering their goals or desires are not sufficiently well-defined to provide such a test.

Although I believe most people survey their lives, I do not believe they consciously take note of the progress and regress of each and every relevant factor, nor do I believe they are even conscious of which specific factors combine to form their perceptions of their lives. Most people do have a general sense of how things in their lives are going; however their impressions, especially when things are fine, may involve nothing more than a positive or negative feeling; no specific content may be present with which to develop the litmus test.

Furthermore, to carry out such a detailed analysis would be not only time-consuming but also a wasteful exercise, for our lives are constantly changing. Which first-order wants are "most important" may change with a person's daily experiences, or vary depending on the context. I believe the notion of a life-plan providing a fixed ordering for one's desires misrepresents the actual state of most people's desires, which are ever-changing.

In the absence of a static life-plan, it is not clear what grounds the third-party observer could appeal to in order to convince the subject that she is not really happy. Even if we grant that a third-party may criticize the subject's pursuits, or offer the subject advice, the subject need not accept the advice or embrace the criticism.

Consider the following scenario: Jane is a graduate student who is currently working on her dissertation. She is quite satisfied with her progress thus far, and she hopes to complete her thesis soon. One day Jane has a meeting with another professor in

her department, and he asks her how she is doing. She explains that she is happy with things in general, and she proceeds to list precisely why she is satisfied, what she still hopes to accomplish, and how she plans to achieve the rest of her goals, which include securing a tenure-track job at a reputable university.

This professor may not have an equally positive impression of Jane's progress or her prospects for actually reaching her goals. He may tell her that he does not like her choice of topic or advisor. He may also tell her that she has overlooked certain factors critical to achieving those goals, such as having teaching experience, participating in conferences, and publishing papers.

We can assume that Jane was happy with her life before speaking with the professor; she viewed her progress positively and had high hopes for the future. As a result of this conversation, Jane's view of her life has changed. She now sees her progress, her topic or even her advisor differently, and she is no longer satisfied with any of them. Jane's happiness may slowly recede or may disappear altogether, as the stark realization sets in that she has been deluding herself. She now believes she has a more realistic understanding of her life and her prospects for the future. Although she is now unhappy, she is grateful for the enlightenment, for she can begin to initiate changes that will move her back in the right direction.

The crucial question is whether Jane was unhappy all along, even before speaking with the professor. Clearly, she thought she was happy, but was she mistaken, as Kekes' theory suggests? If you spoke with Jane previously, she would have provided you with reasons why she believed she was happy. Although she no longer regards those reasons

as relevant, or as important as her new insights, the old reasons were applicable at the time, and they provided justification for her happiness.

I do not see why we should deny Jane's previous state of happiness, simply because she has changed her view of her life. Clearly, her past beliefs and behavior indicated that she was happy. When Jane had a positive impression of her life, she did not want things to change; she was content. The best explanation for her current behavior is that she is no longer happy; she initiates changes to alleviate the dissatisfaction she now feels.

Consider another example for further illustration. Tom walks into an ice cream shop and orders a vanilla cone. Someone says to him, "You know, there are a lot of other flavors, besides vanilla." Tom may be inspired by this comment to try something new, and upon experiencing the wonders of rocky road and jamoca almond fudge, he begins to view vanilla differently. He may find that he no longer enjoys its pure simplicity; when he does eat vanilla ice cream, he finds himself longing for more complex and sophisticated flavors. Tom's tastes have changed, and he is no longer satisfied with his old favorite, vanilla.

Should we say that Tom was never happy eating vanilla ice cream, because it clearly did not meet his gastronomical standards? Should we say that Tom only thought that he was enjoying his ice cream prior to his experience of other flavors, but that he was actually mistaken? Clearly this would be an abuse of language. We generally make assumptions about a person's mental state based on her behavior; how someone behaves usually provides a good indication of what she is thinking and feeling.

Kekes' view on the possibility of error in happiness judgments implies that there is a complete break between what people are doing, and what they are feeling. Worse still, their own reports of their mental states are of no help, for they may believe they are happy, when they are not. This is obviously not the way 'happiness' ordinarily functions in our language.

When the unenlightened Tom ordered vanilla ice cream, he did so because he liked vanilla and eating it made him happy. Although he has since changed his standards, the fact that it did make him happy seems unquestionable. Why else would he continue to order it? As with Jane's case, there is no reason to agree with Kekes and deny Tom's past happiness.

I believe Kekes' view on mistakes about happiness appears plausible only in the obvious cases involving deception. For example, Joe's happiness is largely dependent on his having a successful marriage. He will tell you that he is happy, but he does not know that his wife is having a torrid affair. Kekes would deny this man's happiness on the grounds that he fails to meet his own standard, for he clearly lacks a successful marriage.

In cases where a person's happiness is so obviously dependent upon ignorance or deception, it may be tempting to side with Kekes and deny happiness. I disagree: although the deceived man may become unhappy when he learns the truth, his new attitude does not change the fact that he was happy prior to being told. As Barrow explains, "A building is no less a building because it is built on insecure foundations, although it may not remain one for very long."[169]

To further illustrate why correcting people's judgments of their own happiness is inappropriate, consider a parallel example with unhappiness. A student walks into the

[169] Robin Barrow, *Happiness and Schooling*, 84.

Dean's office to voice her dissatisfaction with the school. The Dean replies to her complaint by saying, "This school has *everything* you wanted, and it clearly meets your standards. Therefore, you cannot be unhappy here – it's impossible! You are happy, you just don't realize it." The Dean's denial of the student's unhappiness is highly inappropriate and does nothing to alleviate it. I believe it is equally absurd to deny a person's happiness.

My criticism of Kekes' views on the possibility of error in happiness judgments highlights certain features of his theory with which I disagree, and I believe as a theory on the structure of happiness it ought to be rejected.

The first problem is that Kekes misrepresents the nature of happiness, which he views as necessarily goal-oriented. Although a person may be made happy by the satisfaction of her desires or the achievement of some goal, I do not believe this condition is present in every case of happiness. How can this model explain the happiness a person feels when someone surprises her with flowers? Her happiness is not explained by the attainment of some goal in her life-plan.

I suppose Kekes could attempt to describe the flowers case in terms of the subject fulfilling her desire to be loved, but this move seems contrived or artificial. Part of the reason she is made happy by the flowers is because she wasn't expecting them. Receiving flowers was not part of her overall plan, nor was it one of her important first-order desires. Yet receiving them still made her quite happy.

Kekes' picture also leaves out further examples involving factors that contribute to one's happiness. Consider the small child who offers to give you a hug when you look upset, or the kind friend who stops by when you are sick, offering to walk your dog or

make you soup. Our lives are greatly enhanced by our interactions with other people, yet these interactions are often unanticipated. Although we are made happy by such gestures, they have nothing to do with the achievement of goals or the satisfaction of our important first-order wants.

I also disagree with Kekes' reliance upon life-plans in his definition of happiness. I have already suggested that most people do not hold the clearly defined life-plans that Kekes' theory requires. Given the tendency to modify one's goals in light of one's success and failure, it isn't clear how someone with constantly changing priorities can easily fit this model. I believe the "plans" people do have lack the stability needed to support the structure envisioned by Kekes.

Kekes must view life-plans as a necessary component of happiness, for they tell us which desires are important. Distinguishing between important and unimportant desires is crucial for Kekes, because it is the satisfaction of our important desires that leads us to happiness. If one had no definitive way to sort through one's desires and differentiate between important and unimportant wants, Kekes' account would reduce to a simple satisfaction view of happiness, a view Kekes admits is obviously false.

Kekes needs a guarantee that the satisfaction of one's desires will result in the subject's experience of happiness, and he attempts to secure this relationship by invoking life-plans, which represent what is important to the person. The problem is that the whole notion of a life-plan is an artificial construct, which applies to very few people. Furthermore, his account makes it logically impossible for anyone lacking a life-plan to experience happiness. The happy drifter becomes a logical impossibility, as is the happiness of most children, adolescents, and college students. Although such people lack

structured life-plans, they can experience happiness. Therefore, having a well-defined life-plan cannot be necessary to happiness.

Kekes believes "happiness requires knowing what is important in one's life," and "a man is extremely unlikely to have a happy life without having a more or less clearly formed view about what his life should be."[170] However, isn't it at least conceptually possible for someone to simply drift through life, without such a strong conception of what her life should be? Surely, her happiness may be more precarious or fragile than the person who actively pursues her goals, but I do not believe that factor should altogether preclude the drifter from experiencing happiness.

Kekes' view of happiness implies that if one is unable to conceptualize a life-plan, one cannot be happy. Therefore, most children would be unable to experience happiness. This goes against common usage, which does permit happiness attributions to children and even babies. Although it is obvious that children do not have the same reasons for being happy as adults, in saying that a child is happy, it is implied that the child is in a certain mental or emotional state, which is the same state an adult is in, when we say the adult is happy. If the use of the word 'happy' implied something radically different when attributed to the child, why would we use the same word to describe the state of both children and adults?

I am not convinced that children should lack the ability to experience satisfaction simply because they lack the ability to develop a sophisticated conception of their life and their goals. Children certainly experience other emotions we commonly attribute to adults, like fear and anxiety. Why should happiness be radically different from these other emotions? For example, the child may experience anxiety at bedtime, because she

[170] Kekes, "Happiness," *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, 647; Kekes, "Happiness," *Mind*, 361.

is afraid of the dark. When we describe the child as being afraid, we are saying that she is in a particular mental state. Although the fear of an adult may have a different cause, the mental state of child and adult is similar; hence we use the same emotion word to describe both. I believe happiness functions in the same way.

The average college student would also fail to be happy on Kekes' view, for few students enter college with a clear sense of "what his life should be".[171] Most students go to college to develop their interests through exposure to a whole new array of subjects they had not previously encountered in high school. Your typical college student doesn't have anything resembling a life-plan, which clearly defines her goals and desires; she is going to college to discover those things.

The first-year law student may have an interest in becoming a lawyer but is unsure whether he wants to go into politics, become a public defense attorney, or join a private firm. Each of these choices will take him in a radically different direction, although at this time, he has no idea which path to choose. Must the lack of a definitive plan preclude him from experiencing happiness? Just as the college student will evolve, so too will the law student, yet clearly their lack of knowledge about the future should not preclude them from being happy.

Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the path the law student chooses will lead to happiness. This point is completely overlooked by Kekes' account, which assumes that fulfilling the important wants of your life-plan is sufficient for happiness. Clearly, one can have a well-defined goal towards which one works, yet the attainment of that goal may not bring happiness.

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[171] Kekes, "Happiness," *Mind*, 361.

Consider the following example. Luke had always had a strong desire to help people and dreamed of becoming a medical doctor. After college, he was accepted to a top medical school where he completed four years of intense study, followed by another five years as an intern and resident at a hospital, where he worked long hours for little pay.

In his early thirties, Luke begins his career as a doctor, finally reaching the goal he has relentlessly pursued. The only problem is that he is completely unhappy. Although he has meticulously carried out his life-plan, successfully satisfying all of his important wants, he fails to be happy. He is unsatisfied with the working environment at his hospital, which he views as a bureaucracy that ineffectively cares for its patients. He dislikes his colleagues, who he sees as lacking compassion, and he comes to view medicine as a business, having little to do with helping people, which was what attracted him to the profession in the first place. The job itself has turned out to be totally different than he had anticipated. He hates being a doctor and wishes he had chosen some other profession, instead of devoting the best years of his life to preparing for a profession he does not find fulfilling.

Clearly, happiness cannot be reduced to fulfilling one's important first-order wants, or carrying out one's life plan, for one can do both and fail to be happy. My examples have demonstrated that it is possible to be happy in the absence of a well-defined life-plan, and unhappy while fulfilling that plan. Therefore, Kekes' definition of happiness is mistaken and ought to be rejected.

Kekes' theory on the structure of happiness also appears to be unsupported by the empirical evidence gathered by psychologists researching happiness. The current

theories indicate that people are not very good at predicting what will lead to future happiness or unhappiness.[172] This conclusion is based on comparisons drawn between people's forecasts of how they anticipate feeling and the actual future emotional states these people experience.

The psychologists have found that we are quite poor at making future predictions, for we consistently overestimate the intensity and duration of our future emotional reactions. We believe that buying a new house will make us extremely happy, when in reality, it will make us somewhat happy, but not as much as we had anticipated. Both good and bad future events are never experienced as intensely as people envision.[173]

As Loewenstein and Schkade explain, all decisions involve predictions about future tastes or feelings. "Getting married involves a prediction of one's long-term feelings toward one's spouse; returning to school for an advanced degree involves predictions about how it will feel to be a student as well as predictions of long-term career preferences; buying a car involves a prediction of how it would feel to drive around in different cars. In each of these examples, the quality of the decision depends critically on the accuracy of the predictions."[174]

The research reviewed by Loewenstein and Schkade indicates that people make systematic errors in predicting their own future feelings, and the authors suggest at least three different sources of prediction errors. The first is that "people often hold incorrect intuitive theories about the determinants of happiness," the second is "different

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[172] See Jon Gertner, "The Futile Pursuit of Happiness," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 7, 2003, for a good summation of this research. See also Daniel Kahneman, "Objective Happiness," in *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, ed. Daniel Kahneman, Ed Diener, and Norbert Schwarz (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 1-25; and George Loewenstein and David Schkade, "Wouldn't It Be Nice? Predicting Future Feelings," in *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, ed. Daniel Kahneman, Ed Diener, and Norbert Schwarz (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 85-103.
[173] Gertner, 44-46.
[174] Loewenstein and Schkade, 85.

considerations may be salient when predicting future feelings than the considerations that actually influence experienced feelings," and finally "people seem to have difficulty predicting the impact of drives and emotions such as hunger, pain and anger."[175]

I believe this research supports the possibility that someone may have her important first-order wants satisfied, yet experience little to no influence on her resulting emotional state. Kekes' account relies upon our ability to predict well, for that would ensure that the correct relationship holds between the satisfaction of important first-order wants and happiness. If one can achieve first-order satisfaction, but be wrong about what will actually make one happy, then one can meet Kekes' criteria for happiness without actually achieving any happiness. The psychological research indicates the relationship between a person's desires and her future mental state is somewhat tenuous; it is not nearly as solid as it must be if Kekes' theory is to work.

Kekes attempts to make his account more complex by building in the notion of "important" wants, which are supposed to reflect the person's values and individual preferences. However, the subject still determines the hierarchy of her first-order wants. If people make systematic errors about what will ultimately make them happy, they may order their wants incorrectly, such that they may achieve the important first-order satisfaction that Kekes identifies with happiness without being made happy in the process.

This error is different from the sort Kekes envisions, for in his cases the subject experiences happiness and satisfaction only to be told by a third-party that her belief is mistaken. In the cases I am envisioning, the subject meets Kekes' criteria for happiness (she satisfies her important first-order wants), but she fails to experience happiness. The

[175] Ibid., 94.

empirical data suggests this possibility is real, as opposed to merely conceptual, for it demonstrates that people are prone to making such errors about their future state of happiness.

I believe my view of happiness is preferable, because I rely on the subject's perception of her situation instead of on the actual satisfaction of important first-order desires. The satisfaction of desires may, of course, contribute to a person's happiness, but my account can acknowledge that in some cases it may not.

In an article responding to Kekes, Garry Hagberg presents several counterexamples demonstrating how a person's happiness can fail to fit Kekes' model. I shall describe one example in particular, which I believe highlights one final weakness in Kekes' account.

Hagberg envisions a violinist whose important desire is to play at his annual recital that night. Between leaving his apartment and completing the recital, many unimportant things go wrong, such as missing the bus, breaking a string at rehearsal, losing a sheet of music, getting locked out of the dressing room, and the small audience at the recital.[176]

Although the violinist has certainly satisfied his important first-order want, it seems undeniable that his satisfaction is somewhat tarnished by all of the unimportant wants that were frustrated along the way. As Hagberg notes, "it is simply not true that the important satisfaction is hermetically sealed off from the unimportant wants in this man's experience. On this theory the myriad connections between wants, which upon reflection show themselves to be crucial for understanding happiness, are obscured."[177]

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[176] Garry Hagberg, "Understanding Happiness." *Mind* 93 (1984): 591.
[177] Ibid., 591.

Hagberg's example illustrates why Kekes' analysis of happiness oversimplifies the subject matter. A person's experience of happiness is the result of countless factors, of which she is only conscious of relatively few. Although it may be true that getting what one views as important will generally increase one's happiness, how one achieves that satisfaction will also have some influence on one's resulting state of happiness. Kekes' theory completely ignores this relevant factor.

For example, you may go to a restaurant with the important first-order desire to eat a good meal. At the restaurant, you do successfully satisfy your important desire, for your food was prepared well and very much to your liking. However, this satisfaction does not cause a significant increase in your overall happiness, because you had a terrible disagreement with your husband over dinner, which completely annihilated any satisfaction you felt with the food.

Kekes could attempt to reply to this example by stipulating that you also had an important first-order want of "not fighting with your husband," which obviously was not satisfied. This reply, however, seems artificial. Any experience that contributes to my happiness is the result of countless factors, few of which I can even identify. Although I may be successfully satisfying some important first-order want, my experience of happiness will be enhanced or decreased by countless other factors which combine to make up that overall experience.

Kekes' reply is unsatisfactory because in many cases my happiness is affected by factors independent of the satisfaction of my important want, which I could not have predicted. If I had twisted my ankle on the way into the restaurant, the painful throbbing throughout dinner might have ruined my experience of eating that good meal. I may have

loved the food and the company but was so distracted by my ankle that I was precluded from enjoying any of it. Although I may satisfy my important first-order want, this satisfaction does not automatically translate into an increase in happiness.

If you had asked the musician about his most important wants, he would have told you it was to participate in his annual recital. If you had asked him what else was important, he certainly could not have enumerated all of the factors that actually exerted some influence on his overall perception of that event. Kekes' model fails to acknowledge the complexity of a person's experience, which is not accurately captured by the simple formula, "the satisfaction of important first-order wants".

I believe this objection also illustrates why conceiving of happiness in terms of a person's perception of her life is preferable to the view put forth by Kekes. The subject's perception will be made up of various factors, one of which will certainly be whether she believes she is achieving what is important to her. However, this view can also accommodate the empirical data, which suggests that one's actual desires may completely misrepresent what is important or overlook what will be of importance. By identifying happiness with one's overall impression, we are able to account for those cases where one gets what she believes to be important, yet this achievement does not result in an increase in her happiness.

I began by arguing that Kekes' theory was objectionable because it viewed mistakes about happiness as possible, and I presented several counterexamples to support this contention. I went on to discuss Kekes' theory in greater detail, evaluating his views on the structure of happiness, which I have also shown to be problematic. I believe Kekes is guilty of offering an artificially confined structure of happiness, which

oversimplifies the subject matter and does not accurately describe many actual cases of happiness. Therefore, Kekes' theory ought to be rejected.

I shall discuss the connection between happiness and morality in the next chapter, where I shall argue for their conceptual independence. The tradition within moral philosophy is to conflate happiness and moral goodness, and this conflation provides the subject with an important reason for being moral ("Your happiness depends upon it!"). I believe this conflation is a mistake for it commits one to an implausible view of happiness. Instead, I shall use the life satisfaction view of happiness to argue that happiness and morality represent independent normative categories.

CHAPTER THREE

Happiness and Morality

I shall now focus on the connection between happiness and morality. In the first section, I shall argue against theorists who view happiness as an achievement earned by the subject, which implies her moral goodness.[178] I shall argue that the tendency to confuse a person's moral character with her ability to be happy is a remnant of the Aristotelian conception of happiness, which fails to reflect the ordinary concept of 'happiness'.

The second section will focus on a Symposium featured in the *Journal of Social Philosophy*, which addressed the logical possibility of the happy immoralist. I shall argue against the view that one cannot be both happy and immoral. In the final section, I shall discuss the distinction between being moral and merely appearing to be moral, and I shall argue that it is not actually *being* moral that correlates with happiness, but merely *appearing* to be moral. Recognizing this distinction will further demonstrate the independence of happiness and a person's moral goodness.

1. The Conflation of Happiness with Morality

Lynne McFall's view of happiness connects it with objective value. McFall views the subject's satisfaction with her life as a necessary, but not sufficient condition of

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[178] Julia Annas, "Happiness as Achievement." *Daedalus* (Spring 2004): 44-51; Julia Annas, "Should Virtue Make You Happy?" *Aepiron* 35 (2003): 1-19; Julia Annas, "Virtue and Eudaimonism." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 15 (1998): 37-55; Philippa Foot, *Moral Dilemmas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001); Lynn McFall, *Happiness* (New York: Peter Lang, 1982); and Richard Taylor, *Virtue Ethics* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002).

happiness. In addition to having a stable disposition to affirm her life, the subject must also be "leading or has led a life worth affirming (judged by some standard which is itself justified)."[179] Therefore, happiness entails being able to rationally affirm one's life, and this is accomplished by judging "(1) that the set of one's important desires is (a) satisfied and (b) successful, and (2) to be satisfied as a consequence."[180] In addition, this judgment must be justified, which means, "it meets the requirements of rationality."[181]

McFall's view of happiness employs both "subjective standards internal to a life and to objective standards grounded in shared community life."[182] The subjective standard involves the person's mental state, which McFall identifies as a state of satisfaction that results from having her desires satisfied. However, McFall believes satisfaction is not sufficient for happiness, because there is also an objective component to happiness, which requires that those desires actually be satisfied and "successful". A desire is successful only if the subject views that desire as good. Therefore, being happy requires a person to have a stable, justified belief that her desires are both satisfied and good, and this belief must be true.

McFall explicitly denies that the immoralist can achieve happiness. Although the immoralist's important desires may be fulfilled, the desires themselves cannot be successful, because "they do not aim at the good. So we conclude that his affirmation is unjustified."[183] McFall's objective standard of happiness ensures that the immoralist will never achieve happiness, for it precludes someone who experiences satisfaction as a

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[179] McFall, 18.
[180] Ibid., 35.
[181] Ibid., 93.
[182] Raymond Angelo Belliotti, *Happiness is Overrated* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 76.
[183] McFall, 36.

result of fulfilling her own internal standards from being happy if those standards are not themselves valuable.

According to McFall, happiness requires one to adopt standards that are rationally and morally justified. Therefore, she must deny the subject's first-person authority over her own happiness. Despite the subject's belief that she is satisfied with her life, she will be mistaken about being happy if she chooses the wrong standard, or if her desires are not actually satisfied.

Richard Taylor also denies that satisfaction is sufficient for happiness, and he agrees that the subject is fallible when it comes to her own happiness. Taylor describes happiness in terms of "having achieved fulfillment or having been blessed with the highest personal good" which is "the great good that is the object of the moral life, the kind of good that normally takes the better part of a lifetime to attain."[184]

According to Taylor, we can test whether someone is happy by asking ourselves whether we would wish to be that other person; if we would not, then she must not really be happy. Taylor suggests, "If someone seems to himself or herself to be happy, perhaps he or she really is happy after all. But one can see how shallow this is by asking whether one would really wish to *be* that other person. It is hard to see why not, if that other person is believed to be truly happy. But we know, in fact, that such persons are not; they only seem so to themselves, largely because they are unwilling to admit their own folly."[185]

Both Taylor and McFall must deny that happiness is attainable by everyone, for not all people possess the requisite mental capacities needed to partake in the right sorts

[184] Ibid., 111.
[185] Taylor, 109.

of activities that contribute to happiness. McFall describes "the happy idiot" as incapable of justifiably affirming her life, even if she is satisfied with that life.[186] Taylor wonders whether one would "be willing to be just like that moron, if I could thereby enjoy the same happiness?" He concludes, "The answer for any normal person is a resounding negative. This shows, not that happiness is not the ultimate personal good, but rather, that the happiness here illustrated is not the kind of happiness that a philosopher upholds as the highest good."[187]

Philippa Foot agrees with the view that some people are precluded from ever achieving happiness. She explains, "the contented life of someone on whom a prefrontal lobotomy has been performed is not the happy life," and we would "count someone as unfortunate rather than endowed with happiness if he were tricked into thinking he was successfully spending his life on important work, when he was really just messing around."[188] Despite her view that happiness is "a most intractable concept," she believes happiness "must come from something related to what is deep in human nature, and fundamental in human life, such as affection for children and friends, the desire to work, and love of freedom and truth."[189]

The view of happiness expressed by McFall, Taylor and Foot places a limit on what values the subject can promote and still be deemed happy, and they all believe adopting the wrong values will make happiness unattainable. I shall argue that all three theorists hold an implausible conception of happiness.

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[186] McFall, 35.
[187] Taylor, 112.
[188] Foot, *Moral Dilemmas*, 35.
[189] Ibid., 35.

Taylor believes my wanting (or not wanting) to be another person should determine whether that person is happy. I believe this view is completely mistaken. If I do not share your penchant for chocolate ice cream, I might not long to be you (while you are eating the chocolate ice cream). However, my not wanting to be you says nothing about the quality of your experience or your mental state; it certainly has no bearing on the question of whether *you* are happy while eating your chocolate ice cream. My wanting or not wanting to be someone else reflects my values and preferences, and it says very little about the other person.

Furthermore, I might not want to be you because I have a moral objection to the cause of your happiness. Perhaps you get pleasure from eating a juicy steak. I might not want to be you, because I am a vegetarian who does not want to experience pleasure caused by eating meat. The fact that I object to the source of your satisfaction does not detract from any happiness you might experience when you eat a good steak.

If you have no moral qualms about hunting, my disdain for hunting should not affect your happiness. Could I deny a person's experience of fear on the grounds that I do not find her particular situation scary? Could I deny someone else's hunger because I believe she has eaten enough? Obviously, what I feel (or what I suppose I would feel if I were in your shoes) has no bearing on your state of mind. The same reasoning applies to happiness. I cannot deny another person's satisfaction because I would not be satisfied were I to be her.

Foot's remarks about happiness are also objectionable, for she attempts to list acceptable means for achieving happiness, which include "affection for children and

friends, the desire to work, and love of freedom and truth."[190] But what about the person who is made miserable by her work, children, friends or family? How can her happiness be tied to such things? Clearly, for some people happiness does come from Foot's sources, but for others, happiness may be linked to something else. I do not see what benefit is incurred by limiting the concept of happiness to only those sources Foot deems appropriate, when we are given no justification for her list over any other.

I believe Foot is guilty of confusing some typical causes of happiness with the nature of happiness. For many people, satisfaction may arise from Foot's causes. However, what typically causes happiness in some (or even most people) is conceptually distinct from theorizing about the nature of happiness. When someone is in a state of satisfaction, she is happy, regardless of what caused her to be in that state.

McFall correctly describes happiness as a state of satisfaction of the subject, but she denies that it is sufficient for happiness. However, she never provides an argument to support the claim that happiness requires both a subjective and an objective component, a claim that appears unmotivated because satisfaction alone accurately reflects common usage. Without an argument demonstrating the need for an additional objective component, the principle of parsimony says we should adopt the simpler life satisfaction theory, which accurately captures the concept of happiness.

Furthermore, I believe McFall's view is weaker than the life satisfaction theory, because her theory deviates from the common usage, which does permit happiness to be attributed to people who are evil, deluded, deceived and demented. According to McFall, happiness requires rational affirmation, a criterion that is both morally and cognitively demanding. She must say that all people incapable of rationally affirming their lives fail

[190] Ibid., 35.

to achieve happiness, regardless of their level of satisfaction; yet this clearly does not reflect the ordinary function of 'happiness'.

Common usage also supports the attribution of happiness to babies and children, yet this too would be impossible on McFall's view. Taylor agrees with McFall, arguing that "children, idiots, barbarians, and even animals are perfectly capable of experiencing pleasure and pain, but none of these can become happy," because none can achieve happiness "in the sense that is important to philosophy, that is, in the sense of having achieved fulfillment or having been blessed with the highest personal good."[191] Foot is also sympathetic to this restricted view of happiness, for she connects it with "what is deep in human nature".[192]

A child may not be capable of rationally affirming her life, or connecting with what is deep in human nature, but a child can certainly experience happiness and unhappiness. Furthermore, we do not need to examine the structure of a person's beliefs or the rationality of her goals to know whether she is happy or unhappy. We often make happiness attributions independent of the formal criteria spelled out by McFall, Taylor and Foot. Therefore, the account of happiness proposed by these theorists fails to represent our ordinary concept of happiness, and they appear to have changed the subject matter altogether.

I believe these theorists are guilty of taking a word from the ordinary person's lexicon and providing it with a philosophical meaning that has lost its connection with the ordinary notion. We need an argument for why we should adopt the more stringent view of happiness found in philosophy; without an argument demonstrating the superiority of

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[191] Taylor, 111.
[192] Foot, *Moral Dilemmas*, 35.

the philosophical concept, we have no reason to accept the view of happiness presented by McFall, Taylor and Foot.

These theorists' motivation for incorporating the additional objective component into happiness comes from their identification of happiness with the good life. All three theorists embrace the Aristotelian thesis that happiness is the greatest good, the end goal towards which all people strive. If achieving happiness means that you have achieved the good life, then a life satisfaction view of happiness would imply that one could achieve the good life by doing whatever it is that makes one happy. Since the life satisfaction view places no restriction upon the causes of one's state of satisfaction, one's happiness might be the result of evil or immoral activities.

If happiness and goodness were conflated, adopting a life satisfaction view of happiness would commit one to subjectivism about value, for goodness would be identified with whatever causes satisfaction or makes one happy. McFall refers to this kind of subjectivism as "repugnant."[193] She defines subjectivism about value as "any view that grounds value wholly in some individual psychological state – pleasure, preference, desire, satisfaction – that admits of few if any internal or external constraints."

McFall attempts to avoid subjectivism by refusing to identify happiness with being in a state of satisfaction. She adds in the objective component to her account of happiness in order to build it up into a state only achieved by people who partake in the right sorts of activities. The objective component of happiness rules out all cases where one is achieving satisfaction in morally questionable ways. Although such immoral

[193] McFall, 79.

people may appear to be happy, they will fail to meet McFall's higher standard of happiness, and so they will fail to achieve the good life.

However, it is the incorporation of this objective component that causes McFall to deviate from common usage, rendering her theory of happiness implausible. She wants to ensure that only those people who partake in the right sorts of activities will achieve the good life, and so she restricts what can make a person happy. But this restriction is highly counterintuitive. Her denial of people's happiness on the grounds that it is impossible for them to rationally affirm their lives (regardless of how satisfied they appear or how satisfied they tell you they are) is dogmatic. Rather than presenting a theory of happiness, she has instead redefined the word 'happy'.

All three theorists deny that satisfaction is sufficient for happiness, yet not one of them provides any justification for holding the Aristotelian thesis that conflates happiness with goodness. I believe we should reject these theorists' first step, and deny the conflation of happiness with the good life. If we separate the realm of happiness from the realm of morality, we can accept the immoralist's happiness without thereby committing ourselves to any particular view on the goodness of his life. We can accept his satisfaction and still admonish him for it.

I believe the move to identify happiness with the greatest good is unmotivated; it goes against common usage, and we have been given no reason to accept it. Once we liberate ourselves from this identification, we no longer have the need to build into happiness the objective criteria McFall uses to avoid slipping into subjectivism.

Once you separate yourself from the Aristotelian idea that happiness has to represent this great good, you can hold a life satisfaction view of happiness without

thereby committing yourself to any particular theory of value. Identifying happiness with life satisfaction implies nothing about the moral worth of a person's life or activities. So long as she is in a state of satisfaction, she is happy, regardless of how she achieves that satisfaction.

The life satisfaction theorist can still issue evaluative judgments about people's lives by appealing to other evaluative dimensions, which are independent of happiness. The life satisfaction theorist can recognize happiness as just one good among many. Therefore, adopting a subjectivist conception of happiness does not thereby commit one to a subjectivist theory of value.

For example, a person might take great satisfaction in the suffering of others; this suffering makes him happy. We can recognize his happiness while still defending the moral judgment that he is a despicable person. In this case, it is the source of his happiness (that he gets pleasure or satisfaction from the suffering of others) that actually supports our moral judgment.

McFall and the other theorists cannot embrace a life satisfaction view of happiness, nor can they recognize happiness and morality as distinct evaluative dimensions, because they hold the Aristotelian thesis that conflates happiness with goodness. Yet it is this thesis that forces them to put forth such implausible views of happiness. I believe we should instead reject the Aristotelian identification of happiness with goodness. Once we abandon this thesis, we are free to adopt the most plausible theory of happiness, the life satisfaction view.

Julia Annas also presents a view of happiness that is objectionable; however, I shall begin with her description of the difference between ancient and modern

conceptions of happiness. On the ancient conception, happiness is the specification of our final end; it is what we seek in everything that we do, and it is achieved through virtuous behavior. For the ancients, happiness is "the end-point of the morally reflective person who has developed the right moral theory."[194]

In contrast, our modern conception of happiness is "extremely flexible in content,"[195] meaning it places no restriction on the different contents individuals may assign to happiness. The modern conception of happiness tolerates quite varied answers to the question of what makes one happy, and we are "willing to allow that just about anything could make her happy."[196] As Annas explains, "our modern conception of happiness is subjective; if I think I am happy at a given time, then I am, and if I find out later that my happiness was based on mistakes of various kinds, then, while I can regret the mistakes, I cannot deny that I was happy."[197]

For the ancients, happiness is achieved by the person who undergoes a fundamental change in values, based on reasoned reflection about her life as a whole. The ancient conception demands "a transformation in our conception of happiness by a change in what is valued," such that the agent comes to see happiness as consisting in a commitment to living virtuously.198 On the modern conception of happiness, one can be deemed happy without undergoing any such reorientation of her values. We view a person as happy so long as she views her life positively based on whatever values she chooses to promote.

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[194] Annas, "Should Virtue Make You Happy?" 13.
[195] Ibid., 13.
[196] Ibid., 13.
[197] Annas, "Virtue and Eudaimonism," 51.
[198] Annas, "Should Virtue Make you Happy?" 14.

Annas argues that it is the subjectivity of modern theories of happiness that creates the great divide between ancient and modern views. Instead of viewing happiness as arising only from virtuous activity, the modern notion allows people latitude in determining what makes them happy, placing no restriction on what can cause a person's happiness. As a consequence, the modern notion does not view happiness as the final end, but instead views it as one possible end, among others. The modern notion of happiness, in contrast to the ancient, has no problem recognizing that people have reason to pursue things other than their own happiness.

Annas appears to be disagreeing with theorists like McFall, Taylor and Foot, who conflate modern and ancient views of happiness by importing back into the modern notion certain moral requirements. However, Annas does not think our modern notion is purely subjective. She believes the modern notion is formed from "a variety of incompatible sources," resulting in a concept of happiness that "contains several different and incompatible elements."199

Annas cites the following example to support her claim that our modern conception of happiness is not purely subjective. Her colleague asked his class about their ideas on when a life is happy. The class cited the typical luxuries often associated with happiness, including a big house, cars, and material wealth. The class was then instructed to imagine that a rich relative had died, leaving them all of his money and various luxuries. The question then posed was, "Will this make you happy," to which the class overwhelmingly responded "No."[200]

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[199] Annas, "Virtue and Eudaimonism," 53, 54.
[200] Annas, "Should Virtue Make you Happy?" 18-19.

Annas argues that this response indicates our modern notion of happiness is not merely a matter of getting what you want, "but it also contained the idea of living a certain sort of life, of being active rather than a passive recipient of money and other stuff."[201] She believes our modern view of happiness is intimately connected to the ideas of achievement and activity, and the students' response implies "my happiness must involve my living a good life."[202] She rejects a purely subjective understanding of happiness, because it "leaves out some important and more objective elements which our reflection has uncovered."[203]

I do not believe Annas' example proves there is something missing from a subjective account of happiness, and I certainly do not believe there is any "objective" element to our modern notion of happiness. Furthermore, I can explain and even embrace her point about the connection between achievement and happiness without giving up the idea that happiness is purely subjective, in the sense of being a mental state that implies nothing about the goodness of the person in that state.

I believe Annas is guilty of conflating possible causes of happiness with the nature of happiness. Happiness just is a state of satisfaction of the subject, but this mental state has myriad causes. In some people, satisfaction is caused by the perception that they are achieving their goals, or at least making positive progress towards their goals. However, whether or not such people are actually reaching those goals or accomplishing anything significant is tangential to the question of whether they are happy.

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[201] Ibid., 18-19.
[202] Ibid., 19.
[203] Ibid., 19.

Instead of identifying a person's achievements as one possible cause of happiness, Annas mistakenly identifies the achievements with happiness itself. The cost of this conflation is the temptation to import into happiness an objective component. However, once you recognize happiness as a state of satisfaction that is sometimes (though not always) caused by a person's accomplishments, the temptation to modify our subjective understanding of happiness disappears.

The subjectivist about happiness has no problem granting that happiness in many people comes from the satisfaction they experience as a result of actually doing something. Embracing this point does not change the fact that the happiness itself is just a state of the subject, caused in this case by what one has accomplished.

I believe Annas misinterprets the "empirical data" from the students' responses. Rather than indicating something deep about the nature of happiness, their responses indicated what would cause satisfaction *in them*. As a group, they agreed that they would not be satisfied unless they were *actually* achieving something, or working towards some goal, and earning it. However, one cannot argue from one possible source of happiness to the conclusion that this is the only possible source of happiness, or a description of the nature of happiness itself.

Annas' identification of happiness with personal achievements is especially doubtful when we consider the possibility of someone who accomplishes great things, but is never satisfied with them. This person is an exceptionally harsh critic of herself, and she never believes she is achieving enough. She constantly dwells on what she still had to do, never appreciating all of her actual success. Her negativity motivates her to work harder and to achieve more; however, given her outlook, she is rarely happy.

This example shows that happiness is not something you earn or deserve, and being happy says nothing about the value of your life or your accomplishments. You can have a successful life in which you accomplish great things, but you fail to be happy because your expectations are too high, or you do not to appreciate the value of what you have done. What a person has done "from an objective standpoint" is irrelevant to happiness; a person's happiness need not correlate with her achievements at all.

One may experience satisfaction as a result of deception or deceit, it may arise from immoral deeds or it may be the result of taking the right drugs. Many of us might not want to experience happiness that is caused by deception, immorality or drugs, but that is merely a reflection of our values and what is important to us; it has nothing to do with happiness. I believe there is no additional objective component to our modern notion of happiness, which is best described by the life satisfaction theory.

2. The Happy Immoralist

Steven Cahn poses the question "Can the immoral person be happy?" in a symposium featured in the *Journal of Social Philosophy*.[204] He believes the immoral person can achieve happiness, and he presents the fictitious example of Fred to illustrate his view. I shall argue against several philosophers who reject Cahn's analysis of Fred, and who attempt to prove Fred is not really happy.

In Cahn's example, Fred is successfully pursuing his three most important goals in life, which are fame, wealth and the reputation for probity. Fred's life is actually a sham, because he is frequently "treacherous and dishonest," though he maintains his

[204] Steven Cahn, "The Happy Immoralist." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 35 (2004): 1.

reputation of moral uprightness by keeping his immorality a secret.[205] Fred's "shallowness and hypocrisy" seem to have paid off, because he has managed to attain all that is important to him, and he is quite satisfied with his life overall.[206] In short, Fred is happy.

Fred recognizes that his state of happiness is the direct result of his immoral behavior. Although Fred's happiness might anger some people, the injustice of it does not support a denial of his happiness. Fred is able to achieve satisfaction through immorality, because actually being moral is not important to him. Fred certainly cares about appearing to be moral (he wants people to believe he has a reputation for probity), but actually being moral is not something he values. Therefore, it is quite plausible that Fred is satisfied with his immoral life, for he has everything that is important to him.

Furthermore, Fred's ability to ignore the demands of morality is also plausible given the preponderance of immorality in American society today. The newspapers and media present daily examples of morally questionable behavior in all domains of life, including scandals on Wall Street, cheating in schools, grade inflation in Universities, physicians bribed by drug companies, drug companies withholding data from drug trials, illegal downloading of music from the internet, reporters fabricating stories, not to mention the usual scandals within politics that include a whole array of ethics violations.[207]

Philosophers tend to ignore the prevalence of immorality in our society, pretending instead that a distinction between happiness and morality does not exist.

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[205] Ibid., 1.
[206] Ibid., 1.
[207] For a discussion of the trend of immorality in American culture, see David Callahan, *The Cheating Culture* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2004).

Philosophers often deny that considerations of happiness and a person' s moral values could come into conflict with each other, maintaining the Aristotelian view that only the moral person is capable of achieving happiness.

Recognizing the distinction between morality and happiness forces philosophers to address the difficult question of why one should be moral, especially when there are self-interested reasons not to be moral. Rather than acknowledge that moral considerations may not automatically trump all other reasons for action, philosophers hide behind the Aristotelian view of happiness, which simply denies the possibility of the immoralist's happiness.

John Kleinig is among the philosophers questioning Fred's happiness, which he refers to as "epistemically unsound."[208] Kleinig views happiness as "a recognition that the various parts of one's life are functioning well in a coherent and stable fashion."[209] Kleinig is skeptical of Fred's happiness because of the way Fred has achieved his goals, and he describes Fred's "path to success" at maintaining happiness as "an extremely perilous one."[210]

Kleinig believes that for most of us, and he emphasizes, "it has to be for most of us – happiness is bound up with living a life very different from Fred's."[211] Kleinig says that "real happiness" is intimately related to "a certain kind of social world" characterized by "trust, truthfulness and respect."[212] Given Fred's values, Kleinig concludes that, "at one important level his happiness is chimerical."[213]

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[208] John Kleinig, "Happiness and Virtue." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 35 (2004): 2.
[209] Ibid., 2.
[210] Ibid., 2.
[211] Ibid., 2.
[212] Ibid., 2.
[213] Ibid., 2.

Kleinig describes Fred's happiness as both "epistemically unsound" and "chimerical," presumably because Kleinig believes it is not warranted by the conditions of Fred's life. However, I wonder whose happiness is ever "epistemically sound," and how we could possibly determine when someone's happiness is justified.

I believe this whole way of thinking about happiness is misguided, because it implies that we can judge happiness externally by looking at the objective conditions of a person's life. I have already argued against the imposition of such "objective standards" on happiness. What matters for happiness is the subject's perception of her life, and whether she likes what she sees; the actual state of her life or its objective conditions is irrelevant. Perhaps Kleinig would not be satisfied with Fred's life, but that is irrelevant to the question of Fred's happiness.

I believe the connection posited by Kleinig between happiness and "a certain kind of social world" may apply to some people, but clearly not to Fred. For people who value being moral, considerations of happiness clearly will be intertwined with moral considerations, for their satisfaction will require living up to their moral obligations. The mistake is assuming all people share these values.

For someone like Fred, being immoral does not affect his happiness, because he is able to reap the benefit of his deceptions without being adversely affected by them. Kleinig might be right that for some people, happiness requires a certain kind of "social world," but it need not be so for *all* people. Therefore, we have no reason to deny Fred's happiness.

Jeffrie Murphy argues that Fred is "attached to temporal values that are vulnerable – for example, dependent on the responses of others."[214] According to Murphy, temporal desires are "vulnerable to the vicissitudes of fate and fortune and carry only temporary satisfaction," leading to a kind of happiness that is only momentary.[215]

Murphy suspects Fred's happiness is diminished by the fear of its fragility, and the contemplation of future unhappiness would "at the very least pose a serious obstacle to his being fully happy now."[216] Murphy concludes, "When I think of the man described by Cahn, I find that I *pity* him. . . But why would I pity him if I thought he was truly happy?"[217]

I believe Murphy is mistaken about the instability of Fred's happiness, which he attributes to Fred's attachment to "temporal values". We are all at risk of future unhappiness, and our moral values provide little protection against such unhappiness. Many of us have strong attachments to other people, whose health and safety are well beyond our own control. Many people also value their own health, careers, or material wealth, but none of these things are eternal, or guaranteed to persist into the future.

Placing value or importance on anything outside of your own mind (even your own body is beyond your control – you might become disfigured, lose a limb or simply age badly) puts you at risk of dissatisfaction and unhappiness. Therefore, all people's values are vulnerable, and there is nothing especially perilous about the immoralist's happiness; it is just like the happiness of everyone else, vulnerable to the vicissitudes of life.

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[214] Jeffrie Murphy, "The Unhappy Immoralist." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 35 (2004): 12.
[215] Ibid., 12.
[216] Ibid., 12.
[217] Ibid., 13.

I believe Murphy also misdiagnoses the reason one might have for pitying Fred, which has nothing to do with his satisfaction with his life or his happiness. If you pity Fred at all, it is because you frown upon his lifestyle choices; *you* would prefer to be a more honorable (if less popular) person. But you are not Fred, and your opinions on his life and activities have nothing to do with his perception of his life. You might not want happiness that results from immorality, but that does not mean certain immoral acts cannot cause satisfaction and happiness in someone else. Your moral objection to Fred's lifestyle is a reflection of your tastes and values, and says very little about the quality of Fred's life, or his state of mind.

Christopher Gowans also questions Fred's happiness, suspecting Fred is "not only lonely but anxious as well."[218] Although Gowans acknowledges the diversity in causes of people's happiness, he agrees with Foot that, "human nature seems to impose some limits on this diversity." According to Gowans, "friendship is rather fundamental to the well-being of human beings," and we are "hard-wired for it."[219] Gowans says that Fred must be lonely, and "if he were a real person, he would not be [happy]."[220] He concludes, "Perhaps Fred is happy in some respects, but we should be most engaged with the respects in which he is probably not."[221]

The first problem I have with Gowans' discussion is his conflation of happiness with well-being. Happiness and well-being are two distinct evaluative domains. I shall discuss various theories of well-being in the next chapter, but most theorists agree that the concept of well-being is used to refer to a person's good, or what is ultimately good

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[218] Christopher Gowans, "Should Fred Elicit our Derision or Our Compassion?" *Journal of Social Philosophy* 35 (2004): 15.
[219] Ibid., 15.
[220] Ibid., 15.
[221] Ibid., 15.

for someone. On a life satisfaction view of happiness, being happy implies nothing about the goodness of a person's life, or the value of her activities.

Gowans wrongly conflates happiness with well-being, assuming if something improves one's well-being, it will automatically increase one's happiness. Even if we grant that friendship always improves one's well-being (and I seriously doubt this claim), Gowans still has not proven anything about happiness. That is, even if we suppose that Fred has no friends at all, we cannot assume he is unhappy.

However, I wonder why Gowans believes Fred does not have any friends, or that Fred lacks whatever it is he and Foot see as crucial to happiness. Perhaps Fred has many friends. After all, Fred is supposed to be a *successful* immoralist, not an unsuccessful one. Although he is immoral, no one else knows that. On the outside, Fred appears to be kind-hearted and caring; people believe he is a virtuous person. Fred is most likely loved and respected by many people who consider him to be a good friend.

However, for someone like Fred, having friends does not contribute to happiness, because the friendships themselves are not intrinsically valuable to Fred. Fred is not satisfied with his life because he has what Foot and Gowans envision as crucial to happiness; Fred is happy with his life because has achieved what is most important to him - fame, wealth and a reputation for probity.

Someone who values different things would probably not be happy with Fred's life, but that is irrelevant to Fred's happiness. Rather than dwell on what Fred lacks from an outside perspective, as Gowans suggests, we should look at what he has from his own perspective. When talking about happiness, it is the subject's perspective that matters, and not how Gowans or anyone else views a person's life.

Therefore, none of the theorists featured in this symposium present a compelling argument that challenges Fred's happiness. These theorists appear to be under the influence of the Aristotelian view that conflates happiness with morality, yet they fail to provide a convincing reason for denying the immoralist's happiness that goes beyond mere intuitions and suspicions.

I believe philosophers are tempted to deny the immoralist's happiness because of the desire to keep morality and rationality closely tied. Once you recognize the independence of morality and happiness, you open the door to the dreaded question, "So why be moral?" If you acknowledge that one's happiness can come into conflict with her duty to be moral, and you accept that it is rational to pursue one's own happiness, you are forced to acknowledge that it could be rational for someone to behave immorally.

Many moral philosophers dislike this conclusion, and they try to avoid it by denying that morality and happiness can conflict. The assumption is that acknowledging reasons for action other than one's moral obligations will somehow diminish the importance of morality, or encourage people to take their moral obligations less seriously. Given the preponderance of immorality in today's society, it seems many people already take their moral duty lightly, if they consider it at all.

However, I believe the solution to the problem of immorality is not to deny the immoralist's happiness. The philosopher's attempt to steal back the word 'happiness' from the common lexicon, and supply it with a "philosophical" definition is futile; it does little to improve the prospects for morality, and only deepens the chasm between popular culture and philosophy.

If philosophers are to make a useful contribution to society, we need to acknowledge that people have real reasons for acting immorally; in particular, we need to stop pretending we live in a world where all good people have the desire for virtue, and all immoral people are doomed to unhappiness. We certainly have to start recognizing and trying to explain trends in popular culture, including the rise in immorality, rather than dogmatically denying that such trends exist.

The chasm between popular culture and philosophy is most noticeable in the ethics literature, which is dominated by examples of immorality that have little connection to real life; most discussions of immorality involve extreme moral depravity. How can we understand the normally conscientious person who chooses to deviate from the conventional standards of morality when the only model provided by moral philosophy is of moral saints and monsters?

I believe recognizing the distinction between happiness and morality provides philosophers with the resources needed to accurately characterize people's motivations and behavior. The claim that morality and happiness are independent normative domains simply amounts to the claim that considerations of one's happiness provide one with reasons for acting that may conflict with (or are at least independent of) considerations of what is moral.

In cases of conflict, the question "Why should I be moral?" becomes most pressing. Considerations of morality will be just one perspective, among many, that offer a person compelling reasons for action. It will be up to the individual to decide which considerations should weigh most heavily, and this choice will define her as a person.

3. Morality or the Appearance of Morality?

Although happiness and morality are conceptually independent, there is sometimes an empirical correlation between a person's moral character and happiness. For many people, gaining a reputation for being moral enhances or at least facilitates their potential for happiness. This correlation can be explained by the desire shared by many people to develop and sustain relationships with others. Having a good moral character puts you at an advantage in terms of achieving happiness, because others will be more likely to interact with you if they believe you are trustworthy. Alternatively, one will have a much harder time maintaining friendships if one is blatantly and overtly immoral.

I do not wish to deny the possibility of the happy tyrant, the happy hermit or the happy immoralist; however, people who do not need others at all for happiness are certainly in the minority. Psychologists studying happiness have found a positive correlation between people's social contacts (including family and friendships) and their level of satisfaction with their lives.[222] As the psychologist Michael Argyle notes, "In many studies [social relationships] come out as the greatest single source of happiness."[223]

If having a close social network is an important source of most people's happiness, then we all have an interest in establishing good reputations, for that will best facilitate forming relationships with others, thereby maximizing the potential for achieving satisfaction. People in your community will not want to deal with you if they

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[222] See Michael Argyle, "Subjective Well-Being," in *In Pursuit of the Quality of Life*, ed. Avner Offer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 18-45; Richard Layard, *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005); Alex Michalos, "Satisfaction and Happiness." *Social Indicators Research* 8 (1980): 385-422; David Myers, *The Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: Avon Books, 1992);
[223] Argyle, 26.

believe you cannot be trusted, and it will be difficult to achieve any of your goals without some help from others. Therefore, if you are interested in maximizing your potential for happiness, you should be moral or at least maintain a reputation for being moral.

Behaving immorally might result in some short-term gains, but if you make no effort to conceal your misdeeds, eventually people will recognize you as an immoralist and avoid dealing with you altogether. Once the immoralist's true nature is revealed, whatever benefits she had will cease and it will be much harder for her to achieve satisfaction.

Recognizing the empirical connection between a person's moral character and happiness is fairly uncontroversial, and most philosophers would agree that behaving morally is usually in a person's long-term best interest. However, one question not addressed within the literature is whether it is actually being moral that is to your benefit, or simply appearing to be moral. Once we distinguish between moral behavior and the mere appearance of moral behavior, it is not clear which one actually correlates with happiness.

The virtuous person is bound by her moral obligations, and will be unable to capitalize on any opportunities that conflict with those duties. The person who merely appears to be moral will have all of the benefits of actually being moral (she will have an equally good reputation), but she will be able to exploit the situation where it is in her best interest not to be moral. I shall argue that it is the appearance of morality that correlates with happiness, and not the subject's actual moral character, because being moral without the appearance does not improve one's prospects for happiness.

I shall evaluate four possible scenarios involving morality and the appearance of morality to see which garners the greatest possible happiness payoff. The four scenarios are: (1) the moral person who also appears to be moral, (2) the immoral person who appears to be moral, (3) the moral person who does not appear to be moral, and (4) the immoral person who appears to be immoral.

I shall begin with scenario (4), which clearly brings the least benefit to the subject. The blatant immoralist completely disregards the moral conventions of her society, making no attempt to hide her contempt for its moral norms. This is the worst possible situation for promoting happiness, because it will be very difficult for the immoralist to sustain her satisfaction.

Although she may be able to achieve some short-term gains, her satisfaction will not last, because eventually she will become known as an immoralist, and her prospects for achieving long-term happiness will be poor. The people in her society will not tolerate a consistent disregard for their moral laws, and eventually this immoralist will end up in jail, or be exiled from the community, neither of which is likely to be conducive to happiness.

Therefore, from a purely self-interested standpoint, a person has reason to be moral, because life will be much more difficult and probably less satisfying without it. Since happiness for most people requires at least some interaction with others, and most people are antagonized by blatant immorality, one is best served by either being moral or at least making an effort not to appear to be immoral.

Scenario (3) is at least as bad an option for promoting happiness as (4), because in this case the subject fails to receive any benefit from her moral behavior. No one

recognizes her goodness; to the outside world, she appears to be an immoralist. The person in this scenario may get some satisfaction from knowing that she is doing the right thing despite appearances, but it is hard to believe the public's negative perception will not diminish her satisfaction significantly. Ultimately, this person will experience the same problems as the immoralist, including poor prospects for long-term happiness.

For example, an attorney might decide to defend a terrorist accused of orchestrating a bombing that killed many innocent people. The attorney may take on this case because she believes justice requires all people to receive a fair trial. She is certainly not a supporter of terrorism, but she believes morality demands that she do her best to defend her client.

This attorney's reasoning is completely misunderstood by the public, who redirects its anger towards her, and they accuse her of being a terrorist-sympathizer. She suffers many bad consequences from taking this case, including threats on her life, and she is forced to move to another city for her own safety. Needless to say, she was much happier before she took this high profile case, which has greatly disrupted her life.

In this example, the attorney sacrificed her happiness trying to live up to her moral obligations. The negative consequences she endured were caused by the public's failure to see her actions as moral. To them, she appeared to be an immoralist, and they shunned her. If the public had a better understanding of her motive, and they were not so influenced by their emotions and bigotry, her actions might have generated a different outcome. Since no one recognized her actions as morally good, she was punished as if she were an immoralist.

Therefore, behaving morally while appearing to be immoral generates none of the benefits typically associated with being moral, and does not improve one's prospects for happiness. Perhaps even the blatant immoralist is better off, for at least she received some short-term gain from her misdeeds. The attorney's moral behavior has not earned her many short or long-term benefits, other than her satisfaction with having acted morally, and it has probably reduced her happiness significantly.

Scenario (1) features someone who is moral and appears to be moral. This situation is typically viewed as the most reliable way of achieving happiness, because it involves none of the risk associated immoral behavior. Although moral behavior certainly has its benefits, being moral is not without drawbacks too, particularly when morality requires one to do things that go against one's self-interest.

Whenever happiness comes into conflict with one's moral duty, the virtuous person will have no choice but to forego her own happiness. The non-virtuous person, however, will have more options; she will be able to choose her moments of immorality, thereby maximizing her potential for sustaining happiness. The smart immoralist will work hard to develop and maintain a good reputation, only acting immorally when there is a huge payoff and little chance at being caught. The virtuous person will miss all opportunities that require her to engage in immorality, and this will limit her potential for happiness.

For example, Anne is invited to go to a concert on the same day she promised to help her sister move into a new apartment. The band playing is Anne's favorite, and this appearance is their last engagement before they break up. Anne does not want to miss this once in a lifetime opportunity, but she has made a promise to help her sister. Anne's

sister does not understand Anne's devotion to this band, and she would be very disappointed if she knew Anne canceled because of the concert.

The virtuous person would not have a choice in this situation; she would have to sacrifice her personal happiness in order to honor her promise to her sister. The non-virtuous person, however, has more options. Non-virtuous Anne might realize her sister will not be angry with her if she comes up with the right excuse, and this small lie will enable Anne to attend the concert and stay in her sister's good graces. Clearly, behaving in such a way is immoral, but it will also promote Anne's happiness more than honoring her promise. If Anne has a good reputation, her sister might not even question the lie, and Anne can have the best of both worlds – happiness and the appearance of morality (or at least no appearance of immorality).

Behaving morally does not provide a guarantee for future happiness. Although the prospects for happiness are better for the moral person, when compared with someone who is blatantly immoral, moral behavior also comes at a price, and the sacrifice made by the moral person may not necessarily translate into a happiness payoff.

There are many examples where people are harmed by their attempts to do what morality requires. For example, Joe might stop on his way to work and help someone fix a flat tire. When he arrives at work late, his boss is angry and fires him. Joe's altruistic behavior actually harms his self-interest, instead of promoting it.

Other people put their lives in jeopardy trying to rescue others from dangerous situations, like drowning, being trapped in a burning building, or being robbed. In any of these cases, getting involved is certainly morally good, but it also may cause the virtuous

person significant harm. She may get hurt, lose a limb, or become permanently disabled, none of which will enhance her prospects for happiness.

There are countless other examples of moral behavior that brings with it personal loss; the whistle blower at a company who tries to expose the corruption might end up losing her job, and the politician who refuses to give political favors might end up losing the election. In these cases, the subject could have incurred much greater personal gain by behaving immorally, and their refusal causes them to experience less satisfaction and happiness.

Although the moral person will not see immorality as an option, it cannot be denied that in some cases she is better off not living up to her moral obligations. I do not wish to deny that being moral is beneficial to people in countless ways. I only wish to emphasize that being moral may also bring certain drawbacks, often in the form of losses to one's own happiness. If one wants to maximize the potential for happiness, there may be times when one will have to do something immoral, and the person who is not able to ignore her moral obligations will achieve less happiness overall.

The final case to review is scenario (2), in which the immoral person is able to hide her misdeeds and successfully appear to be moral. To the outside world, this person appears no different from the person in scenario (1); she has an equally good reputation for probity. However, the important difference between these two people is that one takes her moral obligations seriously, while the other has no problem engaging in immorality when it is to her benefit.

The person in scenario (2) takes a big risk, because her life is a sham, and she is in constant danger of being exposed. However, although her lifestyle involves greater risk,

it also creates a greater potential for personal gain. She will be able to capitalize on all of the chances the moralist in the first scenario had to ignore, and given her good reputation, she will not appear suspicious. Any time the demands of morality jeopardize her happiness, she will be able to refuse to do what is moral.

Therefore, if one is solely concerned with promoting and maximizing happiness, instead of striving for virtue, one should strive to appear virtuous, while retaining the ability not to be moral when it is in one's best interest to do so. The moral person loses the ability to disregard her moral obligations, whereas the person who only appears to be moral always keeps that option open. Appearing to be moral may often prove the best scenario for promoting one's happiness.

The four scenarios we have considered demonstrate the importance of appearances to happiness. Morality in the absence of appearances may often provide the subject with as little happiness as blatant immorality, unless the subject's happiness is tied to the sense of doing right, regardless of the consequences. Moral behavior does generate some benefit for the subject, but it also comes at a cost, while merely appearing to be moral involves the best possible happiness payoff.

In the next chapter, I shall discuss the concept of well-being and its connection with happiness. Just as theorists have been tempted to conflate considerations of happiness with moral goodness, they have also been eager to conflate happiness with well-being, though I shall argue that this conflation is also a mistake.

CHAPTER FOUR

Well-Being and Happiness

In this chapter I shall address the relationship between happiness and well-being. I am interested in the nature of well-being, whether one can achieve it without happiness, and if not, whether it differs from happiness. In the first section I shall begin with a neutral description of the concept of well-being and then consider the debate within the literature over its nature. Following L. W. Sumner,[224] I shall describe this debate as between subjective and objective conceptions of well-being, a distinction he takes to be both exclusive and exhaustive.[225]

In section two, I shall discuss objectivist theories of well-being. I shall argue that all objectivist theories fail to provide a plausible account of the concept, mainly because of disregard for the subject's happiness. I believe all attempts to separate entirely considerations of happiness from judgments of well-being result in untenable theories of well-being. By alienating the subject from her good, they seem to be missing something crucial to the concept of well-being.

However, subjectivist theories of well-being, which factor in the subject's happiness, don't fare much better, for they simply reduce well-being to happiness. In Section three, I shall review several subjectivist theories, arguing that our best account of well-being reduces it to whatever makes a person happy.

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[224] L. W. Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 26-27.
[225] However, see Andrew Moore, "Objective Human Goods," in *Well Being and Morality: Essays in Honour of James Griffin*, ed. Roger Crisp and Brad Hooker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 79, for a discussion of James Griffin's view of the subjective/objective distinction, which would only be exclusive and not exhaustive. See also David Sobel, "On the Subjectivity of Welfare." *Ethics* 107 (1997): 501-508 for criticism of Sumner's subjective/objective distinction.

1. The Nature of Well-being: Setting up the Debate

Well-being refers to the general condition one has when one fares well or has a good life. It concerns how well a life is going "for the individual whose life it is."[226] Within the literature, the terms well-being, welfare, interest, utility, or good are all used interchangeably to represent this concept.[227] The phrase "quality of life" is also used to describe what makes a life good for the person living it.[228]

Andrew Moore explains, "Well-being is a matter of prudence, where this refers to every respect in which life is valuable for the individual whose life it is."[229] Well-being is primarily concerned with harm and benefit to the subject.[230] Stephen Darwall refers to a person's well-being as "the good of a person in the sense of what benefits her."[231] Matthew Silverstein explains, "To say that something contributes to one's well-being is simply to say that it is in one's interest, that it is good for one, or that it makes one's life go better."[232]

Theories of well-being are also referred to as theories of self-interest, where being prudent involves a person's concern with everything bearing on her self-interest.[233] Philip Bricker explains the prudent act as "the act that would *in fact* turn out best for the

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[226] Sumner, 20. See also Matthew Silverstein, "In Defense of Happiness: A Response to the Experience Machine." *Social Theory and Practice* 26 (2000): 1.
[227] Sumner, 1; Moore, 76.
[228] Thomas Scanlon, "Value, Desire, and Quality of Life," in *The Quality of Life*, ed. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 185-200).
[229] Moore, 76.
[230] See Sumner, ch. 1; and Georg Henrik Von Wright, *The Varieties of Goodness* (Bristol, England: Thoemmes Press, 1996), 87.
[231] Stephen Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1.
[232] Silverstein, 280.
[233] See Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 493-502; and Griffin, 4. However, Joseph Raz would reject the identification of well-being with self-interest, which he describes as a biological notion. Although Raz acknowledges the tendency to use these terms interchangeably, he favors a narrower use of 'self-interest'. See *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 295-299, where he discusses the main differences between the two notions.

agent, whether or not the agent is or ought to be in a position to know which act this is."[234]

The concept of welfare is normative, in the sense that "an 'ought' or normative reasons claim follows from the proposition that something is for someone's good."[235] If I am told that eating broccoli is good for me, it follows that I ought to eat the broccoli; its being good for me provides me with a reason to eat it. The normative reason may not necessarily translate into action, for I may have other reasons for not eating the broccoli, which outweigh considerations of my good. However, if something increases my welfare it should create a reason for action *for me*, regardless of whether I actually act.

Despite the tremendous amount of disagreement within the literature on well-being, most theorists would accept this minimal characterization of the concept. The concept of well-being can also be illustrated by the following examples. Jane must decide whether to stay at her current job or take an offer at another company. We can imagine that both she and a co-worker are presented with the same offer. After weighing both options carefully, Jane decides to stay with her current employer. Her co-worker decides to take the offer, switching companies.

After six months and numerous conversations with her ex-co-worker, Jane begins to regret her decision, and she becomes convinced that she should have taken the job offer. She now feels trapped in her dead-end job, where the work is unchallenging and there is little room for promotion. She believes had she switched, her life would have been much better. This belief is further confirmed by her ex-co-worker, who believes her own life has greatly improved because of the job switch. Jane's decision has adversely

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[234] Philip Bricker, "Prudence." *The Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980): 381-401.
[235] Darwall, 4.

affected her well-being; she could have made a better choice, in the sense of being better *for her*.

We can also imagine Jim, who quit smoking twenty years ago, at the insistence of his wife. At the time, he had no desire to quit and quite enjoyed the habit. It was only because of the persistence of his wife that he finally was able to overcome his addiction. He did not consciously recognize any immediate benefit from that decision, other than placating his wife. In fact, during the time right after quitting, he was quite miserable. He realized from the standpoint of his physical health he was doing the right thing, but the cravings, weight gain and general irritableness nearly had him convinced that quitting was a huge mistake.

Jim managed to survive those difficult weeks and as time passed, he slowly forgot just how pleasurable smoking was for him. Twenty years have passed and Jim is the picture of health, enjoying an active lifestyle. One day, Jim runs into an old school buddy who never quit smoking. This guy now suffers from emphysema and is in need of a lung transplant. After seeing what years of smoking can do to one's health, Jim appreciates the high quality of life he enjoys. Jim's well-being was greatly enhanced when he quit smoking, and he is much better off because of it.

G. H. Von Wright uses the phrases "the good of man" and "the welfare of man" synonymously. He acknowledges the temptation to include "happiness" as another synonym of 'welfare,' but he believes this is a mistake because "happiness" and "welfare" are actually "two concepts of different logical category or type."[236] One reason for differentiating the two concepts is "happiness has no immediate logical connexion

[236] Von Wright, 87.

with the beneficial," whereas welfare is "primarily a matter of things beneficial and harmful, i.e. good and bad, for the being concerned."[237]

Von Wright also notes that happiness and well-being differ in their relationship to causality.[238] When we wonder about well-being, we are primarily concerned with how things will causally affect the person whose welfare is in question. Considering whether something is good or bad for someone necessarily involves contemplating the causal connections the thing in question has or will have with that person. The subject's belief that her well-being was positively affected by something does not establish that her well-being was so affected.[239] The subject may be mistaken, or she may fail to appreciate the full ramifications of that thing on her present or future well-being. Most theorists agree that the subject does not maintain first-person authority over determining her level of well-being.[240]

Happiness functions quite differently. Knowing that someone is happy tells us only about her current mental state; it does not necessarily imply anything about the world. Knowing that someone is happy tells us that she views her life positively, and we can accept this without knowing what reason she has for being happy. Her belief that she is happy is sufficient for her being happy; the cause of her state is irrelevant.
Von Wright also argues that it is important not to overemphasize the differences between happiness and well-being, for it does not follow "that the two concepts are logically

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[237] Ibid., 87.
[238] Ibid., 88.
[239] Ibid., 88.
[240] This is because most theorists believe well-being involves more than just mental states. If you held a mental state view of welfare (like hedonism) you might insist upon the subject's first person authority. However, given the objections to mental state theories of well-being (for example, Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), 42-45), most theorists, including subjectivists, insist that well-being involves more than just being in a particular mental state. At the very least, it must involve some state of the world. Therefore, most deny first-person authority when it comes to well-being.

entirely unconnected. They are, on the contrary, closely allied."[241] The problem is specifying the relationship between happiness and well-being, and Von Wright concedes, "This is a question, on which I have not been able to form a clear view."[242]

The well-being or prudential value of a life should also be distinguished from another mode of value, perfectionism. Sumner explains perfectionist value in terms of something's being "a good instance or specimen of its kind, or that it exemplifies the excellences characteristic of its particular nature."[243]

Perfectionist value is independent of prudential value. For example, we can imagine someone with an exceptional talent at the violin, who single-mindedly develops and perfects that skill. Although such work raises the perfectionist value of her life, it implies nothing about her life's prudential value. If this violinist actually hates playing the violin, she is obviously not faring as well as she might have, had she pursued some of her other interests, instead of maximizing the perfectionist value of her life.

The violinist's devotion to perfection came at the expense of the development of her other interests; pursuing those other interests might have actually been better *for her*. Of course, the pursuit of those interests would have decreased her life's perfectionist value, but at least she'd be faring better than she is now. As Sumner notes, there is "no logical guarantee that the best human specimens will also be the best off, or that their underdeveloped rivals will not be faring better."[244] Therefore, perfectionist and prudential value are conceptually independent.

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[241] Ibid., 88.
[242] Ibid., 88.
[243] Sumner, 23.
[244] Ibid., 24.

I shall focus on theories of the nature of well-being, which attempt to answer to the question "What is the best way to understand 'well-being'?"[245] Theories on the nature of well-being do not provide a list of what is good or bad for a person; rather, they attempt to provide "some general account of what it is for something to benefit or harm us, thus what it is for our lives to go well or badly."[246]

Given the plethora of theories of well-being within the literature, I shall sort them into groups, rather then considering each one individually. Following Sumner, I shall divide the theories of well-being into two mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive categories, which he labels "the subjective" and "the objective".[247]

Subjectivist theories of well-being make a person's welfare depend upon the preferences, values, interests or desires of the subject herself. Diane Jeske expresses the basic subjectivist intuition that "to be well-off a person must have certain subjective attitudes towards her life; she must be satisfied and regard her life as worth living."[248] Considerations of my welfare must matter to me, and they cannot do so if they are completely divorced from what I view as important or valuable. As Sumner explains, "a theory is subjective if it treats my having a favourable attitude toward something as a necessary condition of the thing being beneficial for me. It need not also treat it as a sufficient condition, and most subjective theories will not do so."[249]

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[245] See Griffin, 1; and L. W. Sumner, "Something in Between," in *Well Being and Morality: Essays in Honour of James Griffin*, ed. Roger Crisp and Brad Hooker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 1.
[246] Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics*, 7.
[247] Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics*, 27. I should note that not all theorists would embrace the strategy for sorting through theories of well-being based on their classification as "subjective" or "objective". James Griffin argues that "the distinction between objective and subjective. . . does not mark an especially crucial distinction. It would be better if these terms (at least in this sense) were put into retirement." *Well-Being*, 33. David Sobel is also highly critical of this distinction.
[248] Diane Jeske, "Perfection, Happiness and Duties to Self." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 33 (1996): 267.
[249] Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics*, 38.

Subjectivists view welfare as having subject-relative normativity, meaning if something is good for someone, it ought to provide normative reasons for that person to want it.[250] The basic intuition is that something that is for someone's good must attract or engage her in some way; a person's good cannot be something alien to her, such that she cannot appreciate or take an interest in it. Therefore, considerations of welfare should entail reasons for acting *for* the subject herself.[251] As Sumner explains, "Since the prudential value of my life is its value *for me*, it seems reasonable to expect that the attitudes or inclinations which will figure in a constitutive account of my well-being will be mine."[252]

The objectivist would deny this dependency on the subject's attitudes. According to the objectivist, something that I do not regard favorably can be good for me and enhance my well-being, and "my life can be going well despite my failing to have any positive attitude toward it."[253] The objectivist believes someone's well-being "is independent of that person's tastes and interests, thus allowing for the possibility that such an appraisal could be correct even though it conflicted with the preferences of the individual in question."[254]

Nicholas Rescher argues that although people are the best-qualified judges of their subjective states (like happiness), they are not equally skilled at judging the objective conditions of their lives. He believes welfare "hinges upon objectively determinable circumstances," and not one's subjective states.[255] Rescher explains, "What

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[250] Darwall, 4.
[251] See Darwall, ch 1.
[252] Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics*, 37.
[253] Ibid., 38.
[254] T. M. Scanlon, "Preference and Urgency." *The Journal of Philosophy* 72 (1975): 658.
[255] Nicholas Rescher, *Welfare* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 17.

pleases a person, and what he *prefers*, *likes*, or *wants*, is something subjective unto himself, but what is *in his interest* is an objective issue, and welfare goes with the latter category, not the former."[256]

The objective and subjective views on the nature of well-being are mutually exclusive and exhaustive, for no theory could make well-being dependent upon and independent of the subject's attitudes. I shall discuss each alternative in the following two sections, determining how each view of the nature of well-being relates to happiness.

2. The Objective Conception of Well-being

Derek Parfit refers to one version of objectivism as the "objective list theory," because "certain things are good or bad for us, whether or not we want to have the good things, or to avoid the bad things. The good things might include moral goodness, rational activity, the development of one's abilities, having children and being a good parent, knowledge, and the awareness of true beauty."[257]

According to the objective list view, well-being consists in having certain goods that are considered beneficial for everyone. The possession of any of the goods on the list automatically increases the prudential value of the subject's life, independent of her personal preferences. The mere presence of these goods in the subject's life is sufficient to increase her well-being, and the more goods she is able to attain, the better-off she will be.

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[256] Ibid., 18. Although Rescher appears to hold a blatantly objectivist position, his view is actually more complicated, for he goes on to explain that "judgments regarding the welfare of people, while not *subjective*, will thus have to be emphatically *subject oriented*: they require objective information about the specific people in view" (20). The specific information he has in mind involves the subject's own tastes and inclinations. Therefore, his view would qualify as subjective on my construal of the subjective/objective distinction. However, I shall have more to say about Rescher's views on welfare in the next section.

[257] Parfit, 499.

An objective list view of welfare is attractive because it makes interpersonal comparisons of well-being easy to determine. Since well-being is the aggregate of certain objectively determinable goods, we can compare how well-off people are by reference to their possession of the goods on the list. Another appeal of this view is that it is confirmed by ordinary experience. Generally, people are better off when they are in good health, their careers go well, or they develop their talents.[258]

Nicholas Rescher's theory of welfare lists criteria for assessing a person's well-being, including physical and mental health, material prosperity and personal assets, and environmental resources.[259] According to Rescher, "A person's welfare is determined by his state and condition in certain specifiable and overt respects: health, financial status and the like."[260]

I believe Rescher's view is objectivist because he views welfare as "a function of the extent to which certain objective circumstances are realized."[261] As he explains, "The objectivity of welfare can be driven home by reviewing the yardsticks of welfare set out above. . . All such criteria are completely interpersonal and objective in character: their application hinges merely upon having the right information – information of a wholly public sort, to which others may well have easier access than the subject himself."[262]

Rescher rejects the subjectivist's claim that one must factor in the subject's preferences or attitudes in order to determine welfare. He believes "the assessment of a

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[258] Albert Weale, "Welfare," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1998).
[259] Rescher, 12-13.
[260] Ibid., 17.
[261] Ibid., 17.
[262] Ibid., 18.

person's welfare status can be carried out with reference to its external aspects and in no way requires us to penetrate his inner feelings or thought-life."[263]

Rescher appears to hold a paradigmatic objective list view, yet he makes the puzzling remark that welfare "has its idiosyncratic involvements - the subject's own tastes, inclination, personality makeup, physical constitution, etc., all potentially serve as reference points relevant to an assessment of his welfare."[264] This statement appears to contradict much of what Rescher says about welfare. It is especially odd that Rescher believes welfare ought to be concerned with such "idiosyncratic involvements" when his own theory cannot accommodate such involvements.

On Rescher's theory, a person's level of welfare is determined by the presence or absence of the goods listed, and those goods do not factor in personal tastes or preferences. Rescher's statement fails to cohere with his belief that the information needed in making welfare assessments is "of a public sort".[265] Furthermore, it is not clear how Rescher's account could be expanded to include the subject's preferences, for their very consideration contradicts his view of the nature of welfare, which is not supposed to involve "inner feelings and thought-life."[266]

Rescher clearly believes the goods on his list provide the criteria for assessing welfare, regardless of whether the subject herself recognizes such items as good or beneficial. On my understanding of the subjective/objective distinction, Rescher's view should be classified as objectivist. Therefore, I shall regard Rescher's puzzling statement

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[263] Ibid., 18.
[264] Ibid., 20.
[265] Ibid., 18.
[266] Ibid., 18.

about "idiosyncratic involvements" as irrelevant to his overall theory of welfare, which is objectivist.

John Finnis also presents an objective list view of welfare. His version lists seven values as the basic aspects of well-being; they include life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, sociability (friendship), practical reasonableness and religion.[267] Although there may be "countless objectives and forms of good," he believes they are all "ways of pursuing (not always sensibly) and realizing (not always successfully) one of the seven basic forms of the good, or some combination of them."[268]

Finnis believes one does not "pursue" or "realize" the basic values. Rather, one "participates in them," hoping "not only for the pleasure of successfully consummated physical performance and the satisfaction of successfully completed projects, but also for 'happiness' in the deeper, less usual sense of that word in which it signifies, roughly, a fullness of life, a certain development as a person, a meaningfulness of one's existence."[269]

However, Finnis believes it is not the subjective satisfaction or pleasure we may experience that is important to our well-being, but the presence in our lives of the basic values themselves, i.e., the knowledge, the friendship, the aesthetic experience. Even if participation in the basic goods was "emotionally dry, subjectively unsatisfying," it is still "good and meaningful as far as it goes."[270] Therefore, we are benefited by participating in the basic goods, regardless of our personal preferences or responses to such participation.

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[267] John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 85-90.
[268] Ibid., 90.
[269] Ibid., 96.
[270] Ibid., 97.

The capabilities approach is similar to the objective list view, only it treats welfare as a function of the capabilities people have, instead of identifying it with the possession of objective goods, which may not reflect a person's capacity to use those commodities.[271] In Nussbaum's version, the good of a person is represented by a list of central human capabilities that include: life, bodily health and integrity, the senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, play, control over one's environment, among others.[272] Nussbaum's list is supposed to represent the distinct goods crucial to human life, although she notes it may only be a partial list. Regardless of its comprehensiveness, the list is supposed to provide "the general ingredients of a well-lived life."[273]

Stephen Darwall argues for an entirely different objectivist view, which he calls a "rational care theory of welfare". According to Darwall, a person's good is determined by "what we would rationally desire for someone insofar as we care for her, or, equivalently, what is rational to desire for her for her sake."[274]

Darwall believes that a person's good and what is from her point of view seen as good are two different things, and a person's good is constituted "not by what that person values, prefers, or wants (or should value), but by what one (perhaps she) should want *insofar as one cares about her*."[275]

Darwall believes that a person's good is intrinsically normative, but not for the subject herself. Rather, it is normative for the person who cares; insofar as you care for

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[271] See Amartya Sen, "Capability and Well-Being," in *The Quality of Life*, ed. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 30-53; and Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[272] See Nussbaum, 78-80 for the complete list.
[273] Valerie Tiberius, "Cultural Differences and Philosophical Accounts of Well-being," *The Journal of Happiness Studies* 5 (2004), 302.
[274] Darwall, 12.
[275] Ibid., 4.

someone, you ought to be guided by considerations of her good.[276] As Darwall explains, "What gives considerations of someone's welfare or personal good the status of normative reasons is his having a value that makes him worthy of care, as one accepts when one cares for him."[277]

Darwall rejects the common assumption that welfare has an "agent-relative normativity," which would imply that welfare necessarily generates reasons for action for the agent herself. If welfare had an agent-relative normativity, there would be no distinction between a person's welfare and what is good from her own point of view. Darwall argues instead that the normativity of welfare is agent-neutral, because "what benefits the cared for seems not only good for him; it seems a good thing absolutely (agent-neutrally) that he benefited in this way."[278]

Darwall's rational care theory is a view on the nature of welfare, which he uses to support the normative claim that "the best life for a person, in the sense of that with the greatest prudential value or welfare, is a life of virtuous activity in something approaching the Aristotelian sense."[279] Although his rational care theory is independent of this normative claim, he believes the two lend mutual support to each other.

According to Darwall, the agent is most benefited by engaging in valuable activities, especially those that exemplify a kind of "agent neutral value" like beauty or the worth of living beings. If you care for someone, he argues, you should want not only what you see as good for her, but also what seems good agent-neutrally. Therefore, the most beneficial activities for any agent are those that "bring one into a rapport with things

[276] Ibid., 8-9
[277] Ibid., 8-9.
[278] Ibid., 15.
[279] Ibid., 17.

whose worth or importance one appreciates as neither just for some individual (in the way that welfare is) nor from any individual's point of view (in the way that agent-relative value can be)."[280]

Darwall's rational care theory is clearly objectivist, for he does not consider the subject's preferences or desires when determining what is ultimately good for her. On Darwall's account, "the conceptual tie is not between what is good for the agent and any pro-attitude of the agent, but rather, it is the case that if something is good for someone, it must be rational for one who cares for the person to desire and seek that thing."[281]

Darwall's theory, like the objective list theories, places the primary locus of the concept of welfare not in the subject, but rather in the third-person perspective. For Darwall, the relevant position from which to judge a person's welfare is from the perspective of a person who cares. On the objective list or capabilities approach to welfare, any third-party who possessed the requisite list of goods would be qualified to judge someone's welfare. All objectivist theories are alike in their denial that the subject be given any special first-person authority in determining her state of well-being.

Objectivist theories must also deny the connection between happiness and well-being, for considerations of happiness would require one to evaluate the subject's preferences and satisfaction, and the objectivist intentionally excludes such considerations when determining a person's level of well-being.

To support the separation of happiness from well-being, the objectivist can appeal to examples that demonstrate how people's preferences can fail to correlate with what is actually good for them. Sally may not enjoy eating healthy food, but eating fruits and

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[280] Ibid., 19.
[281] Richard J. Arneson, Review of *Welfare and Rational Care,* by Stephen Darwall. *Ethics* 114 (2004): 815-819.

vegetables is *good for her*, regardless of her personal tastes and desires. It is in her best interest to eat healthy food, even if this is something she fails to recognize, or finds unappealing.

Just as Sally's favorable attitude towards cream puffs does not make them good for her, Sally's aversion to spinach does not change its positive effect on her well-being. The objectivist will argue that the same reasoning applies to all of the goods on the objective list, which automatically enhance the prudential value of the subject's life even if she fails to appreciate them, and even if they fail to make her happy.

The role of the subject's attitudes and values is a main point of contention between subjective and objective conceptions of welfare. Although many subjectivists would deny that the subject's favorable attitude toward something is sufficient for that thing to benefit the subject, most believe that a favorable attitude is at least necessary. Any time you have welfare determined by the values or preferences of an outside authority with no connection to the subject (e.g., by an "objective list" or by "someone who cares"), you risk alienating the subject from her own good.

Although subjectivists may disagree over what else comprises welfare determinations, they are united in their belief that the subject's values should play some role in determining what is good *for her*. They believe an account of welfare should not make it possible for the subject to fail to be engaged by considerations of her own good. Sumner argues that we should expect our theory of welfare "to tell us what it means for my life to be going well not just in itself or from some other standpoint but *for me*, to explain how it is that lives can have this peculiar perspectival kind of value."

The question is whether the objectivist picture of prudential value, which entirely divorces it from considerations of the subject's happiness, is plausible. I shall argue that the objectivist position is objectionable. The intuitive appeal of the objectivist's examples involving physical health and the bad choices people make can be attributed to a conflation of well-being with happiness, and I believe it is really considerations of happiness that motivate people to act in such cases. Once we factor out considerations of happiness, considerations of well-being are less compelling.

The most convincing examples supporting objectivism involve the choices people make regarding their health, like those we've already discussed involving Jim and Sally. In such examples, considerations of well-being are supposed to motivate the subject to act, or at least provide the subject with reasons for action that are independent of both personal preferences and happiness. However, I question whether there is an independence from happiness in such examples, which appear to exploit the connection between health and happiness (or sickness and unhappiness).

By following your doctor's health advice, you are supposed to be increasing the prudential value of your life. But you are also playing the safest odds at ensuring your future happiness (or guarding against future unhappiness). For if you disregard the advice, and you get emphysema or some other debilitating disease, you will surely be miserable. Not only will your well-being decrease, but so will your happiness. Clearly, if you can prevent such an unfortunate outcome, you ought to do so, but the reason for your action is to ensure your future happiness.

The question is: Are considerations of well-being equally powerful when they are divorced from their connection with the subject's happiness? If the objectivist view is

correct, considerations of well-being should have the same normative force, regardless of how they affect the subject's happiness. I doubt this view can be maintained.

Consider the following example: Bob's physician tells him to stop smoking, but Bob does not want to quit. He is happy with the way he looks and feels, he enjoys smoking, drinking and eating whatever he pleases, and he does not view the doctor's advice favorably. Suppose we can tell the future, and we know with certainty that no matter what Bob does, he will live for exactly the same number of years, with exactly the same quality of life. We have removed the threat of future unhappiness that may have been caused by Bob's unhealthy lifestyle.

According to the objectivist, Bob should still follow his Doctor's advice, for it is in the interest of his "well-being" to achieve health, a good on the objective list. I believe this claim is questionable, for it is not clear in what sense Bob's life will be better for him. Bob is happy now and will remain happy in the future if he keeps living his life the way that he pleases. Why should he change his habits, when there is no threat of future harm?

The objectivist must say that considerations of Bob's well-being present him with a normative reason for action, even though acting will not noticeably benefit him in any way, and will substantially decrease his present and future happiness by requiring him to make considerable sacrifices. I believe this position is untenable. If you could be guaranteed the same quality of life regardless of whether you ate French fries and drank milkshakes, or ate wheat germ and took vitamins, why would you do the latter unless you actually had some preference for wheat germ?

Furthermore, if happiness and well-being really are wholly independent, then it is conceptually possible for something to contribute to your well-being yet make you miserable. The objectivists never discuss this conceptual possibility. They tend to emphasize how happy the subject will be once she realizes the goods on the list (or follows the advice of the one who cares). It is generally assumed that the list or the advice *will* provide the subject with happiness, eventually.

However, on the objectivists' view it is possible for someone to realize the goods on the list, and be terribly unhappy as a result. In such cases, the objectivist would have to say the subject's life is going well despite her misery. But in what sense is her life going well? Clearly, the objectivist thinks it beneficial for the subject to partake in the goods on the objective list. But if the subject fails to appreciate those goods, how is *her* life made better by them?

The problem faced by all objectivist accounts is explaining in what respect the goods on the list (or the advice of the person who cares) make the subject's life better, if it is not (as they maintain) in terms of happiness. The implausibility of their position is clearest when you consider the person who trades off happiness for well-being. What exactly has she gained by giving up her happiness? In what respect is her life better, now that she is miserable?

The objectivist does not provide a compelling response to these questions, and generally relies on the long-term happiness payoff that comes with achieving well-being. The objectivist believes well-being is something more than mere happiness, that it represents an independent normative domain that creates reasons for action that go

beyond mere considerations of your happiness. The problem is that all of their examples of well-being involve happiness indirectly.

I believe the goods on the objective list most plausibly represent tips for achieving or ensuring one's future happiness. When the objectivist says, "You ought to quit smoking because it will increase your well-being," she is actually saying "You may believe you are happy now, smoking that cigarette, but it is only short-term happiness. And if you care about your future happiness, you're best served by quitting."

I believe objectivist theories are also objectionable, because they license theorists to criticize people's preferences and impose their particular views of the good life. The objectivist cannot deny that people find happiness in ways that do not involve developing their talents, realizing their potential, or partaking in any of the "deeper values" of human life, like moral, aesthetic or intellectual values. The objectivist cannot say to the beer-drinking football lover, "You ought to experience the opera and read some Chaucer, because that will make you *really* happy." The subject maintains first-person authority over her own happiness. The only recourse for the objectivist is to appeal to a different normative category, "well-being," which provides reasons for why this person should change.

However, the obvious question the football-lover should ask is, "Why does adopting the sort of lifestyle *you* recommend improve *my* life? I don't actually enjoy or value any of the activities you recommend, and I'm happy with my life as it is. How can it be that participating in intellectual and aesthetic pursuits will make *my* life better?" I believe the objectivist cannot provide a compelling response to this question.

Consider the following example: Imagine that we take the football-loving beer-drinker to visit museums, we take him to the opera and we force him to listen to some classical music; perhaps we even read him some poetry along the way. The objectivist would say we have increased the prudential value of his life, simply in virtue of exposing him to these "objective goods." Yet if he fails to appreciate such goods, if he is bored by the museums, and falls asleep at the opera, how can they be said to benefit him in any relevant way?

I am not questioning the value of the arts to people who love and appreciate them; obviously, for such people, these activities are wonderfully enriching. But I don't believe all people, simply in virtue of being human, must enjoy such activities or find them rewarding. Some people simply don't like intellectual pursuits. Others find happiness doing mundane things, like shopping. Some people value money and success more than having sufficient free time to develop their talents. If people are so varied in their interests and values, it seems implausible to maintain that attaining certain universal goods benefits *all* people.

Another problem with objective list views is their inability to settle conflicts that will arise when one tries to promote the various goods on the list. How can we determine what is best for the subject, when realizing one good comes at the cost of realizing another? Trade-offs between goods are a necessary part of life, and conflicts between goods are inevitable. The objective list view presents an overly simplistic understanding of what it is for a life to be good (maximize goods on the list), and offers no help in determining which values to maximize, when we are forced to choose between them.

Furthermore, the existence of such conflicts between goods points out the gross inadequacy of all objectivist views, which deliberately disregard the subject's own preferences. Decisions about which values to promote (at the inevitable cost of realizing others) cannot be made on a universal scale, and when conflicts between values arise, no one right answer holds for all people.

For example, some women can only have children by jeopardizing their own health, and they must make a choice between which good to promote – their potential family or their future health. We cannot determine what this woman ought to do without appealing to her own values and preferences.

Perhaps the objectivist could reply that the list is still useful even if conflicts arise between values, because the list itself contains what is beneficial to all people. As long as the subject promotes some of the values on the list, she will achieve well-being, and she will be better off than if she deviated from the list completely. So conflicts between values pose no serious threat to the objective list view.

The objectivist might draw the following parallel: You visit a restaurant you've never been to before, but you read a review that recommended three dishes in particular. Those dishes represent the best that restaurant has to offer, the same way the objective list is supposed to represent the best things in life. So long as you stick with one of the recommended dishes, you will be sure to have a good meal; similarly, so long as you stick with the values or activities on the list, you will be sure to have a good life. Being conflicted about which of the three dishes to choose doesn't render the restaurant reviewer's suggestion useless, just as conflicts between values doesn't render the objective list obsolete.

Although this reply looks promising, it actually illustrates the implausibility of objectivism about welfare. We are supposed to believe your (gastronomic) well-being is best served by choosing one of the three recommendations, just as your personal well-being (or the goodness of your life overall) is supposed to be most enhanced by sticking with the objective goods on the list. The problem is, what if you don't like any of the three dishes recommended? How can sticking with someone else's recommendation on what to order benefit you in any concrete way when it conflicts with your own preferences?

Similarly, given the diversity of people's tastes and interests, we should not accept an account of well-being that limits a person's good to an arbitrary list. The list itself has never been justified, and we have no reason to accept the objectivists' first premise that the mere presence of the goods on the list benefits the subject. Given these objections, objectivism about welfare ought to be rejected.

The objectivist might try to modify her position in response to these objections by transforming her view into a kind of hybrid account that does factor in the subject's preferences. On such a view, the objective list would still represent what is best for a person, but the goods listed will only count towards enhancing the subject's well-being when she has positive attitude towards them.

Susan Wolf's account of what it is for a life to be meaningful is a hybrid theory of welfare, for she believes "meaningfulness is an ingredient of the good life,"[282] and "it is part of an enlightened self-interest that one wants to secure meaning in one's life."[283] On Wolf's view, having a meaningful life benefits the subject and increases her well-being.

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[282] Susan Wolf, "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life." Social Philosophy and Policy 14 (1997): 208.
[283] Ibid., 207.

Her view is objectivist because "meaningfulness is a nonderivitive aspect of a good life – its goodness does not result from its making us happy or its satisfying the preferences of the person whose life it is."[284]

However, Wolf also acknowledges the limitations of a purely objectivist account, arguing that it "would be a mistake to think that the objective good of a meaningful life is one that is wholly independent of the subject's experience or preferences, as if it could be good for a person to live a meaningful life whether or not it makes her happy or satisfies her preferences," and she concludes that "the very idea that activities can make a life meaningful without the subject's endorsement is a dubious one "[285]

According to Wolf, meaningfulness in a person's life arises from her "active engagement in projects of worth,"[286] where the worth of one's projects comes from their objective value, and not from their contribution to the subject's happiness. However, the mere presence of objective value in one's life is not sufficient for meaningfulness or well-being, because the subject must also be "actively engaged," meaning "she is gripped, excited, involved" by them.[287]

Wolf's account improves upon objectivism by recognizing the importance of the subject's perspective in determining her well-being. However, Wolf's account is still objectivist, for she places a limit on what kinds of activities and involvements can contribute to having a meaningful life. Although she admits she has "neither a philosophical theory of what objective value is nor a substantive theory about what has

[284] Ibid., 208.
[285] Ibid., 208.
[286] Ibid., 209.
[287] Ibid., 209.

this sort of value," she still believes we can distinguish between "more and less worthwhile ways to spend one's time."[288]

In particular, Wolf cites moral and intellectual accomplishments, relationships with friends and relatives, aesthetic enterprises, the cultivation of personal virtues, and religious practices as contributors to meaningfulness, while crossword puzzles, sitcoms, computer games, aerobics classes and chocolate are "not the sorts of things that make life worth living."[289]

One could fail to have a meaningful life either by not participating in the "right" sorts of activities (you play golf instead of challenging your intellect), or by lacking subjective attraction for valuable activities (you find them boring and unrewarding). According to Wolf, "in a world in which some things are more worthwhile than others, meaning arises when a subject discovers or develops an affinity for one or typically several of the more worthwhile things and has and makes use of the opportunity to engage with it or them in a positive way."[290]

The question is whether a hybrid theory like Wolf's can save objectivism? I do not believe Wolf's account can help the objectivist, for it is also vulnerable to objections.

Wolf does not present us with a principled way of differentiating activities that have objective value from those that are simply a waste of time. Wolf recognizes this problem, admitting that actually developing "a reliable method for generally distinguishing worthwhile from worthless activities seems overly optimistic."[291] Yet devising such an account is precisely what Wolf needs in order to make her theory viable.

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[288] Ibid., 209.
[289] Ibid., 210.
[290] Ibid., 211.
[291] Ibid., 212.

On Wolf's view, certain activities are meaningful *because* they connect you with things that are objectively valuable. Your subjective enjoyment, although necessary, is *not* sufficient for meaningfulness or well-being. Therefore, being able to identify which activities are objectively valuable is crucial to implementing Wolf's account.

In the absence of a theory of objective value, Wolf's list of worthwhile activities appears arbitrary, and is clearly biased by her own personal preferences. Wolf's "pretheoretical judgments about meaning" are the only evidence she provides to support her assertions about value.[292] Yet we have no reason to believe that Wolf's intuitions reflect "objective value" anymore than our own intuitions.

Wolf issues many judgments about the value of various pastimes, including the claim that chess is a valuable activity, but doing crossword puzzles is simply a waste of time.[293] She cites our respect for people who devote themselves to chess as opposed to pinball, and our admiration for basketball stars instead of jump-rope champions, as evidence for the value of those activities.

I disagree with all of Wolf's examples. Even if doing crossword puzzles is less intellectually demanding than chess, what follows from this about meaning and well-being? If meaningfulness and value only arise from doing intellectually demanding tasks, then we should not even waste our time on chess, for complex mathematical puzzles will present the greatest challenge.

Wolf's judgments about value appear arbitrary and unjustified. Why does she think our respect and admiration of certain activities reflects their objective value? Some people admire porn stars and daring criminals – does that mean their lives have more

[292] Ibid., 212.
[293] Ibid., 210, 212.

value than the obscure Peace Corps volunteer? We often admire what is most popular or salient to us, and our admiration has no connection to the worth or value of the activity.

Perhaps if we had an appreciation for the level of difficulty involved in jumping rope, if we could appreciate the amount of training and skill it takes to develop one's coordination to be able to jump rope well, we might admire the jump roper even more than the basketball star. Would this admiration really change its "objective value"?

Wolf acknowledges that she does not have a "*theory* of value" and all she can appeal to in order to support this distinction is "That we do, most of us, believe that some activities and projects are more worthwhile than others, that we regard certain activities as wastes of time (or near wastes of time) and others as inherently valuable."[294]

Wolf admits, "It is an article of faith that these untheoretical judgments, or some core of them, are philosophically defensible."[295] But her entire theory about meaningfulness depends upon those untheoretical judgments. If the judgments themselves amount to no more than "an article of faith" we have no reason to accept Wolf's account of meaningfulness or well-being.

Furthermore, if objective value can be discovered through simple reflection, then if I don't share Wolf's intuition about crosswords, can they count as a meaningful activity for me? Without a theory of objective value to fall back on, I don't see how Wolf can avoid this conclusion. But then Wolf's account will cease to be objectivist, for one will be able to find "objective value" in whatever sorts of activities one enjoys. Wolf's account will have transformed into a subjectivist theory that simply identifies well-being

[294] Ibid., 213.
[295] Ibid., 213.

with satisfaction or happiness. Since this is a conclusion no objectivist would accept, Wolf's hybrid account can provide little help for objectivism.

Stephen Darwall's rational care theory of welfare is also objectivist, and therefore, it too is vulnerable to the objections presented thus far. However, I believe Darwall's theory is actually more objectionable than the theories we have discussed, for not only does he deny the relevance of the subject's own preferences to her well-being, but he locates a person's welfare in the desires and preferences of *someone else* (namely, the person who cares). I believe his mistake is assuming the "carer" is better acquainted with the benefits and harms affecting the subject than the subject herself.

Darwall's account appears to be modeled after a parent/child relationship, where the parent obviously has a lot more knowledge about the possible consequences of action than the child. When questioning what is in the best interest of the child, we may appeal directly to the parents' judgment, because they will have a better appreciation of how things will affect the child's welfare. We can even ignore the opinions of the child herself, for we assume the parent who cares for the child is seeking to protect that child's interests.

Darwall's model treats all people as children whose loved ones know what is best for them. However, most mature adults are not like children in the respects relevant to well-being. Most adults have certain values and an understanding of what is good, and they don't need someone to protect "their interests". Furthermore, it is not clear why someone, simply in virtue of caring for me, has a better appreciation of how things will affect my welfare than I do. If I am a conscientious adult, my values and preferences

should figure centrally in determining what is good *for me*, and it seems extremely inappropriate to appeal to the values and preferences of someone else.

Darwall is assuming "the person who cares" possesses some great knowledge or insight that the subject herself lacks. Yet what if "the carer" is actually more ignorant and less sophisticated than the subject? The person who cares may be incapable of appreciating the values endorsed by the subject. In this case, how can "the carer" accurately predict what will be good for the subject?

For example, the subject may value the prestige and respect she gets from having a high-power job; achieving success is very important to her. The person caring may be unable to comprehend how anyone would choose to work, instead of staying home and raising a family. The carer will recommend certain lifestyle changes to our subject, which will certainly not make the subject happy. Our subject is satisfied with her life and has no problem with the trade-offs she has made. Why should she even listen to the one who cares, when the values this person is promoting are so foreign to her own? Furthermore, why should the carer's values trump the subject's own and be taken to reflect what is best for the subject? In this example, it is clear they should not.

I believe Darwall makes the mistake of assuming all people are attended to by infallible caregivers, who are able to connect with the deeper values in life that Darwall discusses in his normative theory of welfare. Darwall obviously believes all people are best served by connecting with such deeper values, even if they can't realize it themselves. Hence the need for the for the infallible caregiver, who is in touch with the right sorts of values, and whose judgment we can trust about what will benefit us the most.

However, once we realize that people are not attended to by infallible caregivers, we must ask ourselves: Why is the person who cares necessarily in a better position to judge what's best for me simply because she cares? In issuing welfare judgments, she will be appealing to her own values, which may not reflect what's best for me any better than my own values. Once you imagine your loved ones as ignorant, uneducated, racist or sexist people, the temptation to identify your good with what they recommend seems even less plausible than identifying your good with what you recommend.

Consider the following example: We can imagine a woman who grows up in what Julia Annas refers to as a "traditional" society, characterized by a rigidly enforced sexual division of activities, in which being a man or a woman greatly affects that individual's options.[296] We can imagine in this particular society that the norm for women is to get married quite young, care for their husbands and bear many children. Our subject does not accept the norms of her society. She recognizes the sexual inequality and believes it ought to be changed. She sees herself as a social reformer, who rejects the role society is trying to impose upon all women. Certainly, the life of any reformer is difficult, but she believes in her cause and will continue to fight for it.

According to Darwall's account, if we are interested in the subject's welfare, we should appeal to someone who cares, which in this case is the subject's mother. The mother was also raised in this society, but she accepts its norms. She wishes her daughter would stop all this feminist nonsense and just get married. She believes the best life for her daughter is to be a wife and mother. She does not understand how her daughter could

[296] See Julia Annas, "Women and the Quality of Life: Two Norms or One?" in *The Quality of Life*, ed. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 279-296.

want to be alone and make so many enemies in their small village with all of her talk about equality.

According to Darwall, we should appeal to the mother's opinion to determine what is best for the daughter. The mother may appreciate her daughter's passion for equality, but simply view the cause as hopeless. The mother's pessimism may fuel her belief that rebelling against society is too difficult and will ruin her daughter's life. The mother may also believe that once her daughter gives up the idea of rebelling, and accepts her role in society, she will actually be much better off.

Therefore, according to Darwall's theory, the daughter's well-being is best served by abandoning her cause, succumbing to values she does not hold, and playing a role in society that she firmly rejects. Intuitively, it seems obvious that the daughter's well-being is *not* best served by following the mother's advice, for following that advice will make her miserable. The daughter, who is smart enough to realize a person's sex is irrelevant to her capability, would be better off moving to where there is more equality, or staying in her village and fighting for change. Why should her choices be limited by her mother's view of how women should behave?

Just as the subject's own preferences can fail to reflect the subject's best interest, the preferences of the person who cares can also fail to correspond with what is best for the subject. Just caring for someone does not put one in any better epistemic position for judging well-being than the subject herself.

Darwall's theory is objectionable not only because it imposes external values upon the subject, but also because it provides us with no assurance that promoting those

strange values will even be of benefit to the subject. I believe Darwall's rational care theory ought to be rejected.

I have argued that objectivism about welfare, whether in the form of an objective list of goods, or a "rational care theory," cannot be maintained, for the objectivists fail to explain how the subject benefits from what their theory of welfare prescribes, especially when it goes against the subject's own preferences and adversely affects her happiness. All objectivist theories explicitly deny the relevance of the subject's preferences or values in determining what enhances her welfare, yet none explicitly states why their view of the good life better reflects her welfare. As a result, objectivist theories appear unjustified; they rely on unsupported theories of the good life, which we have no reason to accept.

If the objectivist switches instead to a hybrid view that does factor in the subject's preferences, she still has the problem of justifying which activities are objectively valuable. Without a theory to tell us why some activities are more valuable than others, this hybrid form of objectivism simply reduces to subjectivism, equating well-being with satisfaction and happiness.

In the next section I shall review subjectivist theories of well-being. Although these theorists recognize the connection between welfare and happiness, specifying the precise relationship between them will prove just as difficult for the subjectivist as maintaining their independence was for the objectivist.

3. Subjective Conceptions of Well-being

Subjectivist theories of well-being are not vulnerable to the objections I have raised against the objectivist theories, which failed to track the subject's happiness. All

subjectivists permit the subject's attitudes and values to play some role in determining her welfare, although they differ on the extent of that influence and whether those attitudes must be qualified.

Subjectivists agree that achieving happiness is an important part of having a good life, but few accept the identification of well-being with happiness.[297] Rather, they view happiness as a necessary, though not sufficient condition of well-being. The difficult task for the subjectivist is specifying what additional conditions must be added onto happiness in order to have it represent a persons' good. I shall argue that all of the subjectivists' conditions are unjustified, and their attempts to provide an account of well-being that makes it something over and above happiness fail. The subjectivists' best theories either reduce well-being to happiness, or reduce to objectivism. Since we have already rejected objectivism, we are left with the reduction of well-being to happiness.

I shall begin with the simplest subjectivist accounts of well-being, which view it as resting on the presence of particular mental states. Hedonism is a mental-state view of welfare, which holds that "pleasure is the only thing that is intrinsically prudentially good – that pleasure is the only thing that is prudentially valuable in its own right and for its own sake," and that "well-being rests solely on the presence of pleasure."[298] Henry Sidgwick identifies well-being with "desirable consciousness," meaning it is a mental state we actually desire, or that we would desire if we knew what it was like to be in that state.[299]

The problem for the subjectivist who accepts the reduction of well-being to pleasure is that well-being will cease to represent an independent evaluative domain that

[297] See Matthew Silverstein for a spirited defense of mental state accounts of prudential value.
[298] Silverstein, 280.
[299] Griffin, 9.

provides one with normative reasons for action. Identifying pleasure with well-being renders the concept of a person's good meaningless, for it will amount to nothing more than a statement of the subject's preferences, interests and values. Some people might get pleasure from evil or immoral actions, while others may like things that are not good in any respect. Mental state accounts identify a person's good with whatever produces pleasure or the desired mental state, even if the cause is evil and immoral. This conclusion is implausible.

There is a further problem with mental state accounts of well-being, which is that they cannot ensure the subject's happiness. Hedonism was rejected as a theory of happiness because happiness is more than just pleasure, and one can achieve pleasure without achieving happiness. If pleasure can occur without happiness, then pleasure cannot be identified with well-being, because one cannot achieve well-being without happiness.

In response to the objections to mental state accounts, the subjectivist's next move is to identify well-being with preference satisfaction, or the degree to which a person is able to satisfy her actual desires. Philip Bricker argues, "the mark of the prudent person" is "that he acts so as to get what he wants, has wanted, or will want."[300] According to Bricker, prudent acts are those acts that turn out best for the agent; therefore, prudentially valuable acts increase the agent's well-being. One achieves a prudentially valuable life

[300] Bricker, 382. Bricker's view is actually more complex than the simple satisfaction of actual preferences, for he believes a theory of prudence must "arbitrate the competing claims of the past, present and future selves" (383). Therefore, to achieve well-being on his view, it is not enough to do what one wants right now; one must also factor in past and future preferences, acting to maximally satisfy one's total set of preferences.

on Bricker's view through his "attempts to maximally satisfy his preferences. He creates for himself, via his actions, the best life that his circumstances will allow."[301]

The problem with this theory of well-being is that happiness is not just the satisfaction of one's desires. There will be cases where a person has the wrong desires, such that their fulfillment does not make her happy. If desire satisfaction can occur in the absence of happiness, then it cannot be identified with well-being, for a necessary condition of well-being is happiness. Therefore, preference satisfaction fails as a theory of well-being, for there will be cases where one's preferences are satisfied and one fails to be happy (and therefore, one fails to achieve well-being).

Perhaps the subjectivist could grant that preference satisfaction does not always lead to happiness, but attempt to save her account by limiting well-being to those cases where it does. On this revised view, the subjectivist would identify well-being with the satisfaction of those preferences that do contribute to happiness.

I see two problems with the revised theory. First, what exactly is the subjectivist adding to a person's state of happiness by saying that she has also achieved "well-being"? We can imagine I have a desire for a piece of chocolate cake, I satisfy that desire and now I am happy. How have I improved my well-being? In such cases where the satisfaction of one's desires leads to happiness, it isn't clear why we are talking about anything over and above happiness.

Identifying well-being with preference satisfaction simply reduces well-being to happiness, for the same factors that make me happy (the satisfaction of my preferences) will contribute to my well-being. If there is nothing more to well-being than the satisfaction of desires, there is nothing more to well-being than happiness. But then the

[301] Ibid., 382.

normative force of well-being will be lost, for claims of well-being will amount to nothing more than claims about what will make a person happy, and these carry no implications about the goodness of that person's life.

The lack of a connection with goodness presents a further problem for the person who identifies well-being with preference satisfaction. On the revised preference view, your well-being is supposed to be a function of the fulfillment of those desires that lead you to happiness. But one can achieve happiness with all kinds of desires, some of which might be nefarious in nature. The concept of happiness places no restriction on the content of one's desires. One is happy if she is satisfied with her life, regardless of what caused her satisfaction. One may find happiness by torturing small animals, mutilating and dismembering innocent people, molesting children or carrying out genocide.

The person who is able to achieve happiness through the satisfaction of evil and immoral desires, according to the revised preference view, will also achieve well-being. This seems obviously wrong, for the evaluative domain of well-being should encompass goodness; it represents what is good or beneficial for the subject. How can a person who fulfills his evil, immoral desires be said to have a life that is good in any respect? He certainly can achieve happiness, but happiness carries with it no presumption of goodness.

Therefore, explaining well-being in terms of preference satisfaction is not a viable option for the subjectivist. Preference satisfaction may not lead to happiness, in which case one fails to meet a necessary condition of well-being. Modifying this view to include only those cases where preference satisfaction leads to happiness still leaves one with the problem of evil and immoral desires. On the revised preference view, the

connection between well-being and goodness is lost, and the concept of well-being is indistinguishable from happiness.

In response to these problems, subjectivists have tried to impose additional conditions upon happiness, thereby seeking to secure the connection with goodness that well-being requires. Rather than identifying well-being with the satisfaction of a person's *actual* desires, they identify well-being with "their desires in some way improved,"[302] usually by requiring those desires to be rational or informed.

According to the informed desire view, a person's well-being is identified with the satisfaction of those desires she would have, if she had perfect rationality and full information about her alternatives and their consequences. A person's good is no longer being identified with what she wants or what will make her happy; it is now a function of what she would want if she were a perfect being.

As Peter Railton explains, "My subjective interests frequently reflect ignorance, confusion, or lack of consideration, as hindsight attests. The fact that I am now so constituted that I desire something, which, had I better knowledge of it, I would wish I had never sought, does not seem to recommend it to me as part of my good."

The informed desire theorist seeks to rule out all faulty desires, invoking the model of an "ideal observer" to explain the improved set of preferences being identified with one's welfare. The ideal observer is supposed to be you, only better, for the ideal observer is fully rational, fully informed and fully appreciative of the nature of the objects of her desires. Presumably, if you possessed full information and perfect rationality, your actual preferences would change. The ideal observer's preferences are

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[302] Griffin, 10.

just those desires you *would* have, if you had full information, you were perfectly rational, and you were not making any factual or logical errors.

Railton's account of non-moral goodness demonstrates how an ideal observer can be constructed out of a particular individual's subjective interests.[303] We can imagine a person who has been given "unqualified cognitive and imaginative powers, and full factual and nomological information about his physical and psychological constitution, capacities, circumstances and history" and "whose instrumental rationality is in no way defective."[304] This person is now an ideal observer who can tell us what he would want his actual self to want were he in his actual self's exact circumstances. The ideal observer's preferences provide a ranking of his objective interests, which are supposed to reflect what is better or worse for his actual self.

James Griffin also equates a person's well-being with "the fulfillment of informed desires,"[305] where an informed desire "is one formed by appreciation of the nature of its object."[306] On Griffin's view, a person's well-being is not enhanced by the sheer number of desires she satisfies, nor by the strength or intensity of the desires. Instead, Griffin's account gives "prominence to the features or qualities of the objects of desire, and not to the mere existence of desire."[307]

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[303] Peter Railton, "Moral Realism," in *Moral Discourse and Practice: Some Philosophical Approaches*, ed. Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard and Peter Railton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 137-163. Railton never discusses well-being explicitly, for he is presenting an account of non-moral goodness, which he defines in terms of the satisfaction of one's objective interests. However, a persons' objective interests provide a ranking of what is best for her, so satisfying one's objective interests will increase her well-being. Therefore, Railton's model of non-moral goodness is also a theory of well-being, even though he avoids the use of this terminology.
[304] Ibid., 142.
[305] Griffin, 14.
[306] Ibid., 14
[307] Ibid., 26.

Griffin believes we value certain things because they enhance life "in a generally intelligible way, in a way that pertains to human life, not to any one particular person's life."[308] Griffin believes seeing anything as prudentially valuable involves seeing it "as an instance of something generally intelligible as valuable and, furthermore, as valuable for any (normal) human."[309] He believes "virtually all persons, when informed, want to live autonomously, to have deep personal relations, to accomplish something with their lives, to enjoy themselves," and "with experience, we build up such a profile of the components of a valuable life."[310]

Informed desire theories are supposed to preserve the subjectivist intuition that well-being requires, at the very least, happiness. The problem is the idealization process itself jeopardizes the connection between well-being and happiness. If the process of making me fully rational and fully informed changes me into a person radically different from my actual self, what it is that makes her happy may have no connection with what makes me happy. Consequently, if I fulfill the desires of my ideal self, there is no guarantee my actual self will be any happier. If the satisfaction of my ideal self's desires can fail to correlate with my actual self's happiness, those desires cannot represent my well-being, for happiness is a necessary condition of well-being.

To become fully idealized, it is not enough for you to simply be given the powers of rationality and insight into the value of objects. You must also appreciate and respond to that value, understanding it "in a way that allows it to exert whatever motivational effect it will."[311] As Rosati explains, "Given the changes that a person must undergo to

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[308] James Griffin, *Value Judgment: Improving our Ethical Beliefs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 27.
[309] Ibid., 29.
[310] Griffin, *Well-being*, 114.
[311] Connie Rosati, "Persons, Perspectives, and Full Information Accounts of the Good." *Ethics* 105 (1995):

become fully informed, Ideal Advisor views do not guarantee that we are the persons who occupy the ideal standpoint."[312]

The burden falls on the defender of the ideal observer theory to explain why the satisfaction of my ideal self's preferences represents my good. Satisfying the ideal self's preferences will certainly make my ideal self happy, but what exactly does it do for me? How does it improve the goodness of my life, when I don't share (and can't appreciate) what she desires?

Although my ideal self was originally constructed out of my interests and preferences, the process of idealization gave my ideal self information and experiences that I lack, thereby transforming her into someone else. As David Sobel notes, "The idealization process turns us into such different creatures that it would be surprising if the well-being of the two of us, my informed self and my ordinary self, consisted in the same things."[313]

Sobel also objects to the idealization process, because "some of the limitations which are idealized away by the full information account play a fundamental role in shaping our capacity to value in the ways that we do. In order to have many experiences one must be a particular kind of person. The idealized self which the full information theorist recommends is not the kind of person who could have some of the experiences which could be ours."[314] Sobel concludes, "given what we are like and how we value,

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[312] Ibid., 311.
[313] Sobel, "Full Information Accounts of Well-Being," 793.
[314] Ibid., 809.

the hope of commensurating our well-being by constructing a vantage point fully informed about our possible futures is misguided."[315]

I believe the ideal observer view should be classified as objectivist, for it describes the subject's well-being independent of her actual values or what will make her happy. As an objectivist theory, it ought to be rejected, for it is vulnerable to our previously stated objections.

The rejection of ideal observer views leaves us with only one subjectivist theory to consider, and it comes from L.W. Sumner. Sumner believes happiness is a necessary condition for the achievement of well-being, but he resists a simple reduction of the two concepts. Sumner distinguishes well-being from happiness by requiring that the subject's happiness be "authentic" for it to count towards well-being. There are two conditions of authenticity, information and autonomy.[316]

The information condition ensures the subject is not lacking any pertinent information about her life that would change her happiness assessment. To meet the first requirement, the subject cannot have any false impressions, or be under any delusions. The information requirement ensures that the subject's happiness is warranted, resulting from the actual attainment of whatever she views as important or good.

To meet the second condition of authenticity, the subject must be autonomous, meaning "her beliefs, or values, or aims, or decisions, or actions are, in some important sense, *her own*."[317] The autonomy condition is supposed to rule out all cases of social

[315] Ibid., 808.
[316] Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness and Ethics*, 139.
[317] Ibid., 167.

conditioning, like "indoctrination, programming, brainwashing, role scripting, and the like."[318]

The two conditions of authenticity are supposed to restrict when a person's happiness contributes to her well-being. If the subject fails to meet either of the conditions, she may be happy, but she will not have a life that's good for her.

Although Sumner wants to avoid a simple reduction of well-being to happiness, his theory of well-being draws no such distinction between the two concepts, because the exact same factors that contribute to a person's happiness will contribute to her well-being. The two conditions of authenticity place no restriction on the cause of one's happiness, and as a result, they fail to preserve well-being's connection with goodness. Once again, the objection is that well-being essentially reduces to happiness.

The problem with Sumner's view is that his conditions of authenticity are too weak. People will find happiness in a multitude of ways, some of which may involve evil and immoral actions. If well-being is nothing more than happiness that is informed and achieved freely, then evil dictators, serial killers, child molesters and other depraved individuals will all be able to attain well-being; they will all have good lives. This judgment is implausible.

A further problem with Sumner's view is that his two conditions of authenticity are completely unjustified. Sumner obviously believes that it is better for the happy person to be informed and autonomous, instead of under delusions and indoctrinated. The information and autonomy conditions represent Sumner's view on what makes life good, but why should we adopt that view?

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[318] Ibid., 171.

Perhaps I hold an alternative theory of the good life that places no value on knowledge, and instead emphasizes the benefits of ignorance. On the "ignorance is bliss" theory of the good, the less you know the better off you will be. Following Sumner, I can define well-being in terms of *uninformed* happiness. Armed with such a theory, I can make similar pronouncements about well-being, deeming only those people whose happiness reflects ignorance as achieving it.

The ignorance theory is no different from Sumner's theory, for we are both defining well-being in terms of our personal views on what is good in life. The problem with both theories is justifying the claim that having full information and autonomy, or ignorance, makes life better for the subject. Sumner's theory may seem more intuitively plausible, but without a justification for why his conditions make life good, his theory is equally unwarranted and objectionable.

Therefore, the problems with Sumner's account of well-being are two-fold. The conditions of authenticity fail to do their job in preserving the goodness of well-being, and as a result, Sumner's account reduces well-being to nothing more than a state of happiness. Sumner's conditions of authenticity are also objectionable because they are unjustified, representing Sumner's views on what makes a life good. Therefore, we ought to reject Sumner's theory of well-being.

So where does this leave us in the debate over well-being? Briefly recapping our discussion of well-being, I found objectivist theories objectionable because of their failure to track the subject's happiness. Although objectivist theories were able to preserve the connection between well-being and goodness, they were all guilty of using

the notion of well-being to impose their particular views on what is good in life onto the subject.

Rejecting objectivism left us with only subjectivist theories to consider, all of which were supposed to preserve the intuition that at the very least, achieving well-being requires happiness. The problem for the subjectivist is providing content to the notion of well-being that distinguishes it from happiness. Mental state views were rejected because they simply reduced well-being to happiness, while preference satisfaction views failed to preserve the subject's happiness. Even the revised preference view was objectionable, for it compromised the connection between well-being and goodness.

Ideal observer views were supposed to improve upon preference views by identifying well-being with informed, rational desires, but they were rejected because they failed to preserve the subjectivist intuition that happiness is a necessary condition of well-being. I believe all ideal observer views actually reduce to objectivism, and they should be rejected for that reason. Finally, we rejected Sumner's view because it too reduced well-being to happiness.

Therefore, no theory of well-being survives unscathed. I believe our only alternative is to abandon talk of "well-being" altogether. Referring to a person's good, what's best for her, or what's in her best interest only leads to confusion, for there are no objective standards to which one can appeal for such judgments, yet appealing to the subject's own preferences simply reduces well-being to happiness.

We can speak intelligibly about a person's happiness, but I do not believe we can make similar pronouncements about her well-being. The diversity among theories of well-being indicates that there is no shared understanding of what we mean by the

concept; objectivists view a person's good as independent of her actual values or preferences, while subjectivists regard it as intimately related to those values and, more importantly, to happiness.

The overwhelming objections I have already discussed against both objectivist and subjectivist theories suggest there is something wrong with the concept itself. I believe well-being is actually an empty concept; it does not represent an independent normative domain, and we should stop using this term to issue judgments on the value of people's lives. We can intelligibly speak about a person's happiness, about her moral goodness, and even about her struggle for perfection, but we cannot comment on her well-being or her good, when that is understood to be something over and above her happiness or her moral character.

CONCLUSION

Happiness, Well-being and Morality

Happiness is a state of satisfaction, and being happy implies nothing about the value of a person's life independent of her own perceptions. A person's happiness is proportional to how positively she views her life; the more favorable her impression, the happier she will be.

One might wonder what practical implications follow from my view of happiness. If happiness is nothing more than a state of satisfaction, one might worry that we can no longer appeal to happiness in motivating people to act. The concern might be that granting people first-person authority with respect to their happiness would preclude any meaningful conversations about happiness, and prohibit us from giving people advice. If they are happy, one may argue, what more is there to say?

I believe this concern is mistaken. Just because someone is satisfied does not mean education about what one values cannot take place, for happiness is a dynamic notion. One may be happy right now, but that does not mean she is assured future happiness. Her happiness may only be short-term, and her present choices may be jeopardizing her future happiness.

Since happiness is a degree notion, one may be happy, but her satisfaction level may be at the lower end of this range. Advising people about their choices can highlight the shortsightedness of their goals, or the limited intensity of their satisfaction. We need not deny a person's present state of happiness to make positive suggestions about changes she could initiate to ensure her future happiness.

Consider the following example: Steve frequently skips school to hang out with his friends. He is happy when he is with his friends, and he sees no reason to attend class regularly. Steve's problem is that his happiness is short-term. Eventually, he is going to be kicked out of school, and this will severely limit his prospects for the future.

Although Steve is happy right now, someone might point out to him that he is jeopardizing his future happiness, trading it for short-term pleasure. Admitting that Steve is happy does not force us to approve of his lifestyle, nor does it preclude us from offering him advice. We do not have to deny Steve's happiness in order to use his prospects for staying happy as motivation to change his behavior.

Although happiness is intimately related to personal preferences, we can still offer advice on what people can do to maximize or improve their state of satisfaction. We can appeal to empirical evidence from psychologists to see which preferences and lifestyle choices are most conducive to achieving satisfaction. Although there is no guarantee of success, this advice can help one to increase her chances of achieving happiness by pointing out strategies that have worked in the past for many other people.

Consider another example: Susan's goal is to get into a doctoral program in psychology. She has already applied to numerous programs nearby, but she has been rejected by all of them. Now Susan is very unhappy, and she is seeking advice. My view of happiness can offer Susan two strategies for alleviating her unhappiness.

The first strategy is to view the goals as fixed, and to search for new means of achieving them. Susan might try applying to graduate schools in locations that are less desirable, because she will have a better chance of being accepted if there is less

competition. Strategy I attempts to alleviate the subject's dissatisfaction through positive action.

Most theories of happiness can only appeal to strategy I in advising people about happiness, because they view the subject's desires, goals and values as static. Although this strategy can be effective, it only works in cases where the subject has not already exhausted all of her options. For strategy I to be effective, there must be alternative means available that the subject has overlooked or not yet tried.

However, Strategy I cannot help the person who has goals that are simply unreachable, or who faces obstacles that are insurmountable. Some people have unrealistic expectations, and the goals they adopt cannot be reached. Consider the case of the aspiring model/singer/actress or the aspiring professional sports player who simply lacks the talent needed to achieve success. These people are not guilty of not trying hard enough; what they need to succeed is beyond their grasp. There are no alternative means for them to try, and if they hold onto their dreams, they will never be happy.

Other people suffer from bad luck, which creates obstacles that stand in their way of success. The tennis player who is moments away from winning her first championship suffers an injury that forces her to forfeit the match. She tries to compete again, but her injury affects her ability to play the game. She never gets that close to winning another major tournament, and her injury has destroyed her career. As long as she holds onto the dream of being a professional tennis player, she will be unhappy.

One shortcoming of strategy I is that it overlooks the dynamic nature of people, and their ability to change their goals, desires, preferences and values. A person's happiness is not static because it is responsive to external changes that occur in the

subject's circumstances, as well as internal changes that affect what she values or views as important. Strategy I focuses only on the person's external circumstances, ignoring the possibility of making internal changes. Recognizing people as dynamic beings enables us to appeal to an alternative strategy in alleviating unhappiness. Rather than working on the world, you could work on yourself by trying to change your goals. Since those goals are not fixed, people always maintain the ability to modify them, or abandon them altogether.

Returning to the example of Susan, the aspiring graduate student, we can imagine that she has tried every available means to achieving her goal. Unfortunately, she still has not been accepted into any doctoral programs, because her record in psychology is simply not good enough. Now Susan is extremely unhappy, and she can no longer appeal to Strategy I for help. What else can she do?

Strategy II suggests modifying her goals. She should rethink what it is about psychology that she likes, and then try to come up with a new goal that will be attainable. Perhaps she was drawn to psychology because she likes helping people. There are other professions that she might find equally fulfilling, that do not require graduate school. She previously ignored these avenues in her fixation on becoming a psychologist. As she abandons her unrealistic goals and replaces them with goals that are more attainable, she may become satisfied with her life again, and achieve happiness.

One important lesson that falls out of my account of happiness is the degree of control each person has over her own happiness. The unhappy person can achieve satisfaction in life simply by working on her own perspective. People often feel helpless in the face of their own unhappiness or dissatisfaction. They see a gap between what

they want and what they have, and when they believe this gap is insurmountable, they fall into despair. The gap may actually be insurmountable, and this person may never be able to fulfill some of her desires, but that does not mean she is doomed to a life of unhappiness. She can always change her values and her goals, thereby creating new avenues of satisfaction for herself.

I am not trying to imply that dissatisfaction is always bad for the subject. If one did not work up to one's potential, or if there are alternative means of achieving one's goals that were overlooked, then the experience of dissatisfaction is appropriate, and can even be helpful. In such cases, experiencing negative emotions like dissatisfaction and unhappiness can motivate one to try again, and they can teach one to become resilient. I certainly acknowledge the importance of these negative emotions, especially in cases where they motivate one to work harder.

However, there are the other cases where one wants something one will never be able to attain. In those cases, the dissatisfaction experienced is not helpful; it is self-destructive. Rather than motivating the subject to do more, the dissatisfaction signifies failure, leaving the subject feeling hopeless and terminally unhappy. My account empowers this person to change her life by changing her attitude, rather than simply accepting her unhappiness.

People are dynamic beings with values, interests and preferences that change as they have different life experiences. We cannot expect people to remain satisfied with their lives, simply because they are striving towards certain fixed goals. As you progress through life, your perception of those goals and their importance may change. Therefore, you should always reevaluate your goals, for they may no longer represent what is

important to you, and you may not notice this until after you have achieved those goals and you fail to be happy.

I do not wish to imply that happiness is the primary or sole motivator of action. My account of happiness does not give it any primacy over all of the other reasons people might have for acting, like a sense of moral obligation or duty, or a desire for perfection and excellence. I certainly acknowledge that people act for a multitude of reasons, many of which have nothing to do with considerations of their own happiness.

However, I do wish to stress the independence of happiness from these other motivations. When one acts out of a sense of duty, or because she wants to achieve perfection, there is no guarantee she will also achieve happiness, for happiness is an independent domain. Starting with the Ancient Greeks, philosophers have conflated happiness with these other evaluative notions, using happiness to convince people to pursue various ideals thought to represent the good life.

Many philosophers have argued that the only way of achieving happiness is through virtuous activity, or by developing your talents, or following some objective list of goods. My analysis of happiness shows that these assumptions are false. You may want to pursue moral goodness, perfection, or any other ideals deemed valuable, but there will be no guarantee that in doing this you will be happy, for happiness is compatible with a multitude of lifestyles, interests and preferences. Therefore, philosophers who are trying to argue for a particular ideal will have to argue for it on independent grounds, and not by appealing to a person's happiness as motivation, for happiness is independent of all such ideals.

Happiness is an important concept, because of its motivational force, which transcends the barriers of race, culture, and religion. I may not understand the values of your society if it is very different from my own; I may not share your customs, language or belief system. Yet knowing that you are happy tells me something important about your life that I can understand despite all our differences.

I was struck by the explanatory power of happiness while traveling in East Africa. We had an opportunity to visit a traditional Maasai village in Kenya. Prior to our visit, our tour guide gave us a brief lesson on the Maasai. We were told that the Maasai lifestyle is nomadic and pastoral, and revolves around their cattle. The Maasai live in small huts made out of cow dung, and they sleep on beds made from the cowhides. The cattle also provide food for the Maasai, whose diet consists of meat, milk, and blood. The wealth of the Masaai is measured in terms of their cattle; amassing material possessions other than cattle is useless to the Masaai.

During this lesson, our guide gave us a firm warning. He said, "Do not pity these people, or feel sorry for them. They are happy." Initially, our guide's statement was hard to understand. My immediate thought was, "Sure, *he* says they're happy, but how could they be, when they live in such abject poverty?" The natural tendency was to focus on all that the Maasai lacked in terms of basic amenities and comforts.

However, after visiting with the Maasai, I realized our guide's explanation was simple, yet illuminating: they are happy people, and their satisfaction with their lives was at once apparent and undeniable. They were content and jovial as they sang and danced to welcome us to their village. They clearly took great pride in their traditional lifestyle, and they were eager to share their customs and culture with our group. Although their

houses were small and dark, they were neat and tidy, as was their entire village. The women of the village construct the huts, and you could see the care taken in maintaining them. Although their clothes consisted of simple robes, they were in beautiful bright colors that stood out dramatically against the arid, dusty landscape. Few Maasai had shoes, but we were told they actually preferred to walk barefoot. Although they lack even the most basic amenities like plumbing and electricity, most of the Maasai are educated, and they all send their children to school.

It might be tempting for an outsider to pity these people, but after visiting with them, I believe this sentiment is completely inappropriate. Their lifestyle is very different from our own, but so are their desires, and all of their needs are being met. They are not sick or suffering and their lives are filled with enjoyment. The force of this one simple word, happiness, became clear as I realized the Maasai were happy with their lives just as I am happy with mine.

The Maasai illustrate why happiness is nothing more than a state of mind that can be achieved so long as one is satisfied with her life. There are no necessary material conditions of happiness. My account emphasizes the degree of control each person has over her own happiness, for regardless of your circumstances, luck or natural endowments, you can attain happiness if you just adopt the right mindset. Furthermore, the less you require from the world, the easier it will be for you to achieve happiness, for your satisfaction will not depend on external factors that are unreliable.

My view of happiness can explain the happiness of all people, regardless of how different their lifestyles may be. I can explain the happiness of the Maasai, who seem to possess so little, and I can also explain unhappiness of the person who seems to have so

much. For happiness is a state of mind; so long as one wants what one has, one will be happy, regardless of how much or how little that is. And if over the course of one's life, one never learns to appreciate and value what one has, one will never be happy.

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