

## **Western Historical Traditions of Wellbeing**

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**Abstract:** This chapter provides a brief historical overview of western philosophical views about human well-being from the eighth century BCE to the middle of the twentieth century. Different understandings of the concept of well-being are explained, including our preferred understanding of well-being as the subjective states and objective conditions that make our lives go well for us. While this review is necessarily incomplete, we aim to discuss some of the most salient and influential contributions to our subject. To that end, we discuss some key views from ancient Greece, including the aristocratic values that were considered central to leading a good life, notions of personal and more expansive harmony as they key to well-being, and the idea that the experience of pleasure is all we should really care about. We also explain some of the major religious conceptions of the good life, and their progression through the middle ages and beyond. More recent secular conceptions of wellbeing, including several views on the importance of personal and public happiness. Finally, we discuss views to the effect that happiness is not enough for the good life and that we should strive for loftier goals.

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**Proverb**

*“What is the highest of all the goods achievable in action? . . . most people. . . call it happiness, . . . But they disagree about what happiness is. . .”*

Aristotle

**Introduction**

This chapter provides a brief historical overview of western philosophical views about human well-being or quality of life from the eighth century BCE to the middle of the twentieth century. A comparison of many views discussed here with eastern views described in Joshanloo (2014) reveals a number of similarities. However, since there has not been an enormous amount of cross-fertilization between eastern and western conceptions of wellbeing, the topics are discussed separately in this volume. We present diverse views of a family of well-being concepts proceeding from questions about the best sort of life to lead, the best sort of person to be, the general world views from which these questions arise, and the best sorts of paths put forward leading to the desired goals. Well-being itself is a complex concept, and so the chapter begins by explaining how well-being and its cognates are related to one another. Then, we introduce a framework for understanding well-being as a broad concept that involves subjective and objective qualities of life.

The bulk of this chapter is dedicated to presenting a selection of the major notions of well-being throughout the known history of the western world. While this review is necessarily incomplete, we aim to discuss some of the most salient and influential contributions to our subject. To that end, we discuss some key views from ancient Greece, including the aristocratic values that were considered central to leading a good life, notions of personal and more

expansive harmony as they key to well-being, and the idea that the experience of pleasure is all we should really care about. We also explain some of the major religious conceptions of the good life, and their progression through the middle ages and beyond. More recent secular conceptions of wellbeing, including several views on the importance of personal and public happiness. Finally, we discuss views to the effect that happiness is not enough for the good life and that we should strive for loftier goals.

### Family of well-being concepts

Since at least the fifth century BCE the family of concepts connected to ideas of well-being has not been a well-defined family. In our relatively brief review, we will show that from the earliest recorded writings of the most notable scholars in the western world until the twenty-first century there has been a wide variety of terms used with an equally wide variety of explicit or implicit definitions. Indeed, leading scholars and policymakers continue to disagree about the most basic conceptual distinctions, such as whether health is a component of well-being or various forms of well-being constitute health (Michalos 1969). For example, the widely cited *Constitution of the World Health Organization* preamble says that “Health is the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. But, there are good reasons for not treating ‘health’ as a synonym of well-being or quality of life. In Michalos, Thommasen, Read, Anderson and Zumbo (2005) and Michalos, Ramsey, Eberts and Kahlke (2011) there is empirical evidence that most people would not identify good health with a good life. Here it is enough to point out that identifying health with well-being or quality of life would mean that it would make no sense to ask “What is the impact of health on a person’s quality of life?” And yet, ordinarily, this question makes as much sense

as “What is the impact of wealth on a person’s quality of life?” or “Regarding the quality of a person’s life, is it more important to be healthy, wealthy, wise or just morally good?”.

Recognizing the great variety of meanings assigned to basic terms in research on subjective well-being, Diener (2006) tried to bring some order and consistency to standard usage. Fifty scholars endorsed his short text. The trouble is that most of those who endorsed it only did so when acceptable caveats were added to proposed definitions or characterizations, and there were so many caveats that very little order and consistency was brought to the field. Here is an example from the “guidelines”. “Happiness has several meanings in popular discourse, as well as in the scholarly literature. For example, happiness can mean a general positive mood, a global evaluation of life satisfaction, living a good life, or the causes that make people happy, with the interpretations depending on the context. For this reason some researchers avoid using the term altogether. Scholars in some fields use the term frequently because of its important historical and popular roots, whereas scholars in other fields prefer to use more specific terms for the different aspects of well-being” (Diener, 2006, pp.viii–ix).

Some scholars think that the term ‘subjective well-being’ is more precise than ‘happiness’. But, an unpublished survey of 74 leading researchers led Robert Cummins to conclude that subjective well-being was understood in a wide variety of ways, including contradictory ones. Diener (2006, p.viii) noted that “The term *well-being* is often used instead of *subjective well-being* because it avoids any suggestion that there is something arbitrary or unknowable about the concepts involved”. On the other hand (there is almost always another hand), some scholars use ‘well-being’ and ‘quality of life’ as rough synonyms. For these scholars, the idea of using ‘well-being’ to designate only subjective well-being would be a huge mistake because human well-being has many relatively objective as well as subjective features.

As Diener (2006, p.ix) wrote, there are scholars who use ‘quality of life’ in a broad sense “to include not only the quality of life circumstances, but also the person’s perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and reactions to those circumstances”. For these scholars (e.g., Michalos, 2003), ‘well-being’ and ‘quality of life’ are essentially synonyms, and require subjective and objective indicators for adequate measurement.

In this chapter, ‘well-being’ and ‘quality of life’ are used in this broad sense to mean what makes a person’s life go well for them or a groups’ lives go well for them. Therefore, when health, happiness or other good features of lives are discussed, we take pains to be clear about whether they should be understood as one of many components of well-being, the one and only component of well-being, or a synonym for well-being.

#### A framework for understanding quality of life

In very broad strokes one may think of the quality (or qualities) of life of an individual or community as a function of two variables; the actual conditions of that life and what an individual or community makes of those conditions. What a person or community makes of those conditions is in turn a function of how the conditions are perceived, what is thought and felt about those conditions, what is done, and finally, what consequences follow from what is done. People’s perceptions, thoughts, feelings and actions, then, have an impact on their own and others’ living conditions.

These two main variables (conditions of life and what people make of them), can be combined to construct four scenarios which, with a little exaggeration, may be described as different kinds of paradise and hell. The scenarios are explained below and the framework is depicted in Figure 2.1.

1. If people's living conditions are good, and people accurately perceive and think about them, feel good and act appropriately, we may describe that as Real Paradise.
2. If people's living conditions are bad, and people accurately perceive and think about them, feel bad and act appropriately, we may describe that as Real Hell.
3. If people's living conditions are bad, and people inaccurately perceive and/or think about them, feel good and act inappropriately, we may describe that as the classical Fool's Paradise.
4. If people's living conditions are good, and people inaccurately perceive and/or think about them, feel bad and act inappropriately, we may describe that as a Fool's Hell.

**Figure 2.1. Possible Ways to Describe or Explain Well-Being**

		<b>Subjective Features of Life</b>	
		Good	Bad
<b>Objective Features of Life</b>	Good	Real Paradise	Fool's Hell
	Bad	Fool's Paradise	Real Hell

Given the fragmented remains of many writers considered here, it is impossible to rigorously apply this four-fold set of distinctions to everyone's views. Nevertheless, we will use this framework to elucidate the views discussed in this chapter when we think it is appropriate to do so. By doing this, it will be easier to understand where various thinkers located the determinants of well-being; in our heads or in our circumstances.

### Historical records

Regarding historical records about well-being or the good life, choices must be made regarding exactly which records should be included and how they should be interpreted. Since literacy rates were very low compared to our contemporary standards, what records we have were produced by relatively distinguished, elite individuals. Then as now, such people tended to neglect socially disenfranchised groups like women, the poor, the elderly, the young and the foreigners.

Dover (1974) wrote a fine book dealing with what he called "popular morality" in the time of Plato and Aristotle (around 428 to 322 BCE). The historical records he used included "(i) forensic oratory; (ii) political oratory; (iii) drama and epideictic oratory; (iv) epitaphs and dedicatory epigrams". He deliberately omitted any discussion of philosophical works except for occasional remarks made by philosophers in which the masses of ordinary people were characterized. In general, he thought (probably correctly) that philosophers tended to talk mainly to other philosophers and mainly about relatively theoretical issues concerning a good life, while authors from the four categories just noted more often talked to more ordinary people in less theoretical language. One could not expect that the characterizations of authors in the four groups were always more accurate than those of philosophers because, after all, dramatists,

lawyers and politicians wrote for effect, often creating fictional characters and events designed to impress or persuade others. Granting the differences in historical records used and the pictures painted by diverse groups of authors, in this chapter we have drawn mainly on the work of a highly salient, influential set of philosophers because, in principle at least, philosophers aim to discover and say what is true whether or not it is particularly impressive or persuasive. These things are not necessarily exclusive, but we are following the footsteps of those whose aims are most similar to our own.

Readers should also beware that the literature review that follows is incomplete and it is based on incomplete and imperfect sources. For example, in many cases we only have fragments to go on, and many of those fragments are likely to have been translated from a paraphrase of a quotation that was based entirely on hearsay. Indeed, were it not for the excellent analyses of scholars like McKirahan (1994), McMahon (2006; 2013) and others cited here, this overview would have been greatly impoverished, especially in regards to the views of the ancients. Finally, some passages on the ancient philosophers in this treatise have been adapted from Michalos and Robinson (2012).

### **Major conceptualizations**

In this section we review some major conceptualizations of a “good life”, “the good life”, “the quality of life”, “happiness” or “well-being” from the western historical tradition. Specific examples of scholarly writings illustrating each conceptualization are provided. We begin by discussing ancient views of well-being, drawn mainly from before and around the times of Socrates in ancient Greece. This discussion is focused on the aristocratic values that were considered central to leading a good life, notions of personal and more expansive harmony as

they key to well-being, and the idea that the experience of pleasure is all we should really care about. Next, we explain religious conceptions of the good life, and their progression through the middle ages and beyond. Then, we discuss secular conceptions of wellbeing, including several views on the importance of personal and public happiness. Finally, we discuss views to the effect that happiness is not enough for the good life and that we should strive for loftier goals.

### Aristocratic values

Among the writers of the Archaic Age (c. 750–480 BCE), questions about the best life for an individual, or about the best kind of person to be, had paramount importance. The heroes of the epic poems ascribed to Homer (eighth century BCE), the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, lived in societies governed by hereditary monarchies with the support of members of the aristocracy. They were larger than life characters, born to and raised in privileged, noble and wealthy families, occasionally boasting gods or goddesses in their family trees, displaying physical attractiveness and dexterity, as well as the qualities of practically wise leadership, strength of character, courage, justice, generosity and piety. These are the characteristics and values of those aristocrats. The best kind of people were aristocrats and the best kind of life was aristocratic. Enjoying all the advantages of nobility, such people would have a clear sense of *noblesse oblige* and act accordingly.

It is important to note that while the characters and the general background stories that Homer was working with were inherited from centuries before (composed in a much more straightforwardly aristocratic time), Homer himself was writing at a time when there was social transitioning to more democratic values. In Homer's time, people's vision of a good life began to change from that of competitive to cooperative success. “. . .the various strands of the Homeric

heroic ideal began to unravel. In particular, good birth, wealth, and fighting ability no longer automatically went together. This sort of situation forced the issue: what are the best qualities we can possess? What constitutes human *arete* [i.e., excellence, virtue or goodness]? The literary sources contain conflicting claims about the best life for a person, the best kind of person to be, and the relative merits of qualities thought to be ingredients of human happiness” (McKirahan, 1994, p.358).

The poems of Hesiod of Ascra (late eighth/early seventh century BCE) provide assessments of what is good or bad. In his *Works and Days*, along with some references to the deities Peace, Famine and Disaster, readers are offered themes of the good life that are familiar and still attractive, i.e., flourishing and prosperous communities, populated by honest people, living in peace, enjoying the fruits of their labour, without worries about where the next meal will come from, with an absence of disease and with justice for all. Later in the same poem Hesiod describes the antithesis of a good society through a kind of inversion of these themes. In contemporary terms, one might say that Hesiod’s bad society is one in which the institution of morality has been totally undermined, including people’s sense of justice, resulting in the total destruction of its social capital.

### Harmony

Harmony (*harmonia*) is probably the most frequently mentioned preferred feature of a good life in the 550–250 BCE period. Joshanloo (2014, p.477) remarks that “One of the fundamental differences in western and eastern notions of happiness and a good life is that in the former, attempting to change, master, and control the world (including various aspects of one’s life, relationships, and nature) is praised, whereas in the latter, adjustment to the environment,

achieving harmony with others and the cosmos is prioritized”. If one compares contemporary western psychological theory with eastern philosophical theories, as Joshanloo did, the particular difference he describes in this passage is accurate. However, a comparison between western ancient philosophical theories with eastern philosophical theories, reveals that diverse forms of harmony are common to both traditions.

We have already seen it in the poets’ references to peace. It appears in a variety of forms from most of the important philosophers across the whole period. In fact, the International Olympic Committee (2007, p.12) announced that one of its Fundamental Principles is “The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity”. Below are nine views about harmony in some sense and a life of good quality. Briefly, the nine views are as follows: (1) a soul’s harmony within itself, (2) harmony among the nature of one’s species, nature in general and ideal law, (3) harmony as blending *daimones* with a Supreme Being, (4) a harmonious balance among individuals’ internal atoms and the external atoms of his or her environment, (5) a harmonious balance among an individual’s particular constitution, humors, diets, exercises, geography, seasonal climates, heavenly bodies and government, (6) a harmonious combination of well-ordered souls in well-ordered cities, (7) ascetic harmony with nature, (8) a harmonious mixture of an active life with goods of the soul, goods of the body and external goods, and (9) harmony with nature through virtuous action.

### *Soul’s harmony with itself*

Pythagoras of Samos (c.570–c.490 BCE) imagined that the universe, which he called the *kosmos*, was an “intelligible, ordered whole” somehow held together or connected by *harmonia*,

i.e., by some sort of principle of harmony, which he had shown was intimately related to numerical analysis (McKirahan, 1994, p.115). He apparently believed that all animals have immortal souls which at death transmigrate among diverse species, trading up or down as it were, depending partly on each individual's behavior and character. The aim of the relatively ascetic Pythagorean "way of life" was to bring increased harmony to an individual's soul, thereby improving that individual's chances for trading up rather than down in the next life. The good life we seek is the unobservable harmony of that unobservable entity, the immortal soul. This notion of a harmonious soul or a soul at peace with itself is to some extent a feature of our contemporary popular psychology revealed in remarks about people having or needing to "get it all together", "pull themselves together" and "getting your heart and head together".

*Harmony among the nature of one's species, nature in general and ideal law*

Heraclitus of Ephesus (c.540–c.480 BCE) posited a world constantly undergoing changes while preserving identities, e.g., the Nile River remains the Nile River across time while its waters undergo continuous change. For any of his contemporaries interested in defining "the" good life, the descriptive and evaluative relativism of some of his fragments would have been deeply disturbing. Possibly the most disturbing of all would have been this one: "to God all things are beautiful and good and just, but humans have supposed some unjust and others just" (McKirahan, 1994, p.125).

The good life is one lived in communities in which people willingly follow customs and obey conventional laws that are consistent with an ideal law sometimes referred to as "the divine law". By linking behavior that is appropriate to the conditions of the world and to one's own nature with ideal law, Heraclitus was perhaps the first ancient philosopher to articulate the basic

premise of ethical naturalism (Michalos, 1981). The harmony he sought was not merely within a person's soul, but among a person's nature, the nature of the world and a universal ideal law.

*Harmony as blending daimones with a Supreme Being*

According to Empedocles of Acragas (c.492–c.432 BCE) human bodies were supposed to be wrapped around *daimones* as “an alien garb of flesh”. The *daimones* animating such bodies function like souls but have a special status which is grander than souls. ‘Love’ and ‘Strife’ are names used to describe cosmic forces that are not only physical, but psychological and moral as well. Love is sometimes referred to as Friendship, Joy and Harmony. Love, friendship, harmony, peace, social-esteem and self-esteem, and joy are all positively valued, while strife, quarrels, murder, war and “human distress” are all negative. Most importantly, Love is a cosmic force that brings together the four elements (earth, air, fire and water) in a kind of orchestrated harmony producing a world in which daimones are blended with a Supreme Being.

*Harmonious balance among individuals' internal atoms and the external atoms of his or her environment*

According to Democritus of Abdera (c.460–c.370 BCE), the ultimate material building blocks of the universe were atoms, which were too small to be observed by human senses but were theoretically imagined to be unlimited in number, shape and size, and to be constantly in motion in an unlimited void. Human beings were thought to be unique clusters of compounds consisting of body and soul atoms which were equally material. According to his theory, good health was a function of a kind of “dynamic equilibrium” or harmonious balance among the internal atoms of an individual and the external atoms of his or her environment. In short, all

observable mental and physical disorders could be explained by unobservable disordered and discordant atomic activity, while observable human well-being could be explained by unobservable orderly and harmonious atomic activity. The Real Paradise that one aimed for required a harmonious balance among individuals' internal atoms and the external atoms of his or her environment.

Democritus was the first philosopher to recommend downward comparisons as part of a strategy for attaining happiness i.e., judge your well-being by comparing yourself to someone worse off. (Kahn, 1998, pp.34–35). Insofar as he believed that this strategy was based on some aspect of human nature, Democritus' view should also be regarded as an ancient root of downward comparison theory as elucidated, for example, in Wills (1981). Since this theory is a species of the more generic social comparison theory (Merton & Kitt, 1950), Democritus may be considered a pioneer of the latter as well. With social comparison, the idea is that you should judge your well-being by comparing yourself to average people like yourself or to people in general.

*Harmonious balance among an individual's particular constitution, humours, diets, exercises, geography, seasonal climates, heavenly bodies and government*

The views of the Father of Medicine, Hippocrates of Cos (c.450–c.380 BCE), about the nature of well-being and ill-being are buried among the conflicting views of a variety of authors of the 60 books included in what is now called the 'Hippocratic Corpus' (hereafter Corpus). There was no agreement on how many essential elementary building blocks the world required. Options ran from Thales's single watery substance to Democritus's infinite number of atoms and the void. Several authors of the Corpus drew on the work of Empedocles, especially his idea that

the basic building blocks of the world were the four elements, earth, air, fire and water. These “cosmic elements” were supposed to be connected to four fluids called ‘humors’, fire to yellow bile, air to blood, water to phlegm and earth to black bile.

In short, in contemporary terms, one could say that the body of a man or woman was imagined to be like a cake whose appearance, texture, taste and nutritional value depended upon each ingredient being of the right amount and proportionate to all other ingredients, blending together into the whole cake in accordance with nature’s design. The default position of a human being was a disease-free, healthy human being, “the greatest human blessing” according to one author of the *Corpus*. Emphasizing again the themes of harmony and balance, departures from health were the result of departures from our natural formation and functions. It is a wonderfully optimistic view of the natural state of things, a state offering a quality of life that would be absolutely at odds with the “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” life of one in the state of nature imagined by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). A good life required a Harmonious balance among an individual’s particular constitution, humors, diets, exercises, geography, seasonal climates, heavenly bodies and government

Because of the complexity of individuals’ constitutions, diversity of foods, seasons, ailments and so on, it was impossible to find successful treatments without “some measure”. As some contemporary proponents of subjective well-being indicators and/or health-related quality of life measures might have written today, “. . .no measure, neither number nor weight, by reference to which knowledge can be made exact, can be found except bodily feeling [i.e., patients’ self-reports ]” (Hippocrates, 1923, p.27).

*Harmonious combination of well-ordered souls in well-ordered cities*

Plato of Athens (427–347 BCE) is probably best known for his *magnum opus* the *Republic*. The central questions of the *Republic* are concerned with the nature of the best sort of life to live, the good life, “the life that for each of us would make living most worthwhile” (Plato, 1930, p.71) and more precisely, whether “the life of the just man is more profitable” than that of the unjust man (p.83) or “whether it is. . .true that the just have a better life than the unjust and are happier” (p.101).

On the analogy of the nature of justice in the city given the city’s structure and functions, he concluded that justice in the human soul must occur when “each part is doing its own work” and the rational part is allowed to rule, “since it is really wise and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul, and for the spirited part to obey and be its ally” (p.117). Justice in the city and in the human soul is the great harmonizer, bringing disparate parts together so that they become “entirely one, moderate and harmonious”, and injustice is “a kind of civil war between the three parts” (p.119). Such is the interdependent relationship between an ideal city and an ideal individual that it is impossible for the latter to exist apart from the former. Human well-being in constituted by the harmonious combination of well-ordered souls in well-ordered cities. This is about as much of a reconciliation between the interests of any individual and the public interest, self and other, as one could hope to have.

#### *Ascetic harmony with nature*

Diogenes of Sinope (c.400–c.323 BCE) believed that the best life was that lived according to, recommended by or in harmony with, nature. Such a life would be a life lived well, thriving on virtue and enjoying happiness (Diogenes Laertius, 2000b, pp.67, 73). His most frequently used model for living according to nature is the familiar behavior of stray dogs. Such

animals could flourish, apparently with the blessing of the gods, by eating, drinking, grooming, urinating, defecating and copulating in public without shame. So, contrary to conventional understanding, he thought human beings should be able to shamelessly engage in the same sort of behavior. According to Diogenes Laertius (2000b, p.109), Diogenes “used to say that it was the privilege of the gods to need nothing and of god-like men to want but little”. He would have argued that if the gods are worthy of admiration and emulation, and they are without needs and wants, then a person desiring to become more god-like ought to (morally and prudentially) try to eliminate his or her needs and wants. The world is full of animals that apparently live comfortable and happy lives by living in conformity or harmony with nature doing what comes naturally to them, without any socially constructed conventions. So this is how people should live, i.e. in an Ascetic harmony with nature.

*Harmonious mixture of an active life with goods of the soul, goods of the body and external goods*

Aristotle of Stageira (384–322 BCE) accepted the common sense understanding that a good life required as a determinant and/or a constituent “internal goods. . .of mind and body” and “external goods . . .[like] noble birth, friends, wealth, honor”. “To these”, he wrote “we think should be added certain capacities and good luck; for on these conditions life will be perfectly secure”. Goods of the mind include things like wisdom, temperance, courage, justice and pleasure, while goods of the body include things like health, beauty, strength, athletic talent, and a long life with a good old age (Aristotle, 1926, pp.47–49).

Answering the question “What is the highest of all the goods achievable in action?”, Aristotle famously wrote “As far as the name goes, most people virtually agree; for both the

many and the cultivated call it happiness [*eudaimonia*], and they suppose that living well and doing well are the same as being happy. But they disagree about what happiness is, and the many do not give the same answer as the wise” (Aristotle, 1999, p.3).

Regarding “living well”, Irwin (Aristotle, 1999, p.175) wrote that it had the sense of “having a good life” and it was intended to capture the idea that *eudaimonia* “involves one’s life as a whole”. Aristotle “did not find it natural to speak of someone being *eudaimon* for a few minutes and then ceasing to be *eudaimon*”, i.e., ‘happiness’ did not designate a pleasant mood as it often does nowadays. Rackham (Aristotle, 1934, p.10) remarked that his translation of “*eudaimonia* can hardly be avoided, but it would perhaps be more accurately rendered by ‘Well-being’ or ‘Prosperity’; and it will be found that the writer [Aristotle] does not interpret it as a state of feeling but as a kind of activity”.

Regarding “doing well” [*eu prattein*], according to Irwin, Aristotle is saying that “*eudaimonia*. . .consists in action”. Alternative English expressions are “acting well” or “faring well”. Much like the ordinary English expression, ‘doing well’ can be used in an active sense as in ‘A job worth doing is worth doing well.’ or in a passive sense as in ‘Generally, I am doing well, all things considered.’. In the contexts we are looking at, it is the active sense of ‘doing well’ that Aristotle intends. The importance of Aristotle’s assumption that happiness involves life as a whole has particular significance for contemporary scholars. Since the most frequently studied and measured aspect of people’s lives in quality of life research over the past 30 years has been satisfaction or happiness with life as a whole (Michalos, 2005), we seem to have been following a very old and distinguished tradition. There is, however, a difference in the connotation of “life as a whole” for the ancients and us. For the ancients, the phrase is used to provoke reflection on the whole of one’s life from birth to death, while for us, it is used primarily

to provoke reflection on all the salient domains or features of one's life as currently lived. It is possible that some respondents would mix the ancient with the contemporary connotation of "life as a whole" and craft their responses to our question based on a somewhat different array of things from birth to death, but I do not recall seeing any evidence of this.

All things considered, Aristotle's characterization of a good or happy life is the clearest example we have from the ancients of the view that the quality of a person's, or of a community's, life is a function of the actual conditions of that life and what a person or community makes of those conditions. Conceptually, he could clearly distinguish Real Paradise and Hell from a Fool's Paradise and Hell. Most importantly, he regarded human action as essential. A good or happy life is not simply given by nature, God or gods. It requires internal and external gifts and good luck beyond our control, but it also requires individual and communal initiative. A good or happy life, according to Aristotle, consists of a harmonious mixture of internal and external goods in the first place, and regarding the former, an equally harmonious mixture of reason, appetite and emotion.

#### *Harmony with nature through virtue*

Zeno of Citium (c.333–261 BCE) was the founder of the philosophy of Stoicism. For Stoics, "An animal's first impulse. . . is self-preservation" and "pleasure. . .[is] a by-product. . .an aftermath comparable to the condition of animals thriving and plants in full bloom". Plants and animals are by nature disposed to behave in ways that contribute to their well-being. Human beings possess reason and "for them life according reason rightly becomes the natural life". For Zeno, the proper end for humans was described as "life in agreement with nature (or living

agreeably to nature) which is the same as a virtuous life, virtue being the goal towards which nature guides us” (Diogenes Laertius, 2000b, pp.193–195).

In these passages we find the ethical naturalism of the Stoics in plain view, proceeding from an ‘is’ to an ‘ought’. The word “nature” is used in both a descriptive and an evaluative sense. We are by nature disposed to behave in certain ways to promote the well-being of ourselves and the universe, and we ought to live virtuously or excellently to achieve the aims assigned to us by nature. *The good life we seek involves living in harmony with nature through virtuous action.*

In a passage attributed directly to the Stoic Chrysippus (c.280–c.207 BCE) from his book *On the Means of Livelihood*, the philosopher boldly wrote that “virtue in itself is sufficient to constitute happiness” (Diogenes Laertius, 2000b, pp.297-299). Quite generally, our translator, R.D. Hicks, treated ‘virtue’, ‘well-being’ and ‘happiness’ as synonyms, while ‘health’ is treated as designating a more specific additional thing. Apparently, because a virtuous person knows what is good and what is evil, is disposed to and will choose what is good, such a person will inevitably find happiness. Finding happiness, then, implies that one is happy.

The most troublesome feature of Stoic views about goods concerns their treatment of things that they regard as morally “Neutral (neither good nor evil)” and thus “indifferent” or “morally indifferent” but nevertheless have value and are to be “preferred” because “they are typically appropriate, fitting or suitable for us [as rational agents]” (Baltzly, 2004, p.10). Many people might grant that moral virtue cannot be measured against or traded off with non-moral virtue. For example, such people would say that someone’s excellence (i.e., non-moral virtue) at mathematics or painting cannot be used as a plausible reason for allowing him or her to escape condemnation for the morally wrong (i.e., morally evil) act of killing an innocent person. Others

might be willing to allow people who are extra-ordinarily brilliant at something to get away with moral indiscretions. Comprehensive indexes of the quality of life or human well-being are called ‘compensatory’ if they allow all kinds of virtues or goods to be traded off against all other kinds of goods and evils, and in fact most indexes developed over the past 50 years are compensatory. The Stoics considered here would have rejected such indexes.

### Pleasure

As a determinant and/or constituent, pleasure in various forms is included or at least discussed in practically all accounts of a good life coming from the 550–250 BCE period. Below we will describe four views: (1) a life of personal pleasure regardless of its impact on others, (2) a life of measured pleasures exceeding pains, (3) a life filled with experiences of particular, transient pleasures, and (4) pleasure in the form of peace of mind and a healthy body.

McKirahan (1994, p.396) considered Antiphon of Rhamnous (c. 480–411 BCE) as “possibly the earliest advocate of hedonism in Greek philosophy”, i.e., the first recorded philosopher to regard the pursuit of pleasure or a pleasurable life as the final end (telos) or good life for humans.

Provided that things are “thought of correctly”, he claimed, what is pleasant is naturally, universally life-enhancing and what is painful is life-destroying. More precisely, provided that one thinks “correctly”, one’s experiences of pleasure and pain ought to be regarded as nature’s reliable guides to appropriate human action. So, the best sort of person will make careful and accurate observations of nature, think “correctly” about what causes “distress” and “joy”, successfully apprehend nature’s guides to a long and pleasant life, and scrupulously follow those

guides. Consequently, such a person will enjoy the best sort of life, i.e., a life filled with personal pleasure.

Protagoras of Abdera (c.490–c.420 BCE) was well-known for his skeptical relativism and agnosticism. Of the few fragments reliably attributed to him, the most famous is “A human being is the measure of all things – of things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not” (McKirahan, 1994, p.379). While we have seen elements of skeptical relativism in fragments attributed to philosophers before Protagoras (e.g., in Heraclitus), this fragment is a particularly bold statement of the relativity of all assertions, including those concerning what is just or unjust, beautiful or ugly, and even true or false.

Combined with the idea that whatever is experienced as pleasant is life-enhancing and whatever is experienced as painful is life-destroying, such principles suggest that the best life and the best sort of person to be are entirely dependent on individual preferences guided by experienced and anticipated pleasures and pains. Among pleasures and pains, Plato’s protagonist Socrates thought that variations could only be assessed “when the one is greater and the other smaller, or when there are more on one side and fewer on the other” (Plato, 1924, p.237). So, for example, weighing pleasures and pains, one would naturally prefer greater and/or more pleasures to smaller and/or fewer pleasures and the latter to pains of any size or numbers. He did not suggest that people should calculate what we now call ‘discount rates’ according to which the proverbial bird in hand might be worth two or more in the bush, but he did observe that regarding “size”, “thickness and number” and “sounds” things appear “greater when near and smaller when distant” (p.239). To address this problem, he recommended precise measurement. In language that would have warmed the hearts of hedonists from Bentham (2000) to Kahneman (1999) (not to mention number-crunching social indicators researchers), he wrote, “Now if our

welfare consisted in doing and choosing things of large dimensions, and avoiding and not doing those of small, what would be our salvation in life? Would it be the art of measurement, or the power of appearance? Is it not the latter that leads us astray. . . Would men acknowledge, in view of all this, that the art which saves our life is measurement, . . . [indeed, not merely measurement but] knowledge of measurement, . . . the salvation of our life depends on making a right choice of pleasure and pain – of the more and the fewer, the greater and the smaller, and the nearer and the remoter – is it not evident. . .” (Plato, 1924, pp.239–241).

Creating space for faulty appearances versus reality, these remarks clearly reveal an appreciation of the differences between a Fool’s Paradise or Hell and the real things. Of course, there is nothing here about applying measurement to produce the greatest net pleasure, happiness or good for the greatest number as in the utilitarians Bentham (2000) and Mill (1957) but a clearer defense of the role of “knowledge of measurement” in the pursuit of pleasure and a good life could not have been made. The good life is a life lived with measured pleasures greater than measured pains.

Aristippus of Cyrene (“the Elder”, c.436–356 BCE) was the founder of the Cyrenaic philosophy. Cyrenaics had a radically subjectivist view of knowledge. They believed that all our knowledge comes from transient experienced affections which are unique and infallibly perceived by each individual. Thus, the only sort of well-being or ill-being they could imagine would be subjective well-being or ill-being, and the ideas of a Fool’s Paradise or Fool’s Hell would make no sense to them.

Since the Cyrenaics believed that their knowledge was limited to transitory experiences or affections and that, so far as they knew, there were no essential natures, they saw no point in reflecting on life as a whole and no point in trying to conduct their affairs in the interest of

achieving the end supremely identified by those natures. So far as they were concerned, the only end that was intrinsically valuable and achievable was pleasure, not some sort of abstract, generic pleasure, but concrete, particular pleasures of the sort we all experience. Hence, one might say that the epistemological views of Cyrenaics obliged them to pursue a good time rather than a good life because the latter presumed that there are relatively long-lasting personal selves existing across time, selves of which they had no evidence. For Cyrenaics, a good life was simply a life filled with particular, pleasant and transient experiences.

Given their epistemological views, they could not have any confidence in the existence of or see any value in past or future pleasures. For them, the proverbial bird in hand was not worth two in the bush, discounting an unobservable bird's value by 50%. For Cyrenaics, the discount value of birds in the bush, in the past or future, was 100%.

The idea that “happiness is the sum total of all particular pleasures” of one sort or another has been explored in the past 20 years under various names, e.g., affective happiness (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2012), momentary happiness (Howell, Chenot, Hill, & Howell, 2011) hedonia (Deci & Ryan, 2008), hedonic enjoyment (Waterman, Schwartz, & Conti, 2008, hedonic happiness (Seligman, 2002) and objective happiness (Kahneman, 1999). The pleasures are typically regarded as time-limited or transitory and somehow connected to particular feelings or experiences. While there do not seem to be any contemporary researchers who would follow the Cyrenaics in disregarding other views of happiness, momentary happiness seems to be regarded as a legitimate species worthy of continued research.

Epicurus of Samos (c.341–271 BCE) believed that the chief end or aim of human beings was peace of mind or tranquility and a healthy body. For present purposes what has to be emphasized is that he regarded scientific knowledge and methods as the essential vehicles for the

journey to peace of mind and a healthy body. As in Democritus, Epicurus believed that both human bodies and souls are composites of different sorts of atoms and when people die their atoms are totally dispersed.

The peace of mind or tranquility that Epicurus insisted was the final aim for humans was in some ways similar to and in others different from all those who came before him. Diogenes Laertius (2000b, p.543) said that “in his correspondence” Epicurus “replaces the usual greeting, ‘I wish you joy,’ by wishes for welfare and right living, ‘May you do well’ and ‘Live well’”. This is practically the same language we saw Aristotle using earlier, i.e., “the many and the cultivated. . .suppose that living well and doing well are the same as being happy”. Aristotle’s emphasis on “internal goods. . .of mind and body” and “external goods” like “wealth and honor” is similar to views expressed by Epicurus.

What, then, is the nature and role of pleasure in the good life envisioned by Epicurus? We have seen that Plato, Aristotle and Epicurus often refer to the final aim or end of life as happiness, although the happiness they are referring to is not exactly the same thing. On the role of pleasure, there appears to be a fundamental difference between the views of Plato and Aristotle on the one hand and Epicurus on the other. For the former, pleasure was at best a “handmaiden to virtue” and never the final goal. However, in his *Letter to Monoecus* Epicurus claimed that: “We call pleasure the alpha and omega of a blessed life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge of every good thing.” (Diogenes Laertius, 2000b, p.655) In short, for Epicurus, the good life is a life filled with peace of mind and good health.

The clear implication of Epicurus' remark that "By pleasure we mean the absence pain in the body and of trouble in the soul" is that, contrary to the views of Socrates and Plato, there is no neutral point between pleasure and pain. So far as the latter exists, the former does not, and *vice versa*. Since people are not always in pain, they must sometimes experience pleasure. What's more, one of Epicurus' Authorized Doctrines says that "The magnitude of pleasure reaches its limit in the removal of all pain" (Diogenes Laertius, 2000b, p.665). For example, once one's hunger or thirst are satisfied with food or drink, the pain of wanting both is removed, leaving one in a state of pleasure. If the pain of wanting anything at all, mentally or physically, is removed, then one's life would be "complete and perfect". Once one experiences freedom from physical and mental pain, that is as good as it gets. Just as one has no interest in eating more or drinking more when one's hunger and thirst are satisfied, one should have no interest in living more because extending the length of time one is in the state of being free of physical and mental pain will not make it more pleasurable. It can only bring more of the same. If nothing else, this is a very hardy view of human mortality.

### Religion

Against the prevailing Ancient Greek view that one's well-being depends entirely on the will of the gods, most of the foregoing thinkers recast well-being as something that individuals could influence through purposeful actions. But, the extent to which one's well-being could be influenced was still limited by luck (not everyone lives in paradise), and the actions required to achieve well-being were often too onerous to consistently perform throughout one's life (maintaining one's virtue while on the rack is doubtless no easy task). The combination of these two stark features of reality, which persisted through classical antiquity and have only begun to

fade to any noticeable degree in recent years, provided space for a new view of well-being that continues to fill that lacuna. The rise of Christianity during the final stages and collapse of the Roman Empire popularized the views that true well-being was spiritual well-being, and that this was only available in Heaven (McMahon, 2013).

In this section, the following religious views of well-being are discussed. That true well-being is full possession of God, something that is only available in Heaven (Augustine). That in addition to true well-being in heaven, those who follow the religious path toward God will enjoy similar but less exalted experiences on Earth (Aquinas). And, the view that, while true well-being resides only in heaven, Earthly well-being is characterized by the pleasant satisfaction of our desires (Locke).

#### *Otherworldly happiness as true happiness*

Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) argued that otherworldly happiness was true well-being. Augustine synthesized the philosophy of Plato and other Ancient Greeks with the Christian thought of his time. As a result, he played an important role in shaping western philosophy, Catholicism, and western conceptions of the good life throughout the middle ages and, to a lesser extent, even today. Much like Plato, Augustine argued that wisdom was the key to well-being. But, unlike Plato, Augustine thought that wisdom came from God, and that hoping to live a good life on Earth was ill-advised. Indeed, Augustine derided “philosophers [who] have wished, with amazing folly, to be happy here on Earth and to achieve bliss by their own efforts” because he believed that our original sin prevented us from experiencing any kind of happiness on Earth, and that “true happiness” was only available in Heaven *after we die* (Augustine, 1984, p.852). Wisdom was the key to well-being for Augustine because he thought it keeps our souls in

equilibrium by steering them away from the transient earthly goods of riches and power, and towards God by encouraging us to live in accordance with His will (Augustine 1948). In essence, if you strive to reach God you will be happy because you will be wise enough to want nothing more than your wisdom, and you will know you are on the path to true happiness (full possession of God) in Heaven.

In some ways, viewing the best kind of life—true happiness—as being only available in Heaven seems likely to relieve some of the tensions that the Ancient Greeks might have experienced. Consider that Augustine’s view of well-being explains why life was so hard during the living of it, while simultaneously providing hope for living the good *afterlife*. Moreover, living a life in accordance with God’s wishes—the path to God’s kingdom—was potentially attainable by both the lucky and the unlucky. So for Augustine, life on Earth was a kind of Real Hell, but a life lived correctly could lead to Real Paradise in Heaven. This dour view of our prospects for a good life on Earth persisted as the dominant Christian view for hundreds of years, and only lost its standing when another great synthesizer of theology and Ancient Greek philosophy reconsidered our chances for earthly happiness (McMahon, 2006).

### *Spiritual well-being on Earth*

Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 CE), combined insights from Augustine and Aristotle to emphasize the dual benefits of living well; imperfect beatitude, a positive but imperfect kind of well-being available on Earth, and perfect beatitude, a perfect kind of well-being that is only available in Heaven. Following Aristotle, Aquinas argued that the contemplation of truth is the highest good (or virtue) for intelligent animals (McInerney, 1993). More specifically, and unlike Aristotle, Aquinas referred to the perfect contemplation of truth as perfect beatitude, and

described it as “seeing” God directly with one’s soul, and experiencing “perfect pleasure—a more perfect delight of the senses than that which animals enjoy, since the intellect is higher than the senses” (Aquinas, 1988, book 3, chap. 48). So for Aquinas, perfect beatitude and the perfect contemplation of truth is more about knowing God through direct experience, then through rationally thinking about God’s truths as set down in scripture.

Also following Aristotle, whom Aquinas referred to as simply “the philosopher” (McMahon, 2006, p.127), Aquinas held that humans cannot hope to achieve godlike or perfect contemplation of truth on Earth. However, and moving away from the teachings of Aristotle here, Aquinas believed that higher, but still imperfect, contemplation was achieved by following the teachings of Jesus, and that perfect contemplation could only be achieved through the grace of God. God may show his grace by blessing the righteous with the religious virtues of charity, hope, and faith, thereby enabling them access to Heaven and the experience of perfect beatitude (perfect contemplation of truth) in union with God. So for Aquinas, true well-being is otherworldly, but we can also achieve an imperfect spiritual well-being on Earth.

The most notable difference between Aquinas and Augustine is that Aquinas saw the extent of the immediate benefits of following the dictates of the church that Augustine did not. Aquinas thought that life on Earth could fall somewhere in between Real Paradise and Real Hell for those willing to live well, that is to live a moral life in accordance with the right religious doctrines. This difference in view marks a steady change in western thought from passively accepting earthly suffering—which was viewed as necessary for salvation or at least inescapable—to viewing earthly suffering as a harmful thing that should be avoided where possible.

*Earthly happiness from a religious perspective*

The Aquinian notion that some kind of positive, but imperfect, well-being can be achieved on Earth by living a morally good life in accordance with religious teachings was adopted by many important thinkers through the early modern period. For example, the key enlightenment figure, John Locke (1632–1704 CE), who famously espoused the individual right to pursue happiness, hoped that people would use such a right to tread a Christian path to *imperfect* happiness on Earth and perfect happiness in Heaven. Locke’s liberalism was motivated by his understanding that people have different tastes (“Cheese or lobsters, . . . though very agreeable and delicious fare to some, are to others extremely nauseous and offensive”; Locke, 1975, book 2, chap. 21, sec. 55). He argued that forcing a particular notion of the greatest good on a group of people detracts from the freedom of all to pursue their own notion of well-being, and particularly punishes those whose view of the good life is markedly different from that of the majority (Schneewind, 1994). So, Locke advised that governments should provide their citizens with the necessary freedoms to pursue their own brand of happiness. Nevertheless, Locke thought that the offerings of Heaven will suit everyone’s palate (Locke, 1975), making religious freedoms particularly important.

Despite this similarity with Aquinas, Locke had a different view of the nature of earthly well-being. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke (1975) described earthly well-being as happiness, constituted by a life of many pleasurable satisfactions and few painful dissatisfactions. Locke argued that experiences and predictions of pleasure and pain effectively drew us around the world by instilling desires in us. He described a cycle in which uneasy desire leads to pleasurable satisfaction which, in turn, leads to a new uneasy desire, i.e., what some people now call the hedonic treadmill (Smith, 2014). For Locke, this cycle of desires was

inexorable for all people because either the current unease-causing desire is pleurably satisfied, in which case a new unease-causing desire looms into consciousness, or the current unsatisfied desire eventually fades from consciousness as it is replaced by a new unease-causing desire. However, because different people experience more or less pleasure and pain from the same stimulus, people tend to be drawn in many directions and develop idiosyncratic views on what will provide them with a good life. For Locke, predictions of pleasure and pain are useful guides in this way, as they illuminate each individual's path to happiness. Indeed, believing both our ability to reason and our experiences of pleasure and pain to be God-given, Locke concluded that God wanted us to be happy on Earth, and gave us the tools we needed to achieve earthly happiness (McMahon, 2006). Locke was concerned, however, that people too often made the mistake of failing to use their reason by neglecting the immense pleasures of Heaven when presented with opportunities for immediate, but immoral, pleasures. For Locke then, well-being is happiness and happiness can be found in Heaven and, to a lesser degree, on Earth.

This more Lockean view of the positive life available on Earth as a pleasurable one, rather than a contemplative one, marks the gradual resurgence of the association of pleasure and happiness with well-being in the west. Indeed, of the range of contemporary religious views in the west, the ones that promote the pursuit of a moralistic, but pleasurable, happiness on Earth seem to be becoming more popular than those which advocate suffering on Earth for the sake of perfect well-being in Heaven (Ehrenreich, 2009). As we shall see, the enlightenment, and its attendant questioning of religion, weakens the dominance of the view that true or perfect well-being is not available on Earth. However, many people in the west, and especially the United States, still claim to hold something like this view (Exline, 2003). Similarly, being able to practice their religion is still important for many people in the west, demonstrating that spiritual

well-being is an important component of earthly well-being for some western people (Cohen, 2002), although not as important a component as it is in the east (Joshani, 2014). Despite the superiority of Heavenly well-being professed by some, our inability to infallibly *know* whether heaven exists while we live on Earth makes spiritual well-being on Earth seem like the better social indicator for any contemporary group of individuals.

In this section, we saw how for Augustine true well-being is full possession of God, something that is only available in Heaven. Similarly, Aquinas held that being in Heaven with God was the ultimate positive experience. However, unlike Augustine, Aquinas thought that similar, but less exalted experiences were available on Earth for those who followed the religious path toward God. Finally, Locke argued that, while true well-being did reside only in heaven, Earthly well-being was characterized by the pleasant satisfaction of our desires.

### Happiness

During the Enlightenment, amassing and communicating knowledge became seen as an important route to securing well-being. Indeed, if the enlightenment had a motto, it might have been what was engraved on the 1772 edition of the *Encyclopédie*: “If there is something you know, communicate it. If there is something you don’t know, search for it.” Following the tradition of many of the ancient writers, it was recognized that knowledge and effective education to distribute that knowledge could promote well-being by debunking harmful superstitious beliefs, promoting material living conditions, improving healthcare, and even breaking the bonds of tyrannical power (McMahon, 2006). It was also common during this period to view happiness as well-being. As we shall see, some disregarded any notion of spiritual

well-being, and focused on the pursuit of personal happiness or public happiness, while others worried about the tensions between personal and public happiness.

More specifically, the following views will be explained. That the possibilities for well-being are limited to happiness on Earth, and that happiness is a preponderance of pleasure over pain (La Mettrie and the Utilitarians). That true happiness is a tranquil state, much more dependent on avoiding pain than experiencing pleasure, and one that hard to come for the greedy and the immoral (Smith, Rousseau, and Jefferson). That public happiness should be maximized (the Utilitarians). And, the view that some strategies for increasing public happiness could make it harder for individuals to achieve a tranquil and moralized personal (Smith, Rousseau, and Jefferson).

*Sensory pleasure without religion or morality*

Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709–1751 CE) trained and worked as a physician, which led him to perform many operations and autopsies on humans and other animals (McMahon, 2006). Struck by both the similarity of human and non-human animal organs and the mechanistic nature of these organs and their subcomponents, La Mettrie argued that, just like non-human animals, humans do not need souls to animate them because they are effectively “self-winding machine[s]” (La Mettrie, 1994, p.30). In *Treatise on the Soul*, La Mettrie (1996a) argued that, just as in non-human animals, pleasure and pain, which combine to make up happiness, are the motivating forces of the human machine. As a result of these beliefs, La Mettrie saw happiness as the natural state of all animals: “Nature has created us uniquely to be happy, yes every one of us, from the worm who crawls, to the eagle who loses himself in the clouds” (1994, p.53). La Mettrie was also a prudential hedonist; he viewed pleasure as the ultimate good in life. And,

although Epicurus was a major influence on him, La Mettrie understood pleasure as sensory pleasure—luscious experiences of delight that arise from the arousal and satisfaction of sensual desires (Thomson, 1996). Indeed, La Mettrie saw the Lockean cycle of ‘desire to pleasurable satisfaction to new desire’ as our greatest gift from nature because it provided constant opportunities to experience the pleasures of satisfaction and anticipation.

Believing pleasure to be *the* source of well-being, and having rejected the existence of immortal souls, La Mettrie saw no need for heaven or God either. La Mettrie rejected the existence of heaven and God because he believed that nothing could exist outside of the physical universe. Although anti-religious sentiment was growing during this stage of the Enlightenment, La Mettrie was one of the first to challenge the contemporary theistic beliefs so strongly, and perhaps provided the most articulate discussion of the implications of these anti-theistic claims for human well-being (McMahon, 2006). For La Mettrie, the implications were clear; even the religions that did not demand suffering on Earth still required at least occasional toiling and foregoing of pleasure in this life to ensure true happiness in the afterlife, but the promises of religion were empty, so foregoing pleasure on Earth would mean missing out on the only chance one has for happiness. Adherents’ religious beliefs and voluntary moral restrictions were making a Fool’s Hell out of what might be a Real Paradise.

In addition to completely rejecting any God-given aspect of the good life, La Mettrie’s hedonistic views also broke with one of the oldest traditions of scholarship on well-being; he pointed out that virtue was not a necessary or singularly important route to happiness. Depending on their character, La Mettrie (1987) argued in *Anti-Seneca*, some individuals would be happiest wallowing in filth, some reveling in depraved debauchery, and others committing evil deeds: “Happiness is individual and particular, and may be found in the absence of virtue and even in

crime” (La Mettrie, 1987, p.263) Even more antithetical to dominant historical views of the good life, in *System of Epicurus* La Mettrie (1996b) disapproved of more than the necessary use of reason because he thought conscious deliberation diminished the capacity to experience concurrent pleasure. His disregard for these long-established views about well-being might explain why secular and religious critics alike openly mocked La Mettrie upon hearing that he might have died young from hedonistic over-indulgence; they were pleased that this peddler of repugnant ideas got his just deserts (McMahon, 2006). So for La Mettrie, well-being is secular and amoral sensory pleasure.

#### *Public and personal happiness*

Like La Mettrie, several other Enlightenment thinkers began arguing that happiness on Earth was the most important good for humans, and perhaps even our natural state. Voltaire claimed that “Paradise is where I am” (2003, p.295) and that “the great and only concern is to be happy” (c.f. Craveri, 2005, p.258). Adam Smith argued that happiness is our “natural” or “usual” state (1982, p.149). And, Jean-Jacques Rousseau saw happiness as the natural end of “every being which senses” (Rousseau, 1997a, p.442). In effect, the Enlightenment saw a transition in the ultimate question from the religious ‘How can I be saved?’ to the pragmatic ‘How can I be happy?’ (Porter 2000). But the Enlightenment was also a time of social and political change and, as such, some thinkers were also asking ‘How can *we* be happy?’. Several Enlightenment thinkers offered answers to this question, although many also saw the inherent difficulty in bringing about both private and public happiness.

The Enlightenment saw the fruits of the industrial revolution begin to ripen alongside advances in agriculture and trade (McMahon, 1996). As a result, wealth above subsistence levels

was spreading to an increasingly large proportion of society and the associated disposable income, and increase in markets replete with a variety of goods led to the “birth of consumer society” (McKendrick, Brewer, & Plumb, 1985). A growing economy and more readily available goods would be viewed by most people (and especially economists) as beneficial for public happiness because these things can increase people’s ability to satisfy their most essential needs for things like food, clothing and shelter. It should be no surprise, then, that Adam Smith was a great proponent of the commercialization that was occurring during the Enlightenment.

Adam Smith (1723–1790 CE) believed that governments should be valued to the extent that they “promote the happiness of those who live under them”, since that “is their sole use and end” (1982, p.185). Apparently believing that a society is minimally the sum total of its inhabitants, he declared that no “society can be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable” (1981, p.96). So, Smith argued for governments to aim for economic progress because increases in wealth would reduce suffering. In addition to this benefit, Smith approved of the economic trends of the Enlightenment so strongly because he thought that they were important drivers of security and liberty (Smith, 1981, p.412). Rasmussen (2006) has argued that Smith likely thought of increasing security and liberty for people as the best way to improve well-being because living in a “continual state of war with their neighbors, and of servile dependency on their superiors” (Smith, 1981, p.412) were causes of great suffering to people. Nevertheless, Smith was concerned that while commercialized societies could raise living standards and reduce misery (to the benefit of public happiness), they also exacerbated an old barrier to attaining personal happiness.

Essentially, Smith worried that the frivolous temptations of consumerism would appeal to our natural “desire of bettering our condition” that “comes with us from the womb”, and that we

would succumb, chasing the illusion of happiness instead of enjoying the happiness that might already be at hand (1981, p.341). Smith had a very different view of happiness from La Mettrie, describing it as a state of “tranquility and enjoyment”, and as our “natural” or “usual” state—what we revert to when our desires, fears, and anxieties are resolved (1982, p.149). Smith’s view of happiness was more like a combination of the views of Epicurus and the Stoics; he viewed happiness as a rare but blissful state of being free of (especially psychological) perturbations, not wanting for anything, and as inherently bound up with being virtuous. Also, like Epicurus, Smith saw pain as more important than pleasure: “Pain... almost always, depresses us much more below the... natural state of our happiness, than [pleasure] ever rises us above it” (1982, p.44). Smith also viewed wealth as much more important for mitigating pain than promoting pleasure, since between the natural state of our happiness “and the highest pitch of human prosperity, the interval is but a trifle; [but] between it and the lowest depth of misery the distance is immense and prodigious” (1982, p.45). So for Smith, once a basic-need-satisfying level of material wealth is reached, additional money (or power) makes little difference to happiness.

In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith (1982, p.113) sets out what can help people achieve the “inward tranquility and self-satisfaction” of happiness. Smith thought “warranted praise from others and self-approbation” (Rasmussen, 2006, p.310) are the best sources of happiness because “the chief part of human happiness arises from the consciousness of being loved” (Smith, 1982, p.41). Naturally, virtuous behavior goes much further to engender true appreciation from others than amassing wealth and power. Given all of these views, Smith concludes: “What can be added to the happiness of the man who is in health, who is out of debt, and has a clear conscience? To one in this situation, all accessions of fortune may properly be said to be superfluous” (1982, p.45). For Smith, wealth or economic well-being was not a

constituent, but a determinant of well-being, and one that loses most or all of its well-being generating effect at the level at which basic needs are satisfied. So, while Smith was a proponent of economic growth for reasons of public happiness (security and liberty from suffering), he was concerned that the resulting consumer society might lead individuals to forego the happiness that was readily available to them in favor of the illusory happiness of wealth and power.

A contemporary of Smith, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778 CE) held several similar views, including on what happiness is and that happiness is our natural end. Furthermore, and contrary to La Mettrie, Rousseau was adamant that “Happiness is not pleasure” (Rousseau, 1994, p.40). Rousseau argued that pleasure could not be equivalent to happiness or well-being because it would be absurd to put so much value in “a fleeting state which leaves our hearts still empty and anxious, either regretting something that is past or desiring something that is yet to come” (1979b, p.88). For Rousseau, happiness was “a single lasting state” (1979b, p.88) in which Locke’s uneasiness was never felt, in which one was completely immersed in one’s own momentary existence, without a care in the world (*cf.* the concept of *flow* in Csikszentmihalyi (1997)). Like Smith, Rousseau’s conception of the best possible life was more similar to the Ancient Greeks than most of his contemporaries because he viewed happiness as a kind of permanent self-sufficiency; a state in which one wants for nothing (Rousseau, 1979b). It is no wonder then, that pleasure was insufficient for Rousseau. As La Mettrie would have attested, there is no amount of pleasure that couldn’t be improved by adding a little more.

Compared to Smith, Rousseau was less positive about the economic trends of his day. Rousseau viewed maintaining happiness in a world that constantly presented new desirable possibilities and accoutrements as an extremely difficult task: “As soon as man’s needs exceed his faculties and the objects of his desire expand and multiply, he must either remain eternally

unhappy or seek a new form of being from which he can draw the resources he no longer finds in himself” (1994, p.82). Rousseau was recognizing what Epicurus and the Stoics had argued for before him; if well-being requires something outside of oneself, then any brief achievement of happiness or success is so tenuous that it brings anxiety about losing the new-found good along with itself. In particular, well-being based on external goods (e.g. power and wealth) was considered extremely tenuous because the Gods or other people were liable to disrupt their good fortune (Joshano et al., forthcoming). But Rousseau did not believe Gods would undo earthly good fortune, and he thought that his theory of social contract might allow us to ‘form a new kind of being’ by providing a blueprint for building a society stable enough to vastly reduce the anxiety caused by living in close proximity to our fellow humans.

In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau (1782) argued for various forms of democracy based on the idea that the only legitimate subjugation to power is voluntary subjugation, and only then when the volunteer is also a part of that greater power. In order for Rousseau’s social contract idea to work, everyone had to give themselves entirely to the state, which meant to consciously become a part of one new being—the society—and to act accordingly (i.e. with society’s interests in mind). In such an ideal society, force would only have to be used by the whole on the few if the few had not fully given themselves to the state and were attempting to free-ride on the many. With this security from oppression obtained, Rousseau thought that the benefits of large-scale community living might outweigh the desire-enticing consumerist problems that came along with it:

The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a very remarkable change in man, by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and giving his actions the morality they had formerly lacked. ... Although, in this state, he

deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great, his faculties are so stimulated and developed, his ideas so extended, his feelings so ennobled, and his whole soul so uplifted... (1782, Book 1, sect. 8)

Furthermore, Rousseau (1994) believed that fully giving oneself to society would make achieving the tranquil state of happiness easier because it prevents the disquieting internal tensions that result from being caught between our natural tendencies and desires on the one hand and our duties and the watchful gaze of social institutions on the other hand. Even for those who did fully give themselves to the state, however, Rousseau believed that the government could not force its citizens to be happy, concluding that: “the best [government] puts them in a position to be happy if they are reasonable” (1994, p.41).

Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826 CE) and the signatories to the Declaration of Independence were also aware of the importance of happiness:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

This preamble to the Declaration uses the language of rights, popularized during the Enlightenment, and essentially claims that, as willed by God, everyone is born with the freedom to pursue happiness in whatever way they wish. Based on this, the Declaration states that free individuals may choose to create a government so as to further protect these rights, and that if the government is not allowing the pursuit of happiness as it should, then the people can dissolve or restructure it. These ideas, perhaps without the religious root, have doubtlessly played an important role in shaping the widespread contemporary western belief that governments should arrange institutions and manage conditions in a way that makes it easy for people to pursue happiness. But, which kind of happiness?

McMahon (2006, pp.330–331) has argued that Jefferson intended the newly anointed citizens of the United States of America to pursue both public and personal happiness; he hoped, like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, that they would realize that virtuous and socially beneficent behavior would engender happiness in the individual as well as for her society. According to McMahon, Jefferson and his colleagues believed that many of the main themes we have discussed here would help prevent individuals from pursuing happiness in the way Smith feared they might in a consumer society, and preventing happiness as a result: “In religion, in classical virtue, in the education of reason, and in the public-mindedness of the moral sense, Jefferson and his contemporaries saw the forces that would perform this essential task, ensuring that the pursuit of private pleasures did not veer off the thoroughfare of public good” (McMahon, 2006, p. 330). Unfortunately, Smith’s concerns appear to have been realized in the nation that rushed to economic dominance because “No one could work harder to be happy” than its citizens, who could not relax “for fear of missing the shortest cut leading to happiness” (Tocqueville, 1988,

Vol.1, p.243). Still today, the United States is viewed as the land of abundance, but if happiness surveys are anything to go by, it could not rightfully be viewed as the land of happiness.

### *Utilitarianism*

Utilitarians also thought they had the answer to the question of how to engender public happiness, but they took a more direct route than that taken by Jefferson. Like many Enlightenment thinkers, Utilitarians were disposed to pronouncements such as, “Every authority that is not exercised for the happiness of all can only be founded on imposture and force” (Chastellux, 1772, c.f. McMahon, 2006, p.217). These pronouncements were based on the increasingly widespread Enlightenment belief that the proper role of legislation was to benefit people, but also on the still contentious belief that happiness (variously defined, if at all) on Earth was, ultimately, the only thing of value for people. Based on these premises, Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832 CE) set out the principle of utility (more commonly known as the greatest happiness principle) to discern whether the actions of individuals and governments are moral: “By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question... I say of every action whatsoever, and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government” (Bentham, 2000, p.14).

Essentially, both individuals and governments morally ought to act in whichever ways seem likely to bring about the most happiness for everyone concerned. The motivation behind utilitarianism is simple enough; if every person and institution acted in a way that created the most happiness, then there would be much more happiness to go around. Furthermore, since

Utilitarians also believe that everyone's happiness should be afforded equal moral value (Weijers, 2011), the gains in happiness should not be concentrated among the elite few. In this way, Utilitarians might be thought of as aiming for Real Paradise on Earth by encouraging individuals and institutions to create as much happiness as possible. However, since happiness was an entirely internal state for most Utilitarians, they would prefer a Fool's Paradise to Real Paradise if there was more pleasure to be had in the former. Nevertheless, these moral elements of utilitarianism made it much more palatable than La Mettrie's egoistic view of pursuing one's own happiness. After all, who could argue with more happiness for everyone? Well, that depends at least on how 'happiness' is understood.

Most Utilitarians believe that happiness consists in a preponderance of pleasure over pain (Weijers, 2011). While it might seem myopic to account for all that is good for people in terms of pleasure, Utilitarians usually understand pleasure broadly, so that it includes psychological pleasures as well as sensual bodily pleasures. Indeed, Bentham (2000) understood pleasure synonymously with satisfaction, bliss, ecstasy, well-being, and 50 other terms that roughly equated to feeling good. Since Bentham (2000) was a quantitative hedonist, increasing happiness meant simply increasing the quantity of pleasure or decreasing the quantity of pain, along the lines suggested in Plato's Protagoras. Bentham (2000) laid out in detail the aspects of pleasure that contribute to its quantity. In essence, the quantity of pleasure felt at any moment could be calculated by summing the intensity of each of one's concurrent pleasures, and the same for pain. Then, momentary happiness would be the total concurrent pleasure less the total concurrent pain. Notably, Bentham's quantitative hedonism allowed pleasure from different sources to be of equivalent value if they had the same intensity: "Prejudice apart, the game of push-pin is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry. If the game of push-pin furnishes more

pleasure, it is more valuable than either.” (Bentham, 1825, p.206). Failing to distinguish a difference between the value of sensual pleasures on the one hand and of moral and intellectual pleasures on the other led Bentham and other quantitative hedonists to be accused of peddling a philosophy of swine (Weijers, 2011). Even Bentham’s protégé criticized him on this point.

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873 CE), who studied under and was Godson to Bentham, used a different notion of pleasure in his version of utilitarianism. Mill (1957) developed a qualitative hedonism, which was similar to Bentham’s quantitative hedonism, except that it also took the quality of pleasures into account when calculating their value. For Mill, the quality of a pleasure had to do with how bodily or cerebral it was; bodily or lower pleasures, such as from eating, were of a lower quality than higher pleasures, such as from acting virtuously or listening to opera. The following famous, but often misquoted, statement from Mill demonstrates this view: “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides” (Mill, 1957, p. 9). For Utilitarians then, well-being is happiness, understood as a preponderance of pleasure over pain (broadly construed).

For the thinkers in this section, well-being is Earthly happiness. La Mettrie and the Utilitarians viewed as happiness as a preponderance of pleasure over pain, but they had differing views about what kinds of pleasure are more valuable. Smith, Rousseau, and Jefferson held more tranquil and moralized conceptions of happiness that focused more on avoiding pain than experiencing pleasure. All of these thinkers were concerned with increasing happiness in the public sphere, but it was mainly Smith, Rousseau, and Jefferson that saw how some strategies for

increasing public happiness could make it harder for individuals to achieve a tranquil and moralized happiness.

### Loftier Goals

Although Mill's qualitative hedonistic utilitarianism was more acceptable than Bentham's quantitative version, many critics still worried that happiness (whether defined as pleasure, satisfaction, or tranquility) was not the be all and end all of a good life. As we shall see, critics clamored for morality, community, meaning, religion, and authenticity to be considered as essential aspects of well-being as they had in ancient times. More specifically, in this section, the following views will be explained. That there is more to well-being than happiness and that, as such, public happiness should not be the goal of society (Carlyle, Weber, and Huxley). That moral, social, and religious ends were more appropriate goals for public policy (Carlyle and Weber). And, the view that meaningfulness and authenticity were better public goals than happiness (Huxley).

### *Morality, community, meaningful work, and God*

Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881 CE) lamented the public pursuit of happiness, shaped by Utilitarians in Great Britain, decrying utilitarianism for failing to appreciate the differences between humans and beasts (Carlyle, 1965). Carlyle also attacked the economic markets inspired by Smith for destroying morality: “Our life is not a mutual helpfulness, but rather, cloaked under due laws-of-war, named ‘fair competition’ and so forth, it is mutual hostility” (1965, p.148). At heart, Carlyle was bemoaning the past 200 years of earthly happiness worship that had been eroding traditional values since Locke suggested that God wanted us to be happy on Earth.

Carlyle pined for a return of the days when community, meaningful work, and an intimate sense of God were the values that people held highest (McMahon, 2006).

After visiting the United States and observing the forefront of capitalism and consumerism, Max Weber (1864–1920 CE) held many of Carlyle’s worries. By this time, Smith’s markets had done much to raise living standards, but the cost of this progress, according to Weber, was a disastrous shift in societal goals. The happiness that was being pursued had lost its connotations of virtue, religion, and meaning, and replaced them with wealth. To an outsider, like Weber was, it looked like the American dream was to work very hard in order to pursue the greatest good of wealth. In Weber’s view, Smith’s greatest fear about the commercialization of society had been realized: “Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life” (Weber, 1976, p.53). Like Carlyle before him, Weber lamented what he saw as an erosion of moral and religious values in the United States, where “the pursuit of wealth... [had] become associated with purely mundane passions, which actually gave it the character of sport” (Weber, 1976, p.181). Weber observed people working out of a sense of duty, but without knowing to what or whom the duty was owed; they just worked out of blind devotion to work itself. Without its religious and moral motivations, Weber thought both work and non-work activities were meaningless. Targeting the goal of public happiness (with its strong materialistic connotation) as part of the problem behind these events, Weber suggested better legislation would focus on what is valuable in humans: “I believe that we must renounce human happiness as a goal of social legislation. We want something else and can only want something else. We want to cultivate and support what appears to us valuable in man: his personal responsibility, his deep drive towards higher things, towards the spiritual and moral values of mankind...” (Weber, 1804/1993, pp. 339–340; c.f. McMahon, 2006, p.359).

Both Carlyle and Weber articulated views of well-being that ran contrary to the increasingly happiness- and wealth-centric views of their times, but neither were confident that there was much hope for a return to the older conceptions of well-being that stressed the importance of virtue and religion. Weber warned that everything “opposed to the culture of capitalism was going to be demolished with irresistible force” (c.f. Mommsen, 2000, p. 105). What Carlyle in particular mused over, although without much success, was the problem of how to get people to realize that there was more to life than happiness as Utilitarians defined it (McMahon, 2006). Carlyle and Weber seemed to understand well-being as a life full of morality, community, meaningful work, and God.

#### *Unhappiness, authenticity, and meaning*

In the process of writing *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley (1894–1963 CE) came to share Carlyle’s belief that happiness as pleasant satisfaction or tranquility must not be our main personal or societal goal (Huxley, 1959). In *Brave New World*, Huxley (1932) depicts an advanced society that has taken the greatest happiness principle to its logical extreme; all of its institutions and technologies are geared toward engendering a passive, contented, and pleasant populace. One of the most important technologies put to use in service of these goals is soma.

Soma, is a readily available drug that is used as a reward to control the lower castes and as an antidote for whatever psychological ailments the upper castes might experience. A small dose relieves minor psychological perturbations and produces pleasant feelings. A large dose provides a soma holiday—a complete escape from present troubles into a joyous dreamlike state. As explained by World Controller Mustapha Mond, soma not only makes the imbiber feel happier and less anxious, it also helps virtues to shine: “There’s always soma to calm your anger,

to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long-suffering. In the past you could only accomplish these things by making a great effort and after years of hard moral training. Now, you swallow two or three half-gramme tablets, and there you are. Anybody can be virtuous now. ... Christianity without tears -- that's what soma is" (Huxley, 1932, p.238).

As well as making individuals happy, soma's placating and moralizing effects also help keep society peaceful and stable, as Mustapha Mond makes clear: "The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get... And if anything should go wrong, there's soma" (Huxley, 1932, p. 220). In this respect, soma ensures both the public security that Smith and Rousseau desired and the personal tranquility that results from being free of fear and anxieties. In the appropriate doses, soma also provides the luscious pleasures that La Mettrie desired. Mill would likely not have held the lower pleasure provided by soma in very high esteem, but if quantitative hedonistic Utilitarians like Bentham were true to their theory, they would certainly legislate in favor of this happiness increasing and pain decreasing drug.

Of course, what Huxley achieves in *Brave New World* is to help us imagine what society might be like if particular conceptions of well-being are used as the goal of society. Indeed, Huxley himself was worried that the dominant conceptions of well-being in the west would result in the kind of society his story was based on (Huxley, 1959). Even though the offerings in this futuristic society seem to satisfy the well-being requirements of many of the thinkers discussed in this chapter, most would likely balk at the opportunity to live in such a dystopic society. But why?

A key character in *Brave New World* shares the view that the happiness-oriented society is dystopic. John the Savage was raised on a reserve for the humans who didn't wish to join the

happiness revolution. On the reserve, all modern technology had been lost or abandoned and life had reverted to a tribal and spiritual affair. John was unusual because he was born to and raised by a civilized human who, after becoming pregnant, was left at the reserve. As a result, he was fairly intelligent and could speak the language of civilized society. A certain turn of events leads John to experience the happiness-centric society first hand, and he does not like it. In the end, John voices his concerns about the brave new world through a recognition of what he wants that it cannot provide:

'I'm claiming the right to be unhappy.'

'Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen to-morrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind.'

(Huxley, 1932, p.240).

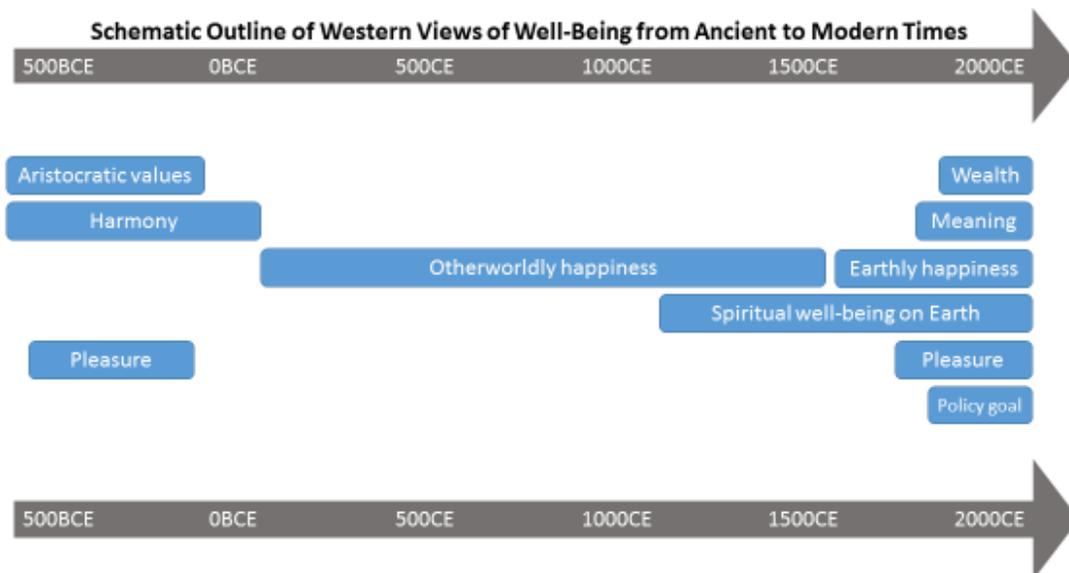
John wanted a real and interesting life, replete with the whole range of states that will be experienced in an unexpected way. There is something very meaningless and inauthentic about a somafied life. And certainly it lacks drama or a narrative worth retelling. Since Huxley began to increasingly identify with John (Huxley, 1959), it is clear that he believed well-being to require meaning and authenticity that was impossible in a life filled with only happiness. Indeed, most readers of *Brave New World* are likely left with the impression that the happy people in Huxley's fantastic society are living in a Fool's Paradise, since they lack the basic freedom to be unhappy, to find their own way, and to pursue a real and authentically meaningful life. Huxley viewed well-being as a meaningful and authentic life, which may well require unhappiness.

In this section, Carlyle, Weber, and Huxley are all arguing that there is more to well-being than happiness and that, as such, public happiness should not be the goal of society. In particular, Carlyle and Weber thought that moral, social, and religious goals were more appropriate. In a similar vein, Huxley argued that meaningfulness and authenticity were better goals than happiness.

### Summary and discussion

As we have seen, there have been a wide variety of conceptions of well-being throughout the history of the west. While some conceptions seem to have died completely, many of the oldest conceptions went in and out of fashion and still inform contemporary views. In this section we very briefly, broadly, and roughly describe the major trends over the last two and a half thousand years. A schematic visual representation of this summary can be seen in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2: Schematic Outline of Western Views of Well-Being from Ancient to Modern Times**



The Ancient view of well-being as excellent personal traits and aristocratic trappings was less prevalent in the middle ages, but resurged somewhat in modern times. In the middle ages, excellent personal traits were mainly replaced with religious virtues. And, in modern times the emphasis seems to have shifted more to the possession of wealth and power, and away from being a morally good person.

Ancient views of well-being as some sort of harmony mainly grew out of favor, except for during the Enlightenment and the preceding century, when the balance between public and personal happiness was being discussed, and perhaps in notions of internal psychological harmony, such as in Smith's view of personal happiness as pleasant tranquility.

Pleasure, a dark horse in Ancient times and through to the end of the middle ages, was usually seen as a positive feature in a life, but never a very important or worthy one. Yet, from the times of Locke and La Mettrie onward, the spreading of more secular world views, and more scientific views of the mind, appear to have made valuing pleasure more acceptable. The height of pleasure's role in conceptions of well-being seems to have been at the time of British Empiricism, when Bentham and his utilitarian colleagues held both academic and political sway (Sumner, 1996). Pleasure still plays an important role in conceptions of well-being today, although usually as part of happiness, which tends to be understood as "satisfaction with life and a preponderance of positive over negative emotions" (Joshanloo & Weijers, 2014, p.718).

Religion and in particular Christianity, which swept to dominance after the fall of the Roman Empire, only began to lose sway over philosophers and non-philosophers alike during the Enlightenment. As science continues to reveal the universe's secrets, and as economic progress continues to reduce the number of people struggling, religious beliefs and religious conceptions of well-being continue to fall slowly out of favor in the west (Diener, Tay, & Myers, 2011).

However, moderate religious views of well-being, such as Locke's, probably remain important as significant numbers of people still report being religious in many western nations.

Happiness, usually understood in the relatively utilitarian way as satisfaction with life and a preponderance of positive over negative emotions, has played only a very minor role in the history of well-being (despite many translations of Ancient texts appropriating the word) up until the Enlightenment. In contemporary western society, happiness is possibly the most common understanding of well-being, or at least the most commonly named component of it. However, how to define happiness is still hotly contested, especially since it has become a synonym of well-being in common usage. For these reasons, measures of happiness that are worded very generally, or other generally worded evaluations of life as a whole, might best represent the contemporary western view of well-being.

Despite this, and in line with Rousseau and Jefferson, the idea that a government would attempt to force people to be happy is as largely reviled today as it was then. This at least partly explains our revulsion at Huxley's brave new world, in which society was arranged in such a way that there was literally no right to be unhappy, and no chance to lead a meaningful existence. Furthermore, the contemporary idea of governments measuring happiness and using happiness research to guide policy is likely unpopular among the older generations partly because their longer view of history has taught them being forced to be free is a much better guarantor of their well-being than any roughshod attempt to force them to be happy. State force has been abused so many times in the past (and even still now), that many people prefer that their governments provide them with the tools they need to pursue their own view of well-being in their own way, a way that is meaningful to them. For this reason, useful proxy measures of well-

being might be thought to be measures of health, education, civil and political liberties, and wealth, since these are the basic enablers of the freedom to pursue well-being in all of its forms.

Throughout this chapter, we have referred the four-part taxonomy of the objective and subjective qualities of life (displayed in Figure 2.1). The most important point to be made regarding this framework is that the classical notion of a Fool's Paradise, which survives today, requires at least the sort of two-variable model mentioned in the first paragraph. This notion is based on the common sense view that there is a real world, however roughly apprehended, and that there are good reasons for believing that some perceptions, thoughts, feelings and actions are more appropriate than others in that sort of world. As the remnants of the works of ancient authors reveal, and as one would easily discover by examining the works of contemporary authors, the common sense view of the human condition is not universally appreciated and accepted. In particular, some scholars are troubled by the fact that a person's personal assessments of his or her life (i.e., self-reported health) may conflict with relatively objective assessments (e.g., measures of blood pressure and heart-valve functioning). While anyone with any democratic sensitivity would grant that each person's assessment of his or her own life should be accorded some privileged status, it is far from obvious that such privilege should override all other considerations.

The best way to address the problem of what to say when relatively objective conditions are not consistent with subjective assessments is to claim that *normally*, or in the standard case, objective conditions and subjective assessments are each necessary and jointly provide a clear *sufficient condition* of a life being bad or good, and being regarded as such for good reasons. Then, if someone's perceptions, assessments and actions are inconsistent with relatively objective conditions as a result of his or her ignorance, disability, disease, substance abuse or

some sort of duress, we are reasonably warranted in over-riding their judgments. As well, if what we regard as relatively objective conditions are not as we think they are (which often happens, including disagreements among well-informed people), it would be unreasonable to insist that our claims about them are true and that we must act accordingly. In both kinds of cases, the normal or standard conditions for assuming the necessity of objective conditions *and* subjective assessments are not met. When the normal or standard conditions are not met, we have the possibility of a Fool's Paradise or Fool's Hell. So we must adjust our judgments to fit these cases. Readers may wish to keep this in mind while reading the rest of this volume.

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