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Well-Being in Contemporary Society

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Introduction

Jelle de Boer, Jan-Willem van der Rijt, Johnny H. Søraker, Pak-Hang Wong and Philip Brey

Four Types of Questions About Well-Being

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) famously argued that human happiness should be conceived as the fundamental principle of human conduct, both psychologically and morally. The desire to be happy normally guides individuals in their decisions in life, and in as far it does not, he believed it *should* guide them. Similarly, governments ought to regard happiness as the standard for improving society. In Bentham's time, this was seen as a revolutionary idea by which he aimed to counteract the force of tradition, superstition, and speculative systems of thought. Bentham claimed that the happiness principle alone followed from the dictates of reason. "Systems which attempt to question it," he wrote, "deal in sounds instead of sense, in caprice instead of reason, in darkness instead of light." (Bentham 1789/1823 [Chapter 1, Section I]). With hindsight, we can say that this assertion was perhaps a bit overconfident. As it soon came to light, the happiness principle too has its drawbacks, one of the most prominent being the difficulty to measure it. Others objected to it on the ground that people's happiness falls outside of the purview of government: people know best what is good for themselves. Due to recent scientific progress, these two arguments have now lost much of their force and as a result Bentham's thinking has made a major comeback.

Nowadays, the first objection is losing much of its urgency as the modern science of subjective well-being continues to develop its methods to measure people's happiness. One very influential method is questionnaire-based and asks people how satisfied they are with their life on, for example, a 0–5 scale, either in a global sense or in some specific domain of their life. Another method probes the emotional responses of people. This can be done in real-time, while they are engaged in their daily routines, or retrospectively, for instance by querying them about these emotions at the end of their day. Other techniques rely on brain scans or the measurement of physiological proxies of happiness. Such techniques enable us to learn what conditions are particularly apt to human beings experiencing

subjective well-being, how strong the influence of these conditions are, and to what degree these different measurement methods interrelate and validate each other.

The force of the second objection is also undermined by progress in this field of research, as it has been demonstrated that people surprisingly often fail in securing their own well-being when left to their own devices (Gilbert 2007, Haybron, 2007). By focusing on the wrong things, or through short-sightedness, people end up in far less favorable conditions than they could be—even by their own standards. Many of us, for example, find a high income important. Yet arguably we find it too important: the evidence suggests that money does not contribute much to happiness once a certain threshold level has been achieved.[1] Prima facie, the fact that people are so fallible in these regards provides a reason to develop public policies that engage with these human shortcomings and so increase subjective well-being.

Subjective well-being scholars have argued that governments should focus less on income as the standard for social well-being but should instead direct their attention to what really matters: well-being itself. For instance, Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman and his coworkers have recommended that governments use this new research on happiness to enrich their bookkeeping methods and develop National Well-Being Accounts. Joseph Stiglitz and Armatya Sen, two further Nobelists, have likewise expressed concerns about traditional, social, and economic indicators and emphasized the need to develop better ones. These appeals have not remained without success: discontent with traditional measures and optimism about the new possibilities now resonate beyond academia, especially within the circles of politicians and policy makers. Currently, the UN, the OECD, the European commission and countries like Australia, Bhutan, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have each issued statements that the subjective well-being of their citizens should be used as a guide for policy-making and as an indicator of its success; some of them have also taken steps toward implementation of this principle. Bhutan has famously gone furthest in this direction and uses a Gross National Happiness Index to guide policies and track progress.

For the study of well-being—what it is, how it works, and how to apply it for policy objectives—four types of questions are especially germane. The present volume is structured around these four issues. The first concerns our understanding of the concept of well-being: what is well-being, what does it consist in? The other three we borrow from John Rawls (2001). In his work on justice, Rawls argued that when working toward a more just society one should ask whether policies and courses of action are "likely to be effective" at the level of the individual (taking into account human psychology), whether they are "politically possible" and

[1] This is sometimes referred to as the "Easterlin Paradox" (Easterlin 1974). The exact relationship between income and subjective well-being is contested, however (see e.g., Stevenson and Wolfers 2008). See also various contributions in Diener, Helliwell and Kahneman (2010).

whether they are "morally permissible" (Rawls 2001, p. 89) Our concern is with well-being, not justice, but the same set of requirements apply.

1. ***The nature of well-being***. At the most general level, a person's well-being tells us how well his or her life is going. This means that the concept of well-being has both a descriptive and an evaluative component. For example, whether a certain individual is very happy is something that can be true or false: it is a matter of fact. At the same time, to say that somebody is happy conveys evaluative meaning. It expresses approval or endorsement: a judgment that this person is on the right track, that she should keep doing what she is doing. Since well-being has both descriptive and evaluative components—to use the words of Bernard Williams: it is a "thick concept" (Williams 2006)—it attracts the attention of empirically minded scientists as well as normatively oriented philosophers, as this volume attests. As mentioned, empirical scholars apply various methods to measure well-being. Some are more cognitively oriented, others more affectively, and still others physiological. We can understand this variety of methods in different ways. They can be taken to represent different approaches to one and the same subject: well-being as a unitary entity; alternatively, each of them can be taken to measure a different aspect of well-being.

   What well-being consists in is an issue that precedes its measurement. We might call it a philosophical question, and there are predictably many different theories of well-being within philosophy. Derek Parfit (1986) has usefully distinguished these theories in three categories: desire satisfaction theories, hedonic experience theories, and objective list theories.[2] From a practical point of view this variety may at first sight seem unfortunate, possibly even dispiriting. When one is interested in measuring and furthering well-being, it can be highly frustrating to get bogged down in philosophical questions regarding its true nature. However, a closer look shows that the requirement of practical applicability can be used to re-examine our most prominent theories of well-being: we can seek to determine where these theories overlap and in what sense they are complementary. This is an exercise that may well bear fruit. It is the subject of Chaps. 1 and 2 of the present volume, "Towards Consensus on Well-Being" by *Tim Taylor* and "Towards a Widely Acceptable Framework for the Study of Personal Well-Being" by *Sam Wren-Lewis*. Independently of each other these authors both argue that subjective well-being can be conceived as a value in itself, as an indicator of what is valuable, or as a resource to create value. Through this troika Wren Lewis ties together the main *empirical* approaches to the study of well-being, while Taylor ties together the most prominent *philosophical* theories. The prospect that empirical science and philosophy could mutually inform each other and are not doomed to talk past each other is further explored in Chap. 3 "Well-Being, Science, and Philosophy" by *Raffaele Rodogno.*
2. ***Effective at the level of the individual***. Human beings are finite beings: it is a fact of life that we cannot get or do whatever we may happen to want.

[2] See also Griffin (1986), Sumner (1996) and Brey (2012).

Proposals regarding the promotion of well-being, either for specific individuals or for society at large, must meet the condition that they are in accordance with human psychology. They must take note of human capacities, dispositions, and the limits of what people can achieve and learn. These constraints are not fixed, however, as they depend on the resources and technologies that are available.

Our prospects of improving well-being are dependent on our knowledge of what makes people happy and their lives go well. Here, the current insights from positive psychology, with its focus on happiness and positive functioning, are especially helpful. In Chap. 4, "Improving the Health Care Sector with a Happiness-Based Approach," Laura A. Weiss, Sarah Kedzia, Aad Francissen and Gerben J. Westerhof show how this knowledge can be applied to help people who are trapped in a vicious spiral of illness, depression, and social isolation via what is called "the Happiness Route".

Aids for improving people's happiness must connect with what people have in stock themselves, their natural dispositions and capacities. This includes their potential to use self-insight, i.e., to use their knowledge of how their own motivations can change due to the choices they make, as *Rixtar Arlegi and Miriam Teschl* demonstrate in Chap. 5, "Conflict, Commitment and Well-Being." Their chapter addresses an important problem for desire satisfaction-based theories of well-being: how to deal with the fact that people often have conflicting desires. Commitment is a technique that allows individuals to cope with this problem of conflicting motivations. Alegri and Teschl contribute to our understanding of this technique by arguing that commitment assisted by self-knowledge can be understood in terms of a volitional solution to motivation conflict.

Natural human psychological capacities are of crucial importance in regards to well-being, but in our modern age technology plays no less important a role when it comes to the prospect of increasing people's happiness. In Chap. 6, "Can Technology Make Us Happy? Ethics, Spectator's Happiness and the Value of Achievement," *Andreas Spahn* outlines the different ways in which modern technology contributes to different aspects of well-being. Positioning himself on the side of Enlightenment optimism with regards to technology, rather than suffering from Romantic uneasiness, Spahn discusses the potential of "persuasive technologies" that can make people both more happy and more likely to act as morality demands. The subsequent two chapters concentrate on specific technologies for improving well-being. *Birgit Beck and Barbara Stroop* in their contribution "A Biomedical Shortcut to (Fraudulent) Happiness? An Analysis of the Notions of Well-Being and Authenticity Underlying Objections to Mood Enhancement" (Chap. 7) question the validity of the common view that mood enhancers should not be used outside of the medical context to make people feel happier because this would merely lead to a fake kind of happiness. They argue that this view is mistaken and that mood enhancers can improve genuine well-being. Not all technologies need to work through such physiological interventions, as *Judith Annett and Stefan Berglund* show in their "Increasing Societal Well-Being Through Enhanced Empathy Using Computer Games" (Chap. 8). They make a case for the development and use of a special kind of social computer

game, designed to increase and stimulate people's empathic capabilities. This should smoothen the interaction between people, which in turn will improve societal well-being.

3. ***Politically possible***. Even if it may be possible to increase well-being for some individuals because their psychological makeup is favorable to interventions that are presently within technological reach, it does not follow that the same holds on a larger scale. At the political level, problems that will undermine the promotion of well-being on a societal scale may, for example, arise due to various sorts of conflicting individual aims, or because of disrupting interaction effects.

   In order to further well-being in a given society, appropriate institutional arrangements and mechanisms are required. In democracies, people must be willing to give their votes to policies that improve well-being, politicians have to endorse such policies, and policy makers and bureaucrats have to implement them. The route to higher societal happiness levels is for a large part a political route, and therefore dependent on the way collective decision-making is organized.

   The question of promoting well-being can enter the political domain in various ways. Political questions arise, for instance, when the provision of a public good impacts societal well-being. This is the subject of Chap. 9 "Well-Being, Happiness and Sustainability" by *Bengt Brülde*. A more sustainable way of life requires drastic changes in consumption, both with respect to its pattern and to its level. How to achieve this environmental goal is an intricate puzzle that involves solving questions regarding the scale and distribution of behavioral types and of particular activities that impact sustainability and well-being. Another factor that advances issues of well-being into the political domain is the occurrence of interaction effects. In Chap. 10 "The Political Pursuit of Happiness: A Popperian Perspective on Layard's Happiness Policy" *Aloys Prinz and Björn Bünger* discuss status competition: the fact that a person's well-being is not only determined by absolute facts about their lives, but also is affected by relative comparisons. To the extent that one person's well-being depends on how well others are doing, the pursuit of happiness becomes a zero-sum game. If this is the case, then governments should arguably intervene to prevent a self-defeating rat race. Prinz and Bünger address this question and examine the possible traps and obstacles on the political road toward reducing the effects of positional comparisons on happiness.

   Knowing how to operationalize well-being indicators and knowing how to foster well-being on an individual level do not entail that we know how to promote well-being on the scale of a whole society. This is demonstrated by Chap. 11 "Measuring Quality of Life—An Idea Whose Time Has Come? Agenda-Setting Dynamics in Britain and the European Union" by *Ian Bache*. Whether an idea catches on depends on the political context. Through a comparative analysis between the UK and the EU, Bache shows how institutional design and political entrepreneurship helped determine the success and timing of the idea that we can improve society through application of the new Benthamite subjective well-being methods and indicators.

4. ***Morally permissible***. Individual and political feasibility together do not suffice to justify the new-Benthamite endeavor. Knowing how to improve the well-being of (a subset of) the population and being able to install the appropriate policy to implement this may be sufficient to ascertain that governments *can* improve individual and societal well-being, but that does not imply they also *should*. Well-being is not the only political value, and neo-Benthamism is not the only moral theory. The goal of fostering well-being among a group of people seems laudable on its own, but any attempts to put it into practice must be carefully considered taking note of their effects on other values, goals, and considerations. These may set constraints, point to trade-offs, or even put the entire Benthamite project into doubt.

   This means that even when it is possible to implement the happiness principle on an individual level by means of effective psychological and technological methods and on the societal level by designing and using institutional and political mechanisms, there can be weighty reasons to refrain from doing so. This is what *Jan-Willem van der Rijt* argues in Chap. 12 "The Political Turn Towards Happiness." Van der Rijt examines the reasons to be wary of a government that is too happily devoted to promoting the happiness of its citizenry, to a Benthamism unbound.

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Chapter 1
Towards Consensus on Well-Being

Timothy Edwin Taylor

1.1 Introduction

The subject of human well-being has been of interest to philosophers since the time of the Ancient Greeks. In modern times, it has also attracted the interest of other academic disciplines, and of medical and other professions which see their role as, in part, to preserve or improve quality of life. Well-being has not always been an explicit priority of governments, however. For much of the period since the second world war, economic growth, as measured by changes in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), was regarded by most nations as the prime indicator of national progress, and as a result widely enjoyed a pre-eminent status as a goal of public policy. That dominance reflected, in part, the assumption, derived from economic theories of utility based on preference-satisfaction, that GDP was also a good proxy for national well-being. In recent years that assumption has often been challenged, in the light of research which appeared to suggest that beyond a certain point, increases in GDP have not resulted in increased happiness (Easterlin 1974). A number of Governments and international organisations have begun to adopt well-being itself, unmediated by GDP, as an aim of public policy, or a criterion against which the effects of policies can be evaluated. This has led to a recognition of the fact that levels of well-being, and the impact of specific policies upon well-being, need to be measured, and a number of governments are proceeding with projects which seek to quantify well-being through a variety of different methodologies.

In the UK, The Prime Minister, David Cameron, in a speech on 25 November 2010, declared his intention to measure national progress not merely by standard of living, but by quality of life. The UK's Office of National Statistics (ONS) subsequently instituted a programme entitled Measuring National Well-being.

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Following an extensive consultation exercise on domains and measures of well-being, ONS adopted a wide range of subjective and objective well-being measures, comprising ten domains with three to five measures within each domain. Its first report on national well-being, "Measuring National Well-being: Life in the UK, 2012" was published in November 2012 (Office of National Statistics 2012). H.M. Treasury's Green Book, which sets out the framework for appraisal of policies, programmes and projects now makes reference to well-being approaches to valuing non-market goods, alongside more traditional means of appraisal (Bache and Reardon 2013; Treasury 2013).

Similar developments have been occurring elsewhere in Europe (Bache 2013). France has begun implementing quality of life measures in response to the findings of a Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMEPSP), headed by Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen. In Germany, a Federal Commission was established to develop new indicators of prosperity and in March 2013 announced nine additional indicators to supplement GDP, including both well-being related indicators such as life expectancy and others such as biodiversity (Berlin 2013). There have also been initiatives in other countries such as Italy and Spain. In 2009 The European Commission issued 'GDP and Beyond', a roadmap of five key actions to improve the EU's indicators of progress in ways more appropriate to citizens' concerns than GDP alone. This was endorsed by the European Parliament in 2011. More widely, the UN introduced the Human Development Index, combining measures of life-expectancy, education and standard of living, as far back as 1990, with the aim of shifting focus from financial to people-centred indicators. The OECD has also been active in this area, promoting the measurement of well-being at successive World Forums since 2004 (most recently in New Delhi in October 2012), and launching the Better Life Index in May 2011 in response to the findings of the CMEPSP.

1.2 The Problem

Interest in well-being as a factor that might influence public policy gives rise to a requirement to measure it, and there are a wide range of methodologies employed to do so within the academic community and by governments and international organisations themselves. A key question underlying the choice of which methodologies to use is that of what it is, exactly, that one is seeking to measure. In other words, *what is* well-being: what is it for a person's life to go well for them. Unfortunately, this is a question on which the prospects of consensus seem remote, since there are a number of rival theories, and no obvious means of resolving the debate between them.

Philosophical theories of well-being can be divided broadly into two categories: subjective theories, according to which well-being is ultimately dependent in some way upon the subjective mental states of the individual; and objective theories,

which wholly or partly reject that dependence.[1] There are further divisions within these categories. Among subjective theories, the major divide is between, on the one hand, hedonist or mental-state theories which claim that it is the positive or negative valence of mental states themselves which determine how well someone's life goes for them; and on the other, theories which hold that what matters for well-being is the satisfaction of desires or preferences. Here, rather than being of value for the subject in their own right, mental states play a different role: that of marking out certain states of the world as having value. We can also see a further important division within mental-state theories, between classical hedonism, which sees well-being in terms of the overall balance between pleasures and pains in someone's life, and views which see a single, global state or attitude as crucial. This state is sometimes referred to as 'happiness', although happiness is a term that itself can be defined in various ways (some of which are consistent with classical hedonism). Others prefer to talk about 'life-satisfaction', the subject's attitude to his or her life as a whole.[2] We can describe classical hedonism as a 'bottom-up' approach, whereas the life-satisfaction approach is 'top-down'.

There are also different approaches within the 'objective' category. There is a family of theories influenced by Aristotle which define well-being in terms of the perfection of human excellences and/or the development and exercise of human capacities. Then there are various 'objective-list' accounts, which do not share the Aristotelians' central principles but attempt to specify various heterogeneous components which together make for a good human life (e.g. Finnis 1980, Chaps. III and IV).

There is also the so-called 'capability approach' associated in particular with Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, which sees well-being in terms of capabilities to achieve various valuable 'functionings'—things that a person is able to do or to be (Sen 1980; Sen and Nussbaum 1993; Nussbaum 2000). This could in principle be either an objective or a subjective theory, depending upon whether it aspires to specify which functionings and capabilities are valuable, or leaves this to be determined by the preferences of the individual subject. In practice, under the influence of Nussbaum, who is of a broadly Aristotelian persuasion (and does indeed specify what capabilities she regards as essential to well-being), it has tended to be seen more as an objective approach.[3]

Within these various categories and sub-categories, there are many different variants of each approach. Thus, for example, there are unrestricted desire-satisfaction theories and informed-desire theories, perfectionist and developmentalist theories within the Aristotelian camp, and a number of different objective lists.

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[1] Sometimes, following Parfit (1984, p. 493), a three-way classification is used: hedonism, desire-satisfaction theories, and objective-list theories (the first two would count as subjective theories, the third as objective on my classification). However, I think it is helpful to categorise the theories within a branching structure, with the subjective/objective distinction as the first decision point (Taylor 2012, pp. 19–35).

[2] For a philosophical exposition of the life-satisfaction approach, see Sumner (1996, pp. 138–183).

[3] But see Baber (2010) for a subjective version.

As in the philosophical community, social scientists also have different views, or make different assumptions, about the nature of well-being, which underlie the way they seek to measure it. These can be approximately mapped onto the taxonomy of different philosophical theories. Thus, for example, those who defend economic measures such as GDPas indicators of levels of well-being within society are likely to favour a desire-satisfaction approach to well-being (e.g. Angner 2011). On the other hand, the notion of Subjective Well-being, which has become a focus for much of the debate about measurement, seems to reflect a view of well-being combining life-satisfaction,[4] with a form of hedonism.[5] Different again is the UN Human Development Index, which is based explicitly upon the capability approach to well-being.

There does not seem to be any prospect that these differences concerning the nature of well-being will be resolved any time soon. But in the absence of consensus between the different camps, not only the validity but also the relevance of the various candidate measures of well-being will always be open to question. The worry is that, even as governments around the world begin to acknowledge the potential importance of well-being for public policy, there is no clear picture of what well-being consists in, and thus what should be measured and/or promoted. Governments can (and do) mitigate this problem by drawing upon a wide range of research which makes different assumptions about the nature of well-being. Nevertheless, the situation is far from ideal.

1.3 Explanatory and Enumerative Questions, and Markers of Well-Being

At first sight, the problem seems intractable. The nature of well-being is ultimately a philosophical issue, and consensus is something that philosophers are notoriously bad at. Nevertheless, I want to suggest that there is, despite appearances, a good prospect of finding a broad area of common ground between different theories. We can begin to see how this might be possible by distinguishing two key questions about well-being which, following Crisp (2006, pp. 102–103), I shall call the explanatory and enumerative questions. The enumerative question is about what sorts of things make a person's life go well for them, whereas the explanatory question concerns *what it is* about those things that *makes* them good for people and what it is for a life to go well for the person who lives it. This is a similar distinction to one made by Sumner (1996, p. 16) between the nature and sources of well being:

[4] As measured by methods such as the Satisfaction With Life Scale—see Diener et al. (1985).

[5] As reflected in the use various measures of affective experience, such as the Day Reconstruction Method (Kahneman et al. 2004).

the explanatory question is concerned with the former and the enumerative question with the latter. It is, for the most part, the explanatory question that forms the battleground between the different philosophical accounts of well-being, but the enumerative question is of more importance for public policy. Policy makers want to know what the drivers of well-being are and how the policies they implement affect it. They are not so interested in the less tangible philosophical questions that underlie these issues.

There is likely to be a greater prospect of consensus if we are not concerned solely with the explanatory question. This is because something may be relevant to well-being in more than one way. It may be wholly or partly *constitutive* of well-being. It may also be *productive* of well-being: though not itself part of what well-being consists in, it may be something which is a reliable means to achieving well-being, or which otherwise serves to promote it. For the purposes ofmeasurement, a third relationship is also relevant. Something might be neither constitutive nor productive of well-being, but might nevertheless serve as a good *indicator* of well-being, if it tends to vary in parallel with well-being. The explanatory question is concerned only with the first of these three relationships, the enumerative question with the first two. However, all three are potentially significant for the measurement of well-being: information on things which stand in any one of these relationships to well-being is likely to be useful to policy makers who wish to promote it. Something which is a constituent of well-being according to one theory may not be so according to another: nevertheless, it might still be productive of well-being, or an indicator of well-being, and thus proponents of both theories could accept that it is relevant for the purposes of measuring well-being, even though they would give different reasons for this.

It would be helpful to have a collective name for those things which bear one or other of these three relationships to well-being, and are therefore relevant for the purposes of measurement. We might perhaps say that something which is either constitutive, or productive, or an indicator of well-being is a *marker* of well-being.

In the next part of this paper I shall explore the extent to which theories which give different answers to the explanatory question may nevertheless find areas of common ground regarding the markers of well-being. In order to ascertain the extent of common ground between different explanatory theories, it would be necessary first to identify what each theory would imply regarding what sorts of things could be expected to be constitutive, productive or indicators of well-being, and then to compare the commitments of the different theories against each other. This might most easily be achieved by considering the theories initially in pairs, and then combining the results. To achieve a reasonably definitive verdict on the extent of common ground would, I suggest, require a good deal of work on both stages of this process. However, I offer below some preliminary thoughts on this issue, based on consideration of the main characteristics of the different types of theories.

1.4 Aristotelian Theories and Hedonism

I shall begin with two approaches which at first sight appear to be at opposite ends of the spectrum of well-being theories. Aristotle defined the Greek notion of eudaimonia (which is sometimes translated 'happiness', but is arguably closer to 'well-being') as 'activity of the soul in conformity with "arete"' (translated as "virtue" or "excellence"). This reflects his wider view that what is good for something is what perfects its distinctive function ('ergon') and the thought that the ergon of humans is what is unique to us and not shared (unlike other functions such as perception) with other animals: that is, rational activity (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1097-98: 1955, pp. 73–76). His influence can still be seen in the work of modern writers such as Phillipa Foot and Richard Kraut who define well-being in terms of the exercise, development and/or perfection of human capacities.[6]

Hedonism also began in ancient Greece, with the ideas of philosophers such as Aristippus and Epicurus, but takes a very different view of what makes a life go well. It has developed into various forms since then, but what these all share is the view that what matters is the quality of one's *mental* life: typically how much pleasure and pain (often defined in broad terms to include attitudinal as well as sensory pleasures and pains) it contains.

These two theories thus take a very different approach to the explanatory question.[7] Nevertheless, it is possible to find common ground on the enumerative question, between at least some versions of these rival accounts. Some moderate Aristotelians, including Kraut, incorporate an element of hedonism into their position by acknowledging that, for the development and exercise of human capabilities to contribute to well-being, it must also be enjoyed by the subject (Kraut 2007, pp. 127–128). They see no inconsistency here, pointing to Aristotle's own view that pleasure 'perfects' an activity, 'as a sort of supervening perfection, like the bloom that graces the flower of youth' (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1175: 1955, p. 321). It is not pleasure which plays the explanatory role, but nevertheless, pleasure is part of the enumerative story, and one of the markers of well-being.

Conversely, there is also scope for hedonists to make some movement towards the Aristotelian position. Mill's (1993) utilitarianism, with its distinction between 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures, can be seen as an attempt to accommodate aspects of Aristotle's thought into a value system based upon hedonism. More widely, it would seem perfectly consistent for a hedonist, without compromising her view that it is pleasure that plays the explanatory role, to consider the question of what sorts

[6] See, for example, Foot (2001), Kraut (2007).

[7] Here I am taking hedonism, in the strictest sense, to be a theory that gives a hedonist answer to the explanatory question: that is, it not only regards pleasure and pain as what make someone's life go well or badly, but holds that they do so *in virtue of being pleasant or painful.* One could also hold that pleasure and pain are what matter in terms of the enumerative question, whilst giving a non-hedonist answer to the explanatory question. For example, one might say that pleasure and pain are what matter because they are what we desire.

of lives, and what sorts of activities, environments and resources, tend to be most productive of a positive balance of pleasure over pain for human beings. The answer to that question will depend in part on what particular variant of hedonism has been espoused. The most plausible and prevalent forms of hedonism focus less on sensory pleasure and more on what Fred Feldman has called 'attitudinal pleasure': the sort of pleasure we feel when we are pleased *about* something (Feldman 2004, Chap. 4). It is plausible that the development and exercise of human capabilities (defined reasonably broadly) is a reliable source of profound and lasting attitudinal pleasure. Of course, a hedonist will want to insist that this can only be a generalisation: that the principal sources of pleasure and pain will vary between individuals and contexts, and that what may be true for most human beings will not be true in all cases. But if we are looking for common ground, rather than a perfect fit, then generalisations may be sufficient.

Thus, there is good reason to expect that there will be a broad area of common ground between moderate Aristotelians and sophisticated hedonists. Of course, the overlap will by no means be complete. Not all Aristotelians—even moderate ones—are prepared to concede as much to hedonism as Kraut. Even on Kraut's view, although everything it counts as having value would also count for a hedonist, the reverse does not hold. Aristotelians would deny that pleasure which is *not* linked to the development and exercise of human capabilities contributes to well-being. However, moderate Aristotelians who allow a role for pleasure tend also to have a fairly broad conception of what counts as the development or exercise of human capabilities. This may include, not only intellectual flourishing but also physical, social, aesthetic and even sexual flourishing. This broad approach would seem to encompass much of what a moderate hedonist would be likely to acknowledge as standard sources of pleasure. On any variant, there will still be certain pleasures that would be accepted by a hedonist, but rejected by Aristotelians, as contributing to well-being. These might include sensory pleasures not associated with the development or exercise of human capacities (the pleasures of loafing around, perhaps), and perhaps certain abstract attitudinal pleasures concerned with remote states of affairs. Nevertheless, it is plausible that the area of overlap would include the greater part of what a moderate hedonist would acknowledge as standard sources of attitudinal pleasure in human life, and all or most of what a moderate Aristotelian would regard as contributing to well-being.

There are variants of the Aristotelian approach that would not share an overlap with hedonism. Some views do not acknowledge any role for pleasures, such as the pure perfectionism mooted by Hurka (1993, p. 190), which defines the human good in terms of physical, theoretical and practical perfection and 'does not find intrinsic value in pleasure, not even pleasure in what is good, nor does it find intrinsic disvalue in pain'. However, as Hurka himself acknowledges, this feature of his theory may diminish its plausibility (he also considers the possibility of a pluralist theory which includes perfectionist values alongside others). The more moderate versions of the Aristotelian approach are also the ones which are more likely to find wide acceptance.

1.5 Desire-Satisfaction Theories

We have identified a likely area of common ground on the enumerative question between moderate versions of two theories which offer quite different answers to the explanatory question. What, then of desire-satisfaction theories, which give a third answer, again distinct from the other two? As with the others, this approach comes in different variants, and the extent of common ground with the others is likely to depend on which version is considered. It is arguable that unrestricted desire-satisfactionism, which holds that the satisfaction of *any* desire counts towards well-being may be unlikely to share much common ground with the Aristotelian approach[8]: though we do have desires related to the development and exercise of human capabilities, most of our desires, in practice, are likely to be for other things. It may have somewhat more overlap with hedonism, since plausibly many of our desires can be seen as aimed at pleasure and the avoidance of pain, in the broad senses of those words. Others are not, however, so here too there is an area that is likely to be excluded from any common ground.

However, unrestricted desire-satisfactionism is vulnerable to criticism on the grounds that it allows the satisfaction of even crazy, whimsical or badly-informed desires to count towards well-being. The most prevalent forms of the desire-satisfaction approach are informed- or rational-desire theories, which are based upon idealised desires or filtered actual desires (e.g. Griffin 1986, pp. 21–38; Railton 1986). These accounts seem likely to have a greater potential for overlap with the other approaches. They lend themselves to consideration of what sorts of things would tend to be the subject of appropriately informed or rational desires for typical human beings. It seems likely that this process would lead to a significant area of overlap with Aristotelian theories, as in the case of the analogous process we considered for hedonism. Again, there would nevertheless be certain things that an informed-desire theory would count as contributing to well-being that even a moderate Aristotelian theory would not. The reverse might also be true in some cases.

It also seems likely that there would be overlap on the enumerative question between informed desire theories and hedonism. The things that are the subject of well—rather than ill—informed desires are also likely to be those that the subject finds rewarding when the desire is satisfied. If the subject gains no pleasure from the satisfaction of a desire, that may well be because the desire was not well-informed. Once again, the overlap will not be complete. Most informed-desire theories would count the satisfaction of a (well-informed) desire, even if it is satisfied without the subject's knowledge, but hedonists would not. And sometimes, even the satisfaction of a well-informed desire may prove disappointing, or conversely, pleasure may not correspond with any well-informed desire. But it seems likely that such cases would be the exception rather than the rule.

[8] For a recent defence of unrestricted desire-satisfactionism, see Lukas (2010).

We might also note in this context a relatively new variant of the desire approach which employs an extended sense of desire emphasising 'desires' focused upon the present rather than on the future. As has been pointed out by Heathwood (2006), this approach tends towards convergence between desire-satisfactionism and hedonism: a 'desire' focused on a state of affairs that the subject believes to obtain seems to be much the same as an attitudinal pleasure.[9]

1.6 Likely Areas of Common Ground

We can envisage, therefore, a process whereby, from very different starting points, and for different reasons, proponents of moderate Aristotelianism, sophisticated forms of hedonism and informed-desire theories might nevertheless find common ground regarding the markers of well-being. I suggest that this common ground might comprise two elements:

(a) A recognition that what contributes to a person's well-being will, in general (perhaps with exceptions), elicit a positive attitudinal and/or affective response from that person.
For hedonists, the affective response itself will be what constitutes well-being; for desire-satisfactionists attitudinal states will determine what contributes to a person's well-being. For Aristotelians neither will be the case, though positive attitudinal and/or affective responses are likely to beindicators of well-being, and on some views may be a necessary condition for well-being.

(b) A list of goods that, in general, can be expected to contribute to well-being for most human beings.
On the moderate Aristotelian approach, these will be examples of the development or exercise of human capabilities, interpreted in a broad sense, which in themselves are regarded as contributing directly to well-being. On the hedonistic and desire-satisfaction approaches, these same things will be regarded as contributing to well-being *indirectly*, by being (typically) productive of a positive balance of pleasure over pain, or the object of informed (or present-focused) desires.

A list of goods, of course, is precisely what is offered by the fourth of the main contenders for a theory of well-being, the objective-list approach, and it seems likely that the goods which are most often endorsed by the other three approaches will also be those that tend to crop up regularly on objective lists. However, this should not be seen as a vindication of the objective-list approach over the others. For objective-list theorists, it is usually the list itself, and the intuitions that underlie it, that determine the constituents of well-being, which is why critics such as Wayne

[9] I have argued for a theory along similar lines in Taylor (2012), although I argue that 'desire', with its focus on the future, is no longer an appropriate label for the attitudinal states involved.

Sumner argue that it fails to do justice to the explanatory question (Sumner 1996, pp. 45–46). However, to the extent that hedonists and desire-satisfactionists can endorse a list of goods, it will have a more modest status, as a generalisation about the sorts of things that will *tend* to contribute to human well-being, defined in subjective terms—a subjective, rather than an objective list. Aristotelians too will have a rationale for what is on the list that lies outside the list itself.

1.7 How Broad Is the Consensus?

The question of how broad, and how widely shared, the area of common ground is between the different theories requires further study. We can, however, make some initial observations at this stage.

We have already noted that certain approaches would not participate in the consensus at all: in particular, a thoroughgoing Aristotelian perfectionism that allows no room for subjective reactions would reject (a) [though it might accept (b) in some form]. Perhaps some objective-list theorists might also reject (a), although many include enjoyment in their list of goods. It is possible that certain subjective theorists would reject (b), refusing to generalise about the sorts of things that may occasion pleasure or be the subject of desires. However, I suggest that the majority of widely-held theories would accept some version of both (a) and (b).

A more complex question is that of how good the fit is between the different approaches *within* elements (a) and (b). It is helpful to look at each of these in turn. On (a), I suggest that the core area of overlap involves subjects' *ex post*, or contemporaneous, responses to what happens in their lives, rather than their *ex ante* attitudes. To the extent that Aristotelians can allow a role for pleasure, it is likely to be pleasure primarily as an *ex post* or contemporaneous reaction to some activity, event or state of affairs related to the development or exercise of human capacities: for example, the enjoyment of an activity, or the satisfaction one feels having completed it. Hedonists will not wish to exclude *ex ante* pleasures of anticipation or *ex ante* pains, like fear. Nevertheless, most pleasures and pains in general seem to be either *ex post* or contemporaneous with their sources.

Desire, on the other hand, is essentially an *ex ante* attitude. Nevertheless, desire-satisfaction theorists are likely to acknowledge that if the subject's *ex post* reaction when a desire has been satisfied is negative rather than positive, that may suggest that the satisfaction of the desire does not, after all, enhance her well-being. On informed-desire theories, the *ex post* reaction may be treated as evidence that the original desire was in some way ill-informed or otherwise defective. Those versions of this approach which use an extended sense of desire that includes 'desires' focused upon the present and past as well as the future may acknowledge the primacy of the latter (Heathwood 2006). Even for desire-satisfaction theorists, it seems, *ex post* reactions tend to trump *ex ante* desires when the two conflict.

Most desire-satisfaction theories, however, will want to include the satisfaction of (well-informed) desires as contributing to well-being even when this occurs

without the knowledge of the subject, and therefore cannot be validated by *ex post* reactions. There is no obvious overlap here with the other explanatory theories. However, for public policy purposes, this limitation on consensus may not be too serious a problem. Cases where a desire is satisfied but the subject remains unaware of this do occur, but I suggest that these are not the norm. In most cases the subject will be aware when the desire is satisfied, and will thus have an *ex post* reaction to this.[10]

Another issue on which there will be differences between the various explanatory theories (and indeed, between different variants of those theories) is the question of whether the fact that something elicits a positive attitudinal response of an appropriate kind is sufficient for it to be regarded as enhancing the subject's well-being, or whether certain other conditions must be met. A related issue on which there will also be differences is that of whether it is necessary that there be an actual positive response, or whether it is sufficient that the subject *would* have responded positively under appropriate conditions.

On the first of these points, we have already seen a significant divergence between Aristotelian theories and hedonism. I acknowledge that this is a substantial difference, even in terms of the enumerative question. Yet the implications for public policy may be less than this suggests. The sorts of pleasures that Aristotelians would reject, such as whimsical, idiosyncratic, or culpable ones, tend for other reasons, to be the kinds that it would not be practicable for a government interested in well-being to target even if it adopted a hedonist account of well-being. They are likely to be less easy to predict and thus promote, and in the case of culpable pleasures, may lead to countervailing displeasure for others. Some hedonists would also include deluded pleasures that many desire-satisfactionists would reject. But again, it seems unlikely that deluded pleasures are the norm, though they do exist. Nor does it seem likely to be the norm that something to which a subject would respond positively under appropriate conditions would fail to elicit such a response under actual conditions. The common thought underlying these points is that if public policy is to concern itself with well-being, it must concern itself with the well-being of large numbers of people, and thus, to the extent that well-being is seen as something to be promoted rather than merely facilitated, it must rely to a large extent upon generalisations: on standard rather than exceptional cases.[11] And I suggest that the standard cases are in general likely to fall within the area of overlap between the different explanatory theories.

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[10] Desires satisfied after the subject's death are perhaps a special case. I concede that these are unlikely to be an area of common ground between the different explanatory theories.

[11] That is not to say, of course, that generalisations should be used when decisions are made that affect the well-being of specific individuals who may differ from the standard case. It might, for example, be the case that vaccination against a particular pathogen would benefit the well-being of an overwhelming majority of individuals. There would thus be good reason for procuring the vaccine on the grounds of improving general well-being, though not for forcibly vaccinating particular individuals whose well-being would not be improved by this.

Regarding the second area in which I suggested that consensus might be found —the list of goods—the question of how broad the area of common ground might be is not solely one for philosophical enquiry. Insofar as one is approaching the question from the point of view of a subjective explanatory theory, then the question of what sorts of things are most likely to be productive of a positive balance of pleasure over pain, or the subject of well-informed desires, seems ultimately to be an empirical one. Philosophers are entitled to speculate about what the answers might be, but this seems to be a topic that requires the input of psychologists and social scientists.

Aristotelians and objective-list theorists might feel themselves entitled to unquestioned ownership of their own lists, since they do not see their content as determined by subjective factors. But this does not mean that they can renounce, without penalty, any role for empirical research. A list of human goods, or of human capacities whose development or exercise is regarded as of central importance, needs to be plausible if it is to attract support as an account of well-being. And if it is to be plausible, it cannot simply be plucked out of thin air. It needs to chime in some way with facts about how human beings actually *are*, and should therefore be responsive to empirical enquiry that may help to reveal such facts.

Perhaps there would be certain differences between, on the one hand, facts about what sorts of things are in general likely to be most productive of a positive balance of pleasure over pain or the subject of well-informed desires; and, on the other the sorts of facts about human nature that might be appealed to by an objective theory. In the case of an Aristotelian theory, for example, there might be a greater emphasis on aspects related to biological flourishing. Nevertheless, it seems likely once again that there would be considerable overlap. Pleasure and desire are part of the evolutionary heritage that enables us to flourish as organisms: they play a key role in identifying things that are useful to our survival. So it would be surprising if they did not in general tend to pick out things which are beneficial to that end, which is not to deny that they may sometimes fail to do so (as for example when the desire for food which helped our ancestors survive leads us to overeat in an environment of plenty).

Finally, I should acknowledge that there are limits to the depth as well as the breadth of consensus. Any common ground between the competing explanatory theories will involve the acknowledgement of certain things as **markers of well-being**, and therefore relevant for the purposes of measurement. It will remain the case that these things will often have a different status under the different theories—they may be a constituent of well-being according to one theory, only an indicator according to another, for example. This is not without significance for the measurement of well-being, since it limits what a theory-neutral approach can say about the relationship between different types of **measures** (see below).

1.8 Implications and Choices

The fact that the area of common ground between the competing explanatory theories is bound to be incomplete (even though it may be substantial, at least between the more mainstream theories) means that it should not be taken for granted that the consensus approach is the right way forward. In selecting measures of well-being, policy makers and their advisers face a real choice between, on the one hand, endorsing one of the rival explanatory theories or, on the other, remaining neutral between them and adopting assumptions about well-being which seem likely to command wide acceptance, focusing upon the areas of common ground between the different accounts.

There are advantages and disadvantages in both approaches (Taylor 2013). Adopting a particular explanatory theory is likely to allow for a finer-grained, more determinate picture of well-being, with a clearer picture of the relationship between the different elements. For example, a measure which tracks something that is a constituent of well-being, according to the preferred theory, may be regarded as a more direct measure than one which tracks something that is merely an indicator of well-being. That kind of discrimination is not available to an approach which remains neutral on the explanatory question.

On the other hand, choosing a particular explanatory theory renders the approach, and the choice of measures that it leads to, more open to challenge from those who reject the preferred theory. The more non-committal approach is likely to be less controversial, at the cost of a certain loss of detail. Of course, no approach is likely to be immune to challenge. As we noted earlier, even the consensus approach excludes some of the more radical (and less widely-held) theories of well-being. However, it is likely to secure wider acceptance than the more narrowly-based alternatives, including exclusive reliance on GDP, which is no longer the accepted proxy for national well-being that it once was (that is not to deny that it may still have a role to play, albeit a less dominant one). The identification and widespread adoption of areas of common ground on well-being as a basis for measurement would have the additional advantage of making comparison easier between well-being programmes adopted by different nations and organisations.

Which strategy is preferable in any given circumstances is, of course, a matter for policy makers and their advisers to decide, on the basis of their respective advantages and disadvantages. The UN adopted the strategy of relying upon a particular theory of well-being—in this case, the capability approach—in framing the Human Development Index. On the other hand, the UK chose to take a more theory-neutral, broadly based approach in developing its national programme for measuring national well-being.

Finally, it should be noted that the identification of areas of common ground and the adoption of a consensus approach to measurement would not be sufficient in itself to determine which measures of well-being should be selected, although it does address an important preliminary issue that underlies the choice of measures. Though it is inevitable that practical considerations such as cost, ease of gathering

data and the availability of historical information will play a role, I have argued elsewhere that the selection of a suite of measures should be driven by criteria relating to the relevance and validity of individual measures, and by the extent to which the selected measures collectively provide a complete, balanced and robust picture of well-being (Taylor 2013).

What are the implications of this paper for those developing national well-being programmes? That would depend in part, of course, on the outcome of the further work I have argued for, but we can draw some preliminary conclusions. The prospect of finding common ground on the markers of well-being would, I suggest, lend support to the theory-neutral option and indicate a particular way in which it might be developed. Rather than being merely an ad hoc collection of unconnected measures, a theory-neutral approach could be a principled response to the unresolved debate between competing explanatory theories, if it is focused upon markers of well-being which can be acknowledged from different theoretical perspectives. If my suggestions in Sect. 1.6 about likely areas of common ground prove well-founded, it seems likely that the consensus approach would support a fairly broadly based approach to the measurement of well-being, involving a mix of subjective and objective measures. There would be limits to its broadness, however, since it would properly exclude measures associated with aspects of particular theories which lie outside the area of common ground.

1.9 Summary and Conclusion

The increasing recognition of the importance of well-being for public policy, and the consequent demand for reliable and widely-applicable measures of well-being, indicates a need for a common understanding of what it is that needs to be measured. I have argued that, while the differences between competing theories on the explanatory question about the nature of well-being—*what it is* for someone's life to go well for them—may be intractable, there are better prospects of consensus on what is relevant for the purposes of measuring well-being—on what I have called the markers of well-being. Something may be relevant not only as a constituent of well-being, but also as something which promotes well-being, or as an indicator of well-being. What fulfills one of these roles under one explanatory theory may fulfil another under a different theory, and thus be relevant to well-being in both cases. I have suggested that there may be a considerable area of common ground between sophisticated hedonism, informed desire-satisfaction theories, objective-list theories and moderate Aristotelian theories. This common ground might comprise a recognition that what contributes to a person's well-being will, in general, elicit a positive attitudinal and/or affective response from that person; and a list of goods that, in general, can be expected to contribute to well-being for most human beings.

Such a consensus might not embrace *all* of the competing theories: certain views, such as a hard-line Aristotelian perfectionism that rejects any requirement for an individual to embrace the excellences that are held to constitute well-being,

are likely to be excluded. And even among those theories that do share common ground, there will be significant areas of disagreement. Nor should the identification of common ground close off debate between rival approaches (including those which fall outside any consensus). Consensus is likely to be provisional, not fixed for all time.

Nevertheless, I suggest there are good grounds to hope that the area of common ground may be large enough to form the basis of a set of working assumptions about well-being that can underpin the choice of both objective and subjective measures to inform public policy. If this could be achieved, the benefits would be considerable. It would, for example, enable the establishment of common criteria for the selection of measures of well-being, rather than separate criteria appropriate to the different theoretical assumptions adopted by different methodologies. It should also give scope for greater commonality between different measurement approaches regarding what is actually measured, and therefore facilitate comparison of their results.

My suggestions in this paper have been based upon observations concerning the nature of the rival theories and their philosophical implications, and some—plausible, I hope—speculations about how they might relate to the lives of human beings in the real world. I make no claim, at this stage, to have established them as more than suggestions. Putting them upon a firmer footing will require further work. My purpose in making these suggestions was in large part to encourage others too to explore the extent of common ground between different theories. The challenge is both to philosophers, to work out the enumerative consequences of their explanatory theories; and to social scientists, to do the empirical work that would enable the extent of common ground to be marked out more accurately than I have been able to do in this paper.

Consensus is not something that comes naturally to academics in general or philosophers in particular. But perhaps this is a context where there is good reason to break the habit of a lifetime and look for areas of agreement rather than disagreement.[12]

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Chapter 2
Towards a Widely Acceptable Framework for the Study of Personal Well-Being

Sam Wren-Lewis

2.1 Introduction

The studies of subjective well-being (SWB) and eudaimonic well-being (EWB) both aim to measure people's well-being through measuring their mental states. I will refer to both areas of study combined as the study of *personal well-being* (PWB).[1] Findings from the burgeoning study of PWB are both interesting and important for the following reason: PWB seems to be closely related to well-being. We care about our own well-being and the well-being of others. It is not surprising, therefore, that findings from the study of PWB are beginning to attract the attention of the media, laypersons, caregivers, developmental organisations and public policy practitioners. The UK government, for instance, has recently commissioned the collection of national personal well-being data to be used alongside traditional economic measures in monitoring the nation's progress.

It is widely accepted that subjective measures of well-being have the potential to provide us with useful information about how well people are doing. Thus, we can say that the study of PWB is *prudentially relevant*. Yet, how PWB and well-being are related is both unclear and controversial. What exactly can we tell about a person's well-being from their mental states, such as their life satisfaction, affect balance, sense of growth, belongingness, competence, autonomy, etc.? Can we conclude that someone who is happy is doing well, or at least doing well in some important respect? In order to answer these kinds of questions, we need a *prudential framework* for the study of PWB —a framework that consists in an account of how PWB is related to well-being.

[1] This use of terminology is in-line with the UK's National Well-being Programme, which refers to subjective measures of well-being (which includes measures of SWB and EWB) as measures of "personal well-being" (Oguz et al. 2013).

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In this chapter, I aim to do two things. First, I aim to motivate the need for a *widely acceptable* prudential framework for the study of PWB. I will argue that we need an account of the prudential relevance of PWB that most people can agree on. Without having a widely acceptable account, we cannot effectively or justifiably act on the basis of findings from the study of PWB. Second, I aim to provide such an account. I will argue that a widely acceptable account must be *theory-neutral* with regards to the nature of well-being (i.e. what well-being consists in). Theories of well-being are controversial, and thereby not widely acceptable. According to a theory-neutral account, PWB is prudentially relevant in three important ways: it tends to be (a) an indicator of well-being, (b) a value, and (c) a benefit. In certain contexts, or under certain conditions, PWB may not an indicator of well-being, nor a value nor a benefit. This contextual sensitivity limits the amount we say about the prudential relevance of PWB. However, this limited role is preferable to the current situation of being unable to act either effectively or justifiably on the basis of interesting and important findings from the study of PWB.

In the first main section of this chapter, I will begin by providing a brief overview of subjective measures of well-being and of some significant findings from the study of PWB. I will then look at the current status of the debate over the prudential relevance of PWB. I will show that there is currently no widely held account of the prudential relevance of PWB, and that this situation is not good for the study of PWB. In the second section, I will consider how this situation can be resolved. I will begin by looking at what well-being is. I will argue that, although there is a coherent notion of well-being, there is no widely acceptable philosophical theory of well-being, and thereby no widely acceptable account of how PWB and well-being are related. I will then provide an account of the prudential relevance of PWB that can be widely accepted i.e. an account that does not rely on a theory of well-being. Lastly, I will show that this theory-neutral account can provide us with informative interpretations of findings from the study of PWB.

2.2 The Study of Personal Well-Being—the Current Situation

2.2.1 A Brief Overview of Subjective Measures of Well-Being

In general, measures of PWB aim to measure a subject's well-being from his or her own point of view. This typically includes measures of a subject's (affective and cognitive) evaluations of their own well-being.[2] There are three main kinds of

[2] PWB researchers may also aim to measure certain mental states that can be viewed as non-evaluative, such as chronic pleasures and pains. Such mental states may not consist in their subject having some kind of evaluative attitude towards their own well-being. Nonetheless, I think we can make the general claim that PWB researchers aim to measure a subject's (affective and cognitive) evaluations of their own well-being.

measures of PWB: (a) affect balance measures, (b) life and domain satisfaction measures, and (c) eudaimonic measures[3]:

- Affect balance measures aim to measure a subject's overall balance of positive over negative affective experiences (Kahneman 1999; Kahneman et al. 2004; Frederickson and Losada 2005).
- Life and domain satisfaction measures aim to measure a subject's satisfaction with her overall life and particular life domains respectively (Diener et al. 1985, 2008).
- Eudaimonic measures, or measures of 'psychological well-being', attempt to measure a subject's attitudes towards particularly important aspects of her functioning, such as her sense of growth, purpose, self-acceptance, mastery, and so on (Ryff 1989; Keyes et al. 2002; Ryan and Deci 2001).[4]

Measures of PWB are linked both conceptually and empirically. Empirically, different measures of PWB tend to be highly correlated (Keyes 2002; Kashdan et al. 2008). All three kinds of measures have been shown to share a general factor, suggesting that they can all be viewed as similar measures of well-being. However, once this shared factor has been controlled for, each kind of measure has been shown to correlate with different kinds of external variables related to well-being (Chen et al. 2012). This suggests that, on a general level, each measure of PWB is more similar than different. However, on a more specific level, certain measures of PWB can come apart: some measures of PWB may co-occur with certain kinds of external variables better than others.[5]

Conceptually, measures of PWB typically aim to measure a subject's (affective and cognitive) attitudes towards particular aspects of their own well-being. Measures differ in two important ways: (a) in terms of the kinds of attitudes measured; (b) in terms of the objects of the respective attitudes. For instance, affect balance measures tend to be measures of (a*) a subject's affective attitudes (e.g., positive and negative affective states) in relation to (b*) certain perceived events and activities that constitute a certain period of their life (e.g., in real time, over the past day, in general, and so on). Alternatively, overall life satisfaction measures are

[3] Affect balance measures and life and domain satisfaction measures are typically referred to as measures of "subjective well-being" (Deiner & Biswas-Diener 2008). Eudaimonic measures are typically referred to as measures of "eudaimonic well-being" or "psychological well-being" (Ryff 1989; Keyes et al. 2002; Ryan and Deci 2001). As mentioned above, I will refer to all subjective measures of well-being as measures of "personal well-being".

[4] Measures of "flow"—the mental state associated with "optimal functioning"—can be viewed as a measure of eudaimonic well-being in this sense. States of flow are positive affective states related to successful performance in activities that are challenging, yet not too difficult. It is a particular sense of mastery that arises from the skillful exercise of one's capacities (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1992).

[5] For instance, when measuring a subject's general well-being, both affect balance and life satisfaction measures tend to be highly correlated. But, measures of affect balance are not significantly correlated with measures of religiosity, and measures of life satisfaction are not significantly correlated with measures of personality and locus of control (Chen et al. 2012).

measures of (a**) a subject's overall judgment in relation to (b**) certain perceived events and activities that constitute their life as a whole.

For each measure of PWB, the objects of the particular attitudes being measured tend to be considered (at least by the subject) to be prudentially relevant. That is, the objects of the attitudes in question concern particular aspects of the subject's life that are related in some way to their well-being. Perhaps the most intuitive way of thinking about this relation is that these aspects concern a subject's *prudential achievements*, namely success in their goals and projects, or in the attainment of other prudential goods (such as health, relationships, education, work, etc.). The awareness of prudential achievements tends to cause us to experience certain kinds of mental states. For example, we may experience positive affect as a result of being aware of having made making progress in one of our life projects. Similarly, our awareness of having attained a basic level of prudential goods may result in us judging our life as a whole to be satisfactory. The point is that these kinds of mental states may be informative in two respects. First, such mental states may be valuable in themselves, perhaps because they feel good or because they enable us to appreciate our lives. Second, the objects of these kinds of mental states tend to *point towards* things that we care about, such as how well we are doing in terms of our goals and projects. In this way, measures of PWB, in general, can be viewed as measuring two important aspects of well-being.

2.2.2 A Very Brief Overview of Some Significant Findings from the Study of PWB

It is worth considering a few key findings from the PWB literature, before looking at the prudential foundations of the study of PWB. Perhaps the most important for our purposes here, are findings concerning the phenomenon of adaptation. Firstly, a set of findings known as the 'Easterlin Paradox' show that, although significant increases in average income correlate with significant increases in average life satisfaction in the short-term, increases in income do not correlate with changes in life satisfaction in the long-term (>10 years) (Easterlin 1974, 2001). In other words, it seems that income makes little difference to certain aspects of our lasting PWB.

Secondly, several findings, which are often used in support of 'set-point theory', show that, although significant changes in certain life conditions (such as winning the lottery, on the up-side, or losing a limb, on the down-side) correlate with significant changes in subjective well-being in the short-term, changes in such life conditions do not correlate with changes in subjective well-being in the long-term (>2 years) (Clark et al. 2008; Heady and Wearing 1989; Lykken 1999). Again, it seems that certain life conditions make little difference to certain aspects of our lasting PWB.

Now, the validity of both the Easterlin Paradox and set point theory has been challenged. With regards to the Easterlin Paradox, Inglehart et al. (2008) have shown that increases in income make a lasting difference to our affect balance, even

if our life satisfaction stays fairly put in the long-run. Additionally, Sacks et al. (2012) have shown that relative increases in income correlate with lasting increases in subjective well-being.[6] Of course, these challenges have also been challenged themselves (see Easterlin et al. 2010 for some replies).

With regards to set-point theory, Heady et al. (2012) have shown that certain kinds of life conditions do make a lasting difference to subjective well-being. Such conditions tend to concern one's intimate relationships, life goals/values, work-life balance, social participation and healthy lifestyle.[7] Nonetheless, Luhmann et al. (2012) show that the kinds of life conditions that make a lasting difference to our subjective well-being are not necessarily those that we consider to be most desirable. In support, Wilson and Gilbert (2008) suggest that changes in life conditions that we can readily explain tend not to make a difference to subjective well-being in the long-term, despite the desirability of such conditions. Thus, even a modified version of set-point theory seems significant.

In general, even if we have doubts over the validity of certain SWB findings, such as the Easterlin Paradox and set-point theory, these kinds of findings—*if true*—seem to be interesting and important. PWB researchers are not without their critics when it comes to the validity of their findings (see, for instance, Johns and Ormerod 2007; for counter-criticisms see Turton 2009). We can think of the validity of PWB research as the extent to which subjective measures of well-being represent that which they purport to represent (Angner 2010). According to this understanding of validity, for instance, measures of positive and negative affect are valid insofar as they accurately measure a subject's positive and negative affect. Now, we may have good reason to doubt the validity of certain PWB measures and findings.[8] However, in the remainder of this paper, I do not want to focus on the validity of PWB research. Rather, I want to consider the following question: Even if findings from the study of PWB were valid, why would such findings be seemingly interesting and important anyway? The answer to this question concerns the *prudential relevance* of PWB findings, namely the extent to which PWB matters for our well-being.[9] Understanding the prudential relevance of PWB is difficult—how PWB and well-being are related is unclear and controversial. In the next section, I will show that the current status of the theoretical and public debate around this issue is not fruitful towards the progress of the study of PWB.

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[6] See also Deaton (2010), Veenhoven and Hagerty (2006) and Stevenson and Wolfers (2008) for further critiques of the Easterlin Paradox.

[7] Though Diener et al. (2006) show that individuals differ in the extent to which certain life conditions caused lasting changes in subjective well-being.

[8] See, for instance, Haybron (2008) on the limits of self-reports in measuring happiness.

[9] Of course, PWB may be normatively relevant in certain ways other than its relationship to well-being. For instance, increases in positive affect have been shown to make people more altruistic (Carlson et al. 1988). However, for the purposes of this paper, I restrict my focus just towards the prudential relevance of PWB, that is, the relationship between PWB and well-being.

2.2.3 Debating the Prudential Relevance of PWB

In the previous section I hoped to show that the study of PWB has produced several interesting and important findings. Moreover, I emphasised that, even though there are unresolved issues concerning the validity of such findings, we still need a theory of why (valid) PWB research is prudentially relevant. That is, we need to know what the relationship is between PWB and well-being.

Now, by focussing purely on the relationship between PWB and well-being, I do not mean to suggest that individual well-being is the only thing of normative significance. In particular, I do not want to suggest that public policy should be responsive to well-being (Wren-Lewis forthcoming). There may be certain things that are more valuable than well-being (such as human rights, autonomy, virtue, beauty, and so on), and the promotion of well-being may not be the responsibility of governments (in contrast to the promotion of certain basic liberties and primary goods, for example). Nonetheless, insofar as we do think that well-being is something of value, and insofar as governments are concerned with promoting well-being, we need to think about the relationship between PWB and well-being.

Certainly many people do think that PWB and well-being are closely related. The study of PWB has received considerable media coverage and interest from laypersons (e.g., the 'Action for Happiness' movement,[10] the 'Happy City' initiative,[11] Positive Psychology clubs, and so on). Further, the study of SWB has recently become the focus of public policy with the development of various National Accounts of Well-being around the world (e.g., Bhutan, Canada, Australia, Brazil, etc.), most notably the development of the UK's National Well-being Programme.[12] The reason behind this flurry of interest is that it matters what makes us happy or satisfied with our lives; in short, PWB is important.

However, there are no consensus views concerning the prudential relevance of PWB. People's interpretations of findings from the study of PWB, such as those concerning the phenomenon of adaptation, tend to be extremely mixed. For some, PWB research is considered to be of upmost importance, and for that reason should radically inform changes in both public policy and the ways we live our lives. For others, however, PWB research is considered to be fairly trivial, and for that reason can be fairly readily dismissed.

Consider, for instance, people's reaction to the findings of the Easterlin Paradox. Many PWB researchers have wholeheartedly embraced the findings as showing us what needs to be done in terms of future public policy. For instance, one of the most prominent "happiness economists" Andrew Oswald, in his article in the Financial Times entitled, *The Hippies Were Right all Along about Happiness*, ends his discussion of the Easterlin Paradox saying that "Happiness, not economic growth, ought to be the next and more sensible target for the next and more sensible

[10] See http://www.actionforhappiness.og.

[11] See http://www.happycity.org.

[12] See http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/well-being/index.html.

generation." (Oswald 2006) These sentiments are echoed throughout the literature. For example, both Richard Layard (2011) and Robert Frank (2001) have proposed that, on the basis of the Easterlin Paradox, governments should increase or introduce new taxes to discourage people pursuing wealth over goods that do bring lasting happiness, such as leisure, relationships, volunteering, and so on.

In response—and not surprisingly—other researchers have hit back at the relevance of the Easterlin Paradox for large-scale changes in public policy (see, for instance, Booth 2012). If increases in average GDP do not make people lastingly better off, this suggests that public policy should focus on other matters beyond growth. But, to those that see economic growth as (at least one of) the most effective ways of improving people's welfare, such as through alleviating poverty, this seems preposterous. The standard response is that, for the promotion of people's well-being, "there are more important things than happiness." If people can be doing badly (e.g. are in poverty), but remain happy all the same, then it seems that we cannot translate PWB findings into judgements about people's well-being (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2000).

This is not a good situation for the study of PWB. The divide between proponents and opponents of PWB leaves the rest of us (perhaps most of us) not knowing what to make of PWB findings. Thus, important findings tend to be ignored as a result of being too controversial.

Yet, findings from the study of PWB are interesting and important *in some sense*. This much is not controversial. People tend to disagree, however, in thinking about *how much* and *in what way* PWB is prudentially relevant. What is needed, then, is a widely acceptable prudential framework for the study of PWB. With a widely acceptable framework, the media, laypersons and public policy practitioners alike can begin to interpret, in a noncontroversial way, the prudential relevance of particular findings from the study of PWB. I believe that this can be done and will attempt to set out such a framework in the remainder of this paper.

Before doing so, however, it is worth being clear on why a widely acceptable framework is necessary. Anyone who thought that such agreement is unnecessary is unlikely to be convinced by the arguments in this paper. A stringent hedonist about well-being, for example, may insist that (valid) PWB findings are all that matter for well-being. We should not, according to such a theorist, dumb down our prudential framework for the study of PWB to accommodate people with incorrect views of well-being. The problem with the non-widely acceptable strategy, however, is not necessarily that certain views over the nature of well-being are wrong, but that it does not help us in achieving what we want the study of PWB to do. For PWB findings to be used by laypersons, the less controversial such findings are, the more they can be used. For PWB findings being used in public policy, in the spirit of public liberalism, public policy practitioners should use only widely acceptable findings in evaluating and developing policy. That is, public policy should be based on theories of well-being that all (reasonable and informed) citizens can accept (Rawls 1971; Gaus 2010). It is for these reasons that the normative framework for the study of PWB must be relatively uncontroversial, and thereby widely acceptable.

Lastly, it is important to stress that there is not necessarily any problem with attempting to determine the correct view of the relationship between PWB and well-being. The problem is that attempts to do so have not as yet been successful at being widely acceptable, and such acceptability is necessary for the effective use of PWB findings. Thus, it may be more helpful (both to an eventually acceptable theory and to laypersons and policymakers in the meantime) to start from relatively uncontroversial relationships between PWB and well-being.

In the next main section I will begin by clarifying the notion of well-being, and then show that current philosophical theories of the prudential relevance of PWB are not widely acceptable. In the succeeding section, I will show that, in contrast, PWB is related to well-being in three ways that are widely acceptable. I will argue that these three relationships can adequately form a widely acceptable prudential framework for the study of PWB.

2.3 The Relationship Between PWB and Well-Being

2.3.1 What Is Well-Being?

So far, I have assumed that well-being is something of value. We care about the relationship between PWB and well-being because we care about well-being. Most people consider their own and other's well-being to be valuable. For some, well-being is the only thing of final value. The promotion of well-being is one of the primary goals of individuals, caregivers, charities, developmental organisations and public policy practitioners.

Yet, one might reasonably think that the debate over the relationship between PWB and well-being is largely controversial because we do not have a clear idea of what well-being is. Indeed, some philosophers have recently argued either that there are several different notions of well-being or that there is no coherent notion of well-being (Scanlon 1998; Raz 2004; Griffin 2007). In this section I will briefly outline what the notion of well-being consists in, and whether concerns over the coherence of this notion prevent us from determining the prudential relevance of PWB.

The notion of well-being refers to how good a life is, or how well a life is going, *for the subject whose life it is*. On a personal level, our own well-being is what we aim to achieve when we are being "self-interested," "looking out for ourselves," "wanting to get something from a situation," and concerned to know "what's in it for us" (Campbell forthcoming). When we aim to benefit our lives in some way, we are aiming to increase our well-being. When we think about whether it would be better for us to have a different career, get married, or make some other major life change, then we are thinking about our own well-being. Scanlon states that, "well-being serves as an important basis for the decisions of a single rational individual, at least

for those decisions in which he or she alone is concerned." (Scanlon 1998: 108)[13] Thus, well-being is one of the main goals of individuals who care about how well their lives are going *for themselves*.

These self-interested motivations can be contrasted with beneficent behaviour, which aims at achieving what is good *for someone else*. When we care about someone, we want that person's life to go well for him or her—we care about his or her well-being. When we have considered how to respond to the needs or wants of another person (a dependent, spouse, or friend) for his or her sake, then we have thought about the well-being of others. Scanlon states that, "well-being is what a concerned benefactor, such as a friend or parent, has reason to promote." (Scanlon 1998: 108) Thus, well-being is one of the main goals of caregivers and of social policy for governments and developmental organisations.

In sum, well-being seems to play an prominent role in our practical lives—in our self- and other-interested deliberation and evaluation. However, upon closer analysis, the role of well-being may be less clear. Some theorists have argued that well-being is a confused concept, which is caught between the concept of a *good life* and a *happy life* (Raz 2004). The good life is one of moral virtue, meaningful relationships and activities, health, aesthetic beauty, spiritual depth, and so on. It consists in all the positive values that enrich one's life. In contrast, the happy life is one of enjoyment, engagement, satisfaction, fulfilment, contentment, etc. It consists in a psychologically rewarding condition related to things one cares about. The notion of well-being may be a hybrid, "an attempt to find a concept which is half one and half the other" (Raz 2004: 270).

Consider how this analysis applies to the debate over the prudential relevance of PWB. It may be that people tend to disagree over the relationship between PWB and well-being because they are holding different (yet equally confused) notions of well-being. Proponents of the study of PWB may view well-being as something that is closely related to a happy life. In contrast, opponents may view well-being as something that is closely related to a good life. If this is the case, it is understandable that both groups of theorists end up talking past each other. Yet, according to the analysis above, neither view may be right—there is no coherent notion of well-being. Thus, perhaps we should ditch the notion of well-being, think separately about the good life and the happy life, and do well not to muddy the waters in-between.

I think, however, that this analysis goes too far. It assumes that the notion of well-being has no particular theoretical or practical role beyond attempting to

[13] This is not to say that we necessarily care about our well-being, or that the promotion of our well-being provides us with reasons to act in certain ways. For example, Scanlon explains that, "If you ask me why I listen to music, I may reply that I do so because I enjoy it. If you asked me why that is a reason, the reply "A life that includes enjoyment is a better life" would not be *false*, but it would be rather strange." (Scanlon 1998: 126) The things we care about (such as enjoyments, success in one's main aims, and substantive goods such as friendship) are not necessarily desirable because they promote our well-being. These things all contribute towards well-being, but the idea of well-being plays little role in explaining why they are good. Thus, Scanlon labels well-being an "inclusive good"—one that is made up of other things that are good in their own right, not made good by their contributions to it (Scanlon 1998: 127).

straddle the different concepts of a good life and a happy life. But this is not the case. The distinguishing feature of the notion of well-being is that is *subject-relative*—it concerns what is good *for* someone or something (Sumner 1996). I follow Tiberius (2007) in thinking that we care about subject-relativity because we care about a life that can be *justified* (as a good life) to the person whose life it is. As Tiberius puts it: "To act for your sake, as opposed to acting for morality's sake or the sake of another person, is to act in a way that I can justify to you in some sense" (Tiberius 2007: 375) It is in this way that the notion of well-being is importantly distinct from concept of a good life. Your life may be justifiable insofar as it is intrinsically valuable (as a result of being morally or aesthetically valuable, say) but this does mean it is justifiably valuable to you. In the case of well-being, the person who must be persuaded of the value of a life is the person whose life it is. They must be able to accept or endorse their life if they were to follow a certain procedure (that does not itself consist in any particular prudential values) (Tiberius 2007).

Similarly, the notion of well-being is importantly distinct from the concept of a happy life. We care about things beyond our experiential lives, such as having genuine friendships, worthwhile achievements, and so on. It may not be justifiable to someone, therefore, that the value of his or her life can be reduced to some kind of favourable psychological condition. In short, it seems that well-being is a coherent concept, which can distinguished from related concepts in virtue of its subject-relativity. A life of well-being is a life that is justifiably valuable to the person whose life it is. This is not necessarily the case for either a good life or a happy life.

The above discussion does, however, show that it is far from obvious what well-being consists in. It is not obvious what kind of life is justifiably valuable to the person whose life it is. We may be able to agree over what well-being is, yet disagree over its constituents. For instance, some theorists claim that a life of well-being consists in a life of pleasure, while other theorists claim that it consists in a life of virtue. In the next section, I will show there is no widely acceptable philosophical theory of well-being. It is for this reason that the current debate over the prudential relevance of PWB is so controversial.

2.3.2 Theories of Well-Being

In this section, I will outline two major disagreements in the philosophical literature that prevent the adoption of a widely acceptable theory of well-being.[14] Without a widely acceptable theory of well-being, it is no surprise that we do not have a widely acceptable account of the prudential relevance of PWB.

[14] I will follow recent work by well-being theorists (e.g. Woodard 2013; Fletcher forthcoming) in classify philosophical theories of well-being in relation to these two major disagreements. Note that this differs from the traditional method of classification—the tri-partite division of theories of well-being into mental state theories, preference-satisfaction theories and objective list theories—influentially outlined by Derek Parfit (1984).

The first major disagreement in the philosophical literature concerns whether theories of well-being accept or reject what we can refer to as the "experience requirement". A theory of well-being accepts the experience requirement just in case it claims that, for any subject S, the only constituents of S's well-being are S's experiences (Griffin 1986: 13, 16–19; Scanlon 1998: 186–187; Sumner 1996: 127–128). According to such theories, if some fact about my life does not affect my experience, it cannot affect my well-being.

There are intuitively strong arguments both in favour and against the experience requirement. Kagan (1992) makes the following argument in favour of accepting the experience requirement. Something contributes towards a person's well-being if it is good *for that person*. Persons are nothing other than a body and mind. Thus, according to Kagan, something can only constitute a person's well-being is if makes a difference to their body or mind. Being genuinely successful, for instance, does not benefit *the person* except insofar as it directly impacts them i.e. through their *experiences* of being successful.

In response, theorists who reject the experience requirement argue that we care about whether we are genuinely successful in such endeavours, not just whether we have certain experiences of success. Moreover, this does not seem to be a mistake. Though-experiments such as Nozick's experience machine appear to support the idea actual states of affairs may constitute our well-being as well as our experiences (Nozick 1974). We do not seem to think that a life divorced from reality would be a life of well-being.

Clearly, whether or not you accept the experience requirement makes a difference to the prudential relevance of PWB. If a person's well-being is constituted entirely by their experiences, we may be able to view subjective measures of well-being as direct measures of well-being. In contrast, if a person's well-being is largely a matter of their actual state of affairs, there may be numerous ways in which PWB and well-being come apart.

The second major disagreement in the philosophical literature concerns whether theories of well-being accept or reject what we can refer to as the "pro-attitude requirement". A theory accepts the pro-attitude requirement just in case it claims that, for any subject S, the only constituents of S's well-being are satisfactions of some (actual or hypothetical) pro-attitude. According to such theories, if I do not have a certain kind of (actual or hypothetical) pro-attitude towards some fact about my life, it cannot affect my well-being.

As with the experience requirement, there are intuitively strong arguments both in favour and against the pro-attitude requirement. In favour of the pro-attitude requirement, it does not seem that certain goods (such as contact with reality, health or long-term relationships) constitute a person's well-being when that person is (actually or hypothetically) averse to those goods. The goods in question may be good in some other respect, such as morally or aesthetically good, but it seems objectionably paternalistic to insist that they are also good for someone who lacks (or would lack) certain pro-attitudes towards them. Alternatively put, it does not seem that we can justify the value of such goods to people who do not have certain pro-attitudes towards those goods.

In response, theorists who reject the pro-attitude requirement argue that certain goods constitute people's well-being regardless of their attitudes towards them. It seems that goods such as achievements, knowledge, virtue, etc., are valued because they are good for people, rather than being good for people because they are valued. Moreover, people's attitudes are systematically prone to error or bias. Desires and values are formed with limited information, overly influenced by the present, emotionally salient stimuli, and so on (Kahneman, 2011). Appealing to the attitudes that people would have with full information or full rational capacities seems to be either ad hoc or incoherent with the intuitions behind endorsing the pro-attitude requirement (Rosati 1996; Hawkins 2010).

Again, whether or not you accept the pro-attitude requirement makes a difference to the prudential relevance of PWB. If a person's well-being is constituted by goods that they do not have certain pro-attitude towards, their PWB may often come apart from their well-being. A person may have many prudential goods available to them, for example, yet fail to value those goods. In such a case, their level of well-being may be much higher than their level of PWB may suggest.[15]

To make things more complicated, one may accept the experience requirement yet reject the pro-attitude requirement, or vice versa. Or one may either accept both requirements or reject both requirements. Any of these theories of well-being are possible, yet all are controversial, and thereby not widely acceptable.

In the next section I will develop an alternative strategy for arriving at a widely acceptable account of the prudential relevance of PWB. This strategy does not involve trying to provide a theory of well-being. Focussing on disagreements over particular requirements for a theory of well-being (such as the experience and pro-attitude requirements) risks masking the areas in which there *is* general agreement. In the next section, I will outline three ways in which PWB is related to well-being. These relationships can be widely accepted, and thereby form a widely acceptable prudential framework for the study of PWB.

2.3.3 A Theory-Neutral Framework for the Study of PWB

In the previous section, I showed that all current theories of well-being are controversial—there are no widely acceptable theories of well-being, and thereby no widely acceptable account of the relationship between PWB and well-being. In this section, I will provide an account of the prudential relevance of PWB that does not rest on a theory of well-being. I will call this a *theory-neutral* framework for the study of PWB. After briefly discussing the commitments of a theory-neutral account, I will outline the relationships between PWB and well-being that make up the theory-neutral framework.

[15] These are the kinds of arguments offered by proponents of PWB in interpreting PWB findings such as the Easterlin paradox (Nussbaum 2000; Sen 1999).

At first glance, it may seem that an account of the prudential relevance of PWB that does not rest on a theory of well-being is paradoxical. For, how can we discover whether or not certain relationships between PWB and well-being hold if we do not know what well-being is? For instance, I will suggest below that PWB tends to indicate well-being. In order to further our understanding of this relationship, we need to investigate the kinds of contexts and conditions in which a subject's attitudes towards her well-being tend to be fairly accurate. But, without referring to a theory of well-being, how can we know whether or not a subject has fairly accurate beliefs in a particular situation or context? It might be, for example, that a happy unhealthy person is systematically deluded over her health, or it might be that her health does not significantly contribute towards her well-being. It seems impossible to decide between these two explanations without a theory of well-being.

In response, I do not think that we need a theory of well-being to interpret these kinds of cases. We already have an adequate understanding of the kinds of ingredients that typically make up well-being. We can reasonably assume that sickness diminishes well-being, for instance. Platitudes concerning what makes people better or worse off do not depend on a philosophical theory that specifies what things are intrinsically good for people and why. Yet such platitudes are informative (Hausman 2012). We do not have to wait for a wildly acceptable theory of well-being before we can venture opinions concerning what makes people's lives better or worse. Such things typically involve certain material living standards, health, education, personal activities including work, social connections and relationships, environment and security (Stiglitz et al. 2009). In general, we know enough about the things that make people better or worse off that we can determine the contexts and conditions in which PWB is related to well-being.

So, what are the widely acceptable relationships between PWB and well-being? In the remainder of this section, I will outline the following three contingent relationships between PWB and well-being:

1. PWB tends to indicate well-being; in this sense, PWB is important in much the same way as other indicators of well-being, such as GDP and social indicators.
2. People tend to care about their own PWB, and the PWB of others; in this sense, PWB is important in much the same way as other goods that people tend to care about, such as health, relationships and leisure.
3. PWB tends to provide people with certain cognitive and motivational benefits, such as being more confident, creative, productive, sociable and healthy, as well as enabling people to value themselves and their lives; in this sense, PWB is important in much the same way as other mental capabilities, such as mental health and self-esteem.

2.3.3.1 PWB as an Indicator

PWB tends to reflect how well we are doing. As mentioned in the first section of this paper, certain mental states, such as affect and life satisfaction, typically *point towards* things that we care about, such as how well we are doing in our objectives, goals, projects, values, and so on. In this way, PWB can be viewed as evidence, or an indicator, of well-being.

Different PWB constructs differ with regards to the aspects of well-being that they tend to reflect. Positive and negative affect can be viewed as more reliably co-occurring with *moment-to-moment changes* in our current goals and projects (Railton 2008; Schroeder 2001; Millgram 2000). We feel good, for example, when recovering from a certain illness, or from receiving a promotion at work. Conversely, we feel bad when we lose a sporting event, or in anticipation of failing to make a particular deadline.

In contrast to positive and negative affect, judgments of life satisfaction can be viewed as more reliably co-occurring with *global changes* in our well-being. Whereas affect correlates with goods such as our health and relationships, life satisfaction has been shown to correlate with success in more long-term goals such as income and educational attainment (Kahneman 2011). This has important implications for the measurement of well-being. If we treat PWB as an indicator of overall well-being, we will need to think about the relative importance of certain momentary and global changes in well-being. For example, Luhmann et al. (2012) have shown that childbirth results in a lasting increase in positive affect (presumably because of the moment-to-moment joys of having children), but lasting decreases in life satisfaction (possibly because of the negative impact of having children on one's career, etc.). In measuring overall well-being, then, we need to think about the impact of certain local changes in well-being (indicated by affect) and certain global changes in well-being (indicated by life satisfaction) within the relevant context.

Lastly, eudaimonic well-being, or 'psychological well-being', differs from both affect balance and life satisfaction insofar as it indicates specifically how well a subject in doing in particular important aspects of their functioning. These aspects tend to include a subject's level of autonomy, growth, purpose, self-acceptance, mastery, and quality relationships (Ryff 1989). This more narrow view of a subject's life can be viewed as either an advantage or a disadvantage. It is advantageous in that a subject's psychological well-being will tend to reflect how well they are doing in some of the most important aspects of their life. Moreover, it will not be distorted by potentially irrelevant factors, such as particular goals and projects that are not in fact good for the subject. However, it is disadvantageous for much the same reason, namely that it will tend to fail to reflect certain aspects of a subject's life that are important for their overall well-being, yet are not related to the particular aspects of functioning measured.

2.3.3.2 PWB as a Value

The fact that most people tend to care about their own PWB, and the PWB of others, is perhaps the most obvious of the three contingent relationships between PWB and well-being. Yet, it is worth exploring this relationship in more detail. The first thing worth mentioning is that people may tend to care about certain PWB constructs more than others. For instance, people may care about affect balance because positive affect feels good and negative affect feels bad. Affect can be viewed as feelings of things as good or bad in a certain way, and it is because these things feel good or bad to us that we can understand affective states to be pleasant or painful (Helm 2009). Although this understanding of the feeling of affect suggests that affective states only feel good or bad because they *represent* something about our lives that is good or bad, this does not take away from the fact that we can begin to care about the feeling of affect itself, as well as the things that affect represents. In this way, individuals typically come to care about their overall affective lives, with a concern for experiencing affective states that feel good over ones that feel bad.

This may not so much be the case with other well-being constructs, however. Judgments of life satisfaction may not feel either good or bad in themselves. Nonetheless, individuals may come to care about being satisfied with their lives, or having a sense of overall fulfilment (Sumner 1996). Thus, people may not come to value their life satisfaction in the same way that they come to value their affect balance (that is, simply because it feels good) but life satisfaction may still come to be valued as a result of wanting to be satisfied with how our lives are going (Tiberius 2008).

The same cannot be said for the construct of psychological well-being. Recall that psychological well-being consist in subject's attitudes towards particular important aspects of her functioning, such as her sense of growth, purpose, self-acceptance, mastery, and so on (Ryff 1989; Keyes 2002). It is unlikely that people will come to value these attitudes beyond the ways in which such attitudes are related to affect balance and life satisfaction. That is, it is not obvious how a sense of well-functioning is valuable beyond the fact that it tends to feel good (i.e., is related to affect balance) or that it consists in the appreciation of a particular aspect of life (i.e., is related to life satisfaction). It is possible that some individuals will come to value a sense of well-functioning in particular, in the same way that individuals may come to care about having a sense of overall fulfilment. In general, however, it seems less likely that psychological well-being will be valued in this way. Thus, unlike affect balance and life satisfaction, most people may not tend to care about their own psychological well-being (above and beyond its relationship to affect balance and life satisfaction).

2.3.3.3 PWB as a Benefit

Perhaps the most important way in which PWB is related to well-being is the fact that it has various cognitive and motivational benefits. People with PWB tend to be more confident, creative, productive, sociable and healthy (Oishi et al. 2007; Lyubomirsky et al. 2005). These traits tend to be beneficial on all plausible theories of well-being.

Positive and negative affect are particularly important in this respect.[16] For instance, Fredrickson (Fredrickson 2006; Fredrickson and Losada 2005) has shown that positive affect, in contrast to negative affect, tends to result in positive outcomes in the long-term, such as high levels of health and productivity. Such findings have inspired the 'broaden-and-build' theory of positive affect. According to the broad-and-build theory, negative affective experiences narrow attention, cognition, and physiology toward coping with an immediate threat or problem. In contrast, positive affective experiences produce novel and broad-ranging thoughts and actions that are usually not critical to one's immediate survival and well-being. Over time, however, these novel experiences may aggregate into consequential resources that can change people's lives. Consider the following examples offered by Fredrickson: idle curiosity can become expert knowledge, or affection and shared amusement can become a lifelong supportive relationship. In this way, the broaden-and-build theory suggests that the short-term cognitive and motivational effects of positive affective experiences tend to lead to long-term thriving and well-being.[17]

Although these kinds of cognitive and motivational benefits are important, positive affect tends to be beneficial in a more fundamental respect. That is, having a favourable affect balance enables us to *appreciate* our selves and our lives. This is perhaps best illustrated by almost the opposite mental condition, namely depression. Depressed individuals, who suffer from an unfavourable affect balance, often lack a sense of self-worth and find no value in any personal activities. They are unable to appreciate the value of themselves and their lives, and thereby lack the motivation to improve their situation. In contrast, individuals with a favourable affect balance often do have a sense of self-worth, and by extension tend to value their own projects, commitments, contributions to relationships, and so on (Hawkins 2008). In short, positive affect enables people to have sufficient *valuing capacities*, that is, the capacity to form and pursue one's own conception of the good life.

Life satisfaction can be viewed as similar to affect balance in this respect, though importantly different. Being satisfied with one's life tends to consist in the appreciation of one's life. Part of valuing one's self and one's life is to be satisfied with it. However, life satisfaction is not merely a judgment of how well our lives are going, but whether our lives are going well *enough* (Haybron 2008). Thus, high levels of

[16] For an excellent overview of the benefits of positive affect see Haybron (forthcoming).

[17] See also Carver (2003).

our life satisfaction may tend to have negative motivational consequences insofar as we judge our lives to be entirely satisfactory. This may result in us failing to be motivated to improve our lives in certain ways. Conversely, low levels of our life satisfaction may tend to have positive motivational consequences insofar as we judge that our lives could be better in certain ways. In sum, the cognitive and motivational benefits of life satisfaction are less straightforward than those of positive and negative affect.

In contrast to life satisfaction, psychological well-being may be crucial in enabling us to have sufficient valuing capacities (that is, to appreciate our selves and our lives). To see why, it is worth considering again the opposite mental condition of depression. Being depressed does not merely consist in having low levels of negative affect. In addition, depressed individuals also tend to have feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt, a diminished ability to think, concentrate, make decisions, and a diminished interest in all activities (Huppert and So 2013). These factors, in addition to an unfavourable affect balance, prevent depressed individuals from being able to value themselves and their lives. In contrast, individuals with high levels of psychological well-being have a sense of self-acceptance, autonomy, mastery and purpose (Ryff 1989). These factors enable people to have sufficient valuing capacities. Such factors also tend to be general-purpose facilitators for the achievement of values, whatever one's particular values happen to be (Raibley 2012). In short, psychological well-being tends to significantly contribute towards the capacity to form and pursue one's own conception of the good life.

2.3.4 *Putting the Account to Work: A Theory-Neutral Framework in Context*

We now have a good grasp of the broad ways in which PWB is importantly related to well-being. It is important to note that each of the three relationships outlined above are *defeasible*. That is, even if PWB tends to be related to well-being in these broad ways, it may not be in certain contexts or conditions. Without a theory of well-being, we can merely claim that PWB tends to be prudentially relevant. We need to further investigate the kinds of contexts and conditions in which each of the three relationships outlined above do not hold.

Consider PWB as an indicator of well-being, first. I argued that each PWB construct could be viewed as an indicator of certain aspects of well-being. Nonetheless, there may be certain kinds of contexts or conditions in which each indicator fails to correlate with its respective aspect of well-being. For example, I claimed that affect balance indicates moment-to-moment changes in well-being. Yet, affective states may be elicited by salient information, even if such information is not prudentially relevant. Various self-control problems, such as procrastination and addiction, are cases in point (Rachlin 2004). As another example, I claimed that life

satisfaction indicates more global changes in well-being. Yet, judgments of life satisfaction may be consistently influenced by extraneous factors, such as one's ethical beliefs ("Should I be grateful for, or non-complacent, over the way my life is going?") (Haybron 2008) or a narrow practical perspective ("How can I be satisfied with my life when I have so much work to do?") (Tiberius 2008). In general, there may be many ways in which our well-being and our awareness of our own well-being can come apart.

Now consider PWB as a value. I claimed that people tend to value their own PWB as well as the PWB of others. Firstly, however, there may be significant cross-cultural and demographic variation in the extent to which people value PWB. People from more collectivist cultures, for instance, tend to value group harmony and social cohesion. In contrast, people from more individualistic backgrounds tend to value individual achievement and happiness (Diener and Suh 2000; Jugureanu and Hughes 2010). Secondly, in certain circumstances, people may tend to sacrifice their own PWB in favour of other more important values. For example, the dedicated parent may sacrifice her PWB in favour of looking after her disabled child. Such individuals (as well as individuals with a more 'collectivist' set of values) may in fact come to disvalue their own PWB.

Lastly, consider PWB as beneficial. It is clear that many of the cognitive and motivational benefits of PWB will not tend to be beneficial in certain contexts (Gruber et al. 2011). Optimism is not always the best strategy when the outcomes in question are unrealistic; being confident in a particular activity is not always beneficial when one is unskilled in that activity; and so on. Of course, some benefits of PWB may tend to be more readily beneficial than others, such as health and valuing capacities. Yet, even valuing capacities can fail to be beneficial when they are inappropriately directed towards one's life. A sense of self-worth is important, for instance, but not if it is directed towards harmful activities or outcomes over which one had no part in.

These brief considerations show that focussing on the above three relationships between PWB and well-being opens up a large area of research that needs to be done on the contexts and conditions in which these relationships do not hold. We cannot say with certainty that PWB is prudentially relevant in any given situation or context. Rather, we need to look at each context in detail, and consider whether we have any reason to doubt that PWB is related to well-being in any of the three ways outlined above. Again, these reasons are relatively theory-neutral. We need to know whether subjects have an adequate amount of information within a certain context, for example, or whether they suffer from a particular cognitive bias.

Let us illustrate how this kind of theory-neutral framework would work in practice by returning to the different interpretations of the Easterlin paradox discussed above. Recall that theorists widely disagree over the implications of the findings behind the Easterlin paradox. Those who believe PWB is highly correlated with well-being hold that such findings show lasting well-being has not significantly increased in the past 50 years. Those who believe PWB is less highly correlated with well-being hold that such findings show there is more to lasting well-being than PWB. In contrast to both of these views, the theory-neutral

approach does not make any claims about how closely related PWB is to well-being. It merely claims that (except in certain contexts or conditions) PWB tends to indicate well-being, or is a value or a benefit. I will briefly consider the fact that PWB tends to indicate well-being, here, and the way in which this relationship suggests we should interpret the Easterlin paradox.

I have claimed that PWB tends to indicate well-being, but that in certain contexts and conditions this relationship may not hold. Now, the findings behind the Easterlin paradox (as well as the findings behind the set point theory of PWB) seem to provide us with evidence that there are broad contexts in which PWB does not indicate *absolute levels* of well-being. Seemingly unfortunately individuals, such as poor peasants in India (Sen 1999) or people with severe physical disabilities (Layard 2011) can feel happy, despite their unfavourable conditions. However, this does not mean that PWB fails to indicate well-being in such contexts. Indeed, it seems that such findings provide us with evidence that PWB tends to indicate *improvements* or *worsenings* in well-being. Poor peasants can feel happy insofar as their lives are getting better, even if their absolute level of well-being is dismal. Conversely, seemingly very fortunate individuals (such as healthy, popular millionaires) can feel unhappy insofar as they perceive their lives to be getting worse.

Indeed, additional evidence may further narrow down the contexts in which PWB tends to be an indicator of either (a) absolute levels of well-being, (b) changes in well-being, or (c) rates of change in well-being. Additional evidence, for example, may suggest that, below a certain standard of living, PWB tends to indicate absolute levels of well-being. Above that standard of living, PWB may tend to indicate changes in well-being. Again, this does not require a particular theory of well-being. In order to discover whether or not this is the case, we merely need to assess the contexts and conditions in which the typical ingredients of well-being (health, relationships, leisure, etc.) correlate with PWB.

I believe that this situation would be better than the current status of the debate over the prudential relevance of PWB outlined above. We can move beyond broad controversial theories of the relationship between PWB and well-being towards a more limited, yet widely acceptable, account of the prudential relevance of PWB. We can begin to interpret findings from the study of PWB in ways that will be both effective and justifiable. For instance, the interpretation of the Easterlin paradox offered above is important – it shows that significant increases in standards of living do not result in lasting increases in improvements in well-being. And this interpretation can be widely accepted—it does not consist in viewing PWB as being either too closely or too distantly related to well-being.

2.4 Conclusion

In this paper I have argued in favour of a particular (theory-neutral) prudential framework for the study of PWB. I began by arguing that we need a widely acceptable prudential framework i.e. an account of the prudential relevance of PWB

that most people can agree on. This framework does not currently exist, but needs to in order for important and interesting PWB findings to be used effectively and justifiably.

I then argued that (at least in the foreseeable future) any prudential framework for the study of PWB based on a particular theory of well-being will be overly controversial. Instead, we need to look towards a theory-neutral account of the prudential relevance of PWB. I offered such an account, according to which PWB is important because it tends to be (a) an indicator of well-being, (b) a value, and (c) a benefit. These three relationships can form a widely acceptable prudential framework, which we can use to interpret important findings from the study of PWB.

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Chapter 3
Well-Being, Science, and Philosophy

Raffaele Rodogno

3.1 Well-Being Between Philosophy, Science, and Public Policy

Given the central importance of well-being to each one of us (Rodogno 2008), it should not be surprising that research on well-being is pursued in multiple disciplines and currently exploding. The medical research database PubMed (2013), for example, gives more than 4 million entries on "well-being" with most of the publications concentrated in the last 30 years; and while psychology and economics have recently witnessed the birth of vigorous new fields such as hedonic psychology, the science of subjective well-being, and economics and happiness (Bruni and Porta 2005; Bruni et al. 2008; Diener 1984; Easterlin 1974; Frey 2008; Frey and Stutzer 2002; Kahneman 2000; Kahneman and Krueger 2006; Layard 2005; Seligman 2011; Sen 1999), in philosophy, well-being maintains its perennial centrality (Darwall 2002; Feldman 2010; Griffin 1986; Haybron 2008; Rodogno 2003; Russell 2012; Sumner 1996; Tiberius 2008). On their side, politicians have recently grown interested in the topic, as attested by the efforts made by several European governments and institutions to develop new statistical measures of progress that include well-being indicators (European Commission 2013; German Council of Economic Experts and Conseil d' Analyse Economique 2010; Italian National Council for Economics and Labour 2013).

Combined, the academic and political interest in well-being opens the door to the fruitful application of well-being research to society. Research on well-being, however, is not always well integrated across the disciplines purporting to study it. In particular, there seems to be insufficient communication between the empirical study of well-being as pursued in economics and psychology, on the one hand, and

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the normative and conceptual study of well-being as pursued in philosophy, on the other. This is not to say that there are no researchers that, individually, make consistent and productive efforts at building bridges across the more conceptual and the more empirical study of well-being.[1] It is rather that these efforts have not yet gone far enough; they should be more widespread and systematic. Unfortunately, there still are entrenched tendencies, on the one hand, to theorize and conceptualize well-being in the absence of any concern for issues such as measurement and, on the other, to measure well-being without sufficient concern for its conceptualization. In each camp, these tendencies are sometimes accompanied by an attitude of scepticism towards the research conducted by those in the other camp. It would not be uncommon, for example, to hear complaints arising from each side concerning the very relevance or usefulness to well-being research of the work conducted by scholars on the other side.

Having established that there is at least some lack of communication in the field of well-being research, we should ask whether this state of affairs is less than optimal or downright pernicious. As it turns out, it is likely to be both. It is a general presumption about scientific knowledge and understanding that it tends to benefit from communication and the confrontation of ideas that it allows. There are no evident reasons to take this general presumption not to apply to the case at hand. To this extent, the current state of well-being research should count as less than optimal. Furthermore, something peculiar to well-being research makes the lack of communication particularly dangerous. By its very nature, well-being research has important normative practical repercussions. Any result arrived at in this field can be used more or less directly to influence clinical practices, and social and economic policies. The lack of communication may therefore ultimately have a negative impact on the well-being of those who are the object of these interventions and policies. Finally, given that public policy ultimately relies on those who provide the numbers, i.e., the economists and psychologists, the lack of communication has as its lamentable consequence to rob "science and public policy of the expertise of philosophers that could be employed to evaluate empirical claims about well-being promotion" (Alexandrova 2012a, 3).

Having established that there is a regrettable lack of communication, we should turn to the question of its origin and, thence, its solution. According to Anna Alexandrova, at the origin of the current predicament, is a particular understanding of the concept of well-being that is widespread among philosophers. On this understanding, the concept of well-being is taken to conform to the two following assumptions (2012a, 5):

[1] Notable examples are Alexandrova (2005, 2008, 2012a, b), Angner (2008, 2011, 2012), Feldman (2010), Haybron (2008), Sen (1985, 1987, 1992, 1993), Tiberius (2008), Tiberius and Plakias (2010). On the more purely empirical side of well-being research, scholars such as Diener, Frey, Kahneman, and Seligman have made consistent efforts at integrating work in psychology with economics and public policy (cf. Diener and Seligman (2004), Frey and Stutzer (2002), Kahneman (2000), Kahneman and Krueger (2006), Kesabir and Diener (2008), Stiglitz et al. (2010).

Death Bed. The concept of well-being concerns the most general evaluation of the prudential value of a person's life and not anything else. The focus of the concept of well-being is the sort of evaluation we might undertake at a person's death bed: How has she done in life, all things considered?

Uniqueness. The substantive theory of well-being specifies the unique set of conditions that apply in all and only cases of well-being. Whenever the concept of well-being applies, the substantive theory of well-being is supposed to tell us what it is.

Together, these two assumptions "imply that a single substantive theory of well-being should yield the conditions under which a person's life is going well in general." (2012a, 6). Along with Alexandrova, we shall call this view *invariantism* about well-being. Now though invariantism is not said to be problematic in itself, it is considered to be problematic insofar as it makes philosophical analyses unusable by empirical science. That is because unlike philosophical analyses, those social and medical sciences that purportedly deal with well-being do not make general but only *context-specific* evaluations. Hence, while philosophical well-being is unitary and general, "a great variety of constructs of well-being are used in the various scientific projects" (Alexandrova 2012a, 2).

To illustrate the variety of well-being concepts handled by these sciences, Alexandrova picks the case of developmental economics, gerontology, and the psychology of child well-being. Developmental economists, for example, typically ask how well a country is doing. The construct needed to answer this question must allow comparisons across time and nations and hence must be capable of ordering the states of well-being on some sort of scale. In his recent *Human Well-Being and The Natural Environment* (2001, 54), for example, Partha Dasgupta argues that a minimal set of indices for spanning a reasonable conception of current well-being in a poor country includes private consumption per head (encompassing food, shelter, clothing and basic legal aid), life expectancy at birth (as the best indicator of health), literacy (as a proxy for basic primary education), and civil and political liberties (as allowing people to function independently of the state and their communities).

Alexandrova's own conclusions here are to the effect that "developmental economics operates with its own construct of well-being" (2012a, 13) and that this is distinct from the typical constructs philosophers use such as happiness, pleasure, satisfaction of desires, or the exercise of virtues. Yet, Alexandrova continues, "Dasgupta does not claim that his is the uniquely correct account of well-being, but that it is the correct one for some purposes of developmental economics" (2012a, 13). Similar conclusions are arrived at after a quick review of the prevalent conceptualizations of well-being in child psychology and gerontology.

If this is the right diagnosis, standard philosophical analysis of well-being involves invariantist features that make it unresponsive to the needs and realities of medical and social science and, hence, public policy. Making philosophical analysis relevant to policy would then involve abandoning invariantism in favour of a form of variantism. The latter is a thesis to the effect that *the term well-being can invoke different kinds of evaluations and different substantive theories of well-being*

depending on context. "Thus in different contexts well-being may amount to the subject's hedonic profile, or their objective quality of life, or certain aspects of their health etc." (6).

Should we accept that invariantism is at the origin of the current irrelevance of the philosophy of well-being and variantism its cure? In what follows, I argue against this particular diagnosis: invariantism is not at the origin of the current predicament, for its defining assumptions actually fail to characterize philosophical theories of well-being sufficiently well. As for variantism about well-being, it is neither an option in philosophy nor the correct characterization of the empirical science of well-being. As I shall argue, we need not presuppose that scientific practice makes use of plural concepts of well-being according to context. Finally, and more positively, I sketch those moves that philosophers in collaboration with scientists ought to make in order to realize the desired rapprochement between their respective disciplines.

3.2 Invariantism About Well-Being

In order to determine whether invariantism is at the origin of the current predicament, it is important to establish that it does indeed characterize philosophical theories of well-being. In this section, I will therefore examine the invariantist credentials of some of the major theories of well-being currently on offer. In order to render this task somewhat systematic, I start from the beginning, i.e., by asking what kinds of well-being ascriptions theories of well-being are intended to systematize. As it turns out, there are two distinct though connected kinds of well-being ascriptions; theories of well-being can be viewed as primarily focusing on the one as opposed to the other.

Consider some mundane well-being ascriptions. We often ask ourselves whether certain practices or activities, e.g., working long hours, or drinking a lot of alcohol, are good for us. At least some of our well-being ascriptions, then, are attempts at identifying the kinds of things that are good for us. There are, however, other, perhaps even more mundane, kinds of well-being ascriptions. While presupposing that certain kinds of things are good for us, the function or point of these ascriptions is that of assessing how well a person's life is going (or has gone) for her. When making these ascriptions, that is, we tend to focus on the presence or absence in one's life of those things that are good for one. Importantly, the assessment is done against some substantial standards determining what amounts of what good things ought to be present or absent in one's life for one to judge correctly that the life is going or has gone well or bad for the person. The two kinds of ascriptions are distinct, for we can certainly tell whether something is good for a person without at the same time knowing how much of that good thing the person should have in order for her life to count as a good life for her.

While the first type of ascriptions described above answers the question "What kinds of things are good and bad for one?" the second answers the question "When

is a life good or bad for a person?" The first question is about the idea of *final value* and *disvalue for* a person. As I shall refer to it, this is the *prudential* question; prudential theories offer systematized answer to this question. I shall refer to the second question as to the *good life* (or *bad life*) question; "good life" theories provide systematized answers to this question. The distinction I am making does not track a distinction between quantitative and qualitative ascriptions of well-being as much as the distinction between comparative and absolute ascriptions of well-being. In particular, while prudential claims enable us to make comparative ascriptions ("this option is better for me than that one" or "this one is my best option"), "good life" claims enable us to make absolute ascriptions of well-being (this option is positively good, excellent, frankly bad, would make my life not worth living etc.).[2] This should suffice in guise of an introduction to this distinction, which will become clearer as we illustrate it by discussing the major theories of well-being in the two subsections below. Our main purpose there, however, will be to assess the invariantist credentials of the major theories of well-being.

3.2.1 Invariantism and Prudential Theories

Let us begin by looking at so called prudential theories of well-being. Philosophers working with this kind of theories seem to share a few general assumptions. First, at its most general or abstract level, the idea of one's well-being is an unarticulated notion: it is the idea of one's interest, advantage, private or personal good, or benefit irrespective of what anyone actually takes to give substance to this idea. Second, philosophers also generally take it that the idea of well-being is a normative (as well as a descriptive) notion.[3] The idea of something being good for you, that is, involves reasons for you to desire and pursue that thing. If you fail to act in accordance with these reasons without a valid justification (as, for example, ignorance or stronger non-prudential reasons not to so act), your practical rationality is criticizable.

Third, and connected to normativity, is the idea that prudential considerations are essentially temporally extended in principle to all of one's life (and to those who believe in an afterlife, possibly also after death). Note that what is at issue here is *not* connected to the *Death Bed*. To illustrate this point, consider pension schemes. If we could be confident enough that Jim will obtain much greater goods in 10, 20, or 30 years, if only he refrained from enjoying some good now, then that is what he ought prudentially to do. Even though there are temporal considerations at stake

[2] Note also that while I claim that these two types of questions are distinct, I also believe that they are in principle connected and should be answered by a unitary theory.

[3] Though, what type of normativity, whether, that is, it is agent-relative or agent-neutral, has recently been disputed. See Darwall (2002) for a challenge to the default view that it is agent-relative rather than agent-neutral. See Rosati (2008) for a defence of the idea that well-being is agent-neutral as well as agent-relative.

here, and even ones that may in principle extend as far as one can expect to live (if not beyond), we are not in the business of evaluating how well Jim has done for himself. Even if, *ceteris paribus*, he will do better if he acts as he ought prudentially to act, Jim may all in all have a bad life. What is at issue is rather the idea that in determining what action is in one's self-interest, one cannot, on pains of irrationality, neglect that one's well-being has a temporal dimension that extends in principle to as far as one's life. If we dismiss this idea as a requirement inherent to the concept of well-being, no one could tell Jim that choosing to consume the goods immediately is imprudent or stupid.

With this common background, philosophers working with the prudential question seek to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions that determine prudential goodness. There are a number of competing views of this kind on offer. Perhaps the most influential and discussed theory in the twentieth century is the so called *desire satisfaction theory*, according to which the satisfaction of a person's desires is both a necessary and sufficient condition for her well-being. The notion of satisfaction involved by this type of theory is neither the affectively positive *feeling* of satisfaction nor the cognitive evaluation of being satisfied with something, but rather the logical sense in which desires are satisfied whenever their intentional objects obtain. Today desire theorists endorse for the most rationalized version of the theory, which we will call *rational desire theories of well-being*.[4]

Historically, one of the most noticeable alternatives to desire satisfaction theories is *hedonism*. On this theory any question about well-being will be directly and ultimately a question about pleasure and pain. Finally, on so called *Objective List* theories (Finnis 1980), prudential goodness is identified with a plurality of substantive goods such as pleasure, knowledge, friendship, autonomy, accomplishment and even virtue.

This quick tour of the main theories populating this part of the philosophy of well-being should provide us with enough information for the purpose of assessing their alleged invariantist credentials. So far, neither one of the three theories has much to do with *Death Bed* because, when addressing the prudential question, prudential theories of well-being are simply not aiming at evaluating lives. As we shall see, something more, namely, an appeal to standards of some sort is required to evaluate lives in that way and the theories at hand here do not discuss or presuppose such standards.

[4] Under this heading, we may regroup a number of theories that are, in fact, distinct in many ways. Some of them, for example, reduce the normative notion of well-being to the non-normative notion of rational desire understood conditionally as what an agent would desire, (a) on reflection; or (b) under idealized conditions; or (c) if she were fully informed; or again as (d) what a fully informed version of herself would want for herself as she actually is. Others, however, want to avoid this reduction and characterize well-being in terms that are themselves normative as *what there is reason for an agent to desire*. See Sidgwick (1907, 100–112), Brandt (1972, 686), Rawls (1972, 408), Railton (1986), Griffin (1986) and Skorupski (1999). I do not include in this class Desire Satisfactionism theories of well-being such as Heathwood (2011, 24–25) insofar as they explicitly deny that rational desires determine the prudential goodness of lives.

Let us now turn to *Uniqueness*, whose claim is that philosophical analyses of well-being aim at finding the unique set of conditions for the correct application of the concept "well-being". Note that, as characterized here, the primary aim of prudential theories is not to determine *when* a subject is doing well or bad but rather *what* kinds of things are beneficial or harmful to a subject. Perhaps prudential theorists would accept claims to the effect that if the context is sufficiently different in the relevant respects, then, say, different standards would be in order to evaluate whether someone is doing well or bad. In line with *Uniqueness*, however, prudential theorists cannot accept that the nature of the goods that constitute an individual's well-being changes with the context. No desire theorist, for example, will accept the truth of hedonism or the objective list theory just because the context has changed. In this sense, prudential theories certainly satisfy *Uniqueness*. The question, to be discussed in Sect. 3.4, is, then, whether it is this feature that impedes communication between philosophy and the empirical studies well-being.

3.2.2 Invariantism and "Good Life" Theories

Next we should assess the invariantist credentials of the major theories belonging to the other class. These theories systematize those mundane well-being ascriptions whose function or point is the evaluation of people's lives or aspects of their lives. The first important point to emphasize is that these well-being ascriptions cannot be performed in the absence of some standards, which are being met or failing to be met by an individual's life. Were you to look back on your life from your death bed, and judge that you had had a good life you would implicitly be appealing to a standard of well-being which you must believe your life has attained. This is quite unlike the other type of well-being ascriptions. No similar standard being attained is implicated in your judgment that eating this ice-cream would be good for you insofar as it is pleasant or it satisfies one of your desires.

Three general remarks about the nature of the standards involved in these ascriptions are in order here, starting with the claim that the standards are taken to be different in kind. There will, hence, be standards the fulfillment (or failure to fulfill) of which will be taken to determine whether the life in question is good, the best, bad, horrendous, barely worth living, or not worth living for the person whose life it is. Some of these standards may be defined in terms of each other: hence, for example, someone may claim that a life that is not worth living is a life that fails to measure up to standards defining a life worth living, whatever these are.

Secondly, note that, conceptually, the standards that one applies in order to assess how well or bad a life is for the person whose life it is need not be understood in *perfectionist* terms. Perfectionism

> starts from an account of the good human life, or the intrinsically desirable life. And it characterizes this life in a distinctive way. Certain properties, it says, constitute human nature or are definitive of humanity—they make humans humans. The good life, it then says, develops these properties to a high degree or realizes what is central to human nature.[5]

The judgments about well-being discussed so far need not be developed against the backdrop of any idea of what makes humans humans. Even if there were a correct account of human nature, there is no logical guarantee that well-being would correspond to it. Without a substantial argument to that effect, we can assume neither that the most developed (in whatever perfectionist terms) human specimen will also be best off in terms of well-being, nor that "their undeveloped rivals would not be faring better."[6]

The third remark bears on the nature of the authority setting the standards. Are the standards to be determined (a) subjectively, i.e., by the subject's reflective or unreflective attitudes; (b) intersubjectively, i.e., by the community or a group of competent judges; (c) objectively, i.e., by alleged facts about human nature; or (d) differentially, in accordance with the type of standard at issue (e.g., the best life can be determined subjectively but not the standard for a life worth living)?

Perhaps the most famous historical example of a theory in this camp is Aristotle (1984) whose main claim was that the best life for man consists in those lifelong activities that actualize the virtues of the rational part of the soul.[7] In accordance with the first remark above, note that Aristotle is not just trying to define the good life but something more ambitious, namely, the *best* possible human life or excellent life. In fact his theory can be considered to set objective standards in the sense that this type of life would be the best or excellent one for any human being given not only some subjective features but also objective features derived from our *ergon*.[8]

A more recent theory in this camp is L. W. Sumner's *authentic happiness* theory of well-being. This view is at bottom spelled out by two claims: (i) happiness consists in life satisfaction, and (ii) well-being is identical to happiness.[9] We are told that happiness consists in, both, a cognitive and an affective aspect:

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[5] Hurka (1993), 3.

[6] Sumner (1996), 24. *Pace* (McNaughton and Rawling 2001), 157–158; 158 n. 2.

[7] I am assuming that there are cogent interpretations of Aristotle that do not make his theory straightforwardly perfectionist in the sense described above. Russell (2012, 44–64), for example, argues that Aristotle understands eudaimonia as an agent-relative good, and understands the virtues as benefiting their possessor in an agent-relative way.

[8] What the latter consisted in is unfortunately a matter of exegetical dispute with important repercussions on the alleged objective nature of Aristotle's view. According to most interpreters, the *ergon* at issue here makes a reference to Aristotelian ideas about the metaphysical/biological essence of human nature. According to another interpretation (Adkins 1984), however, the *ergon* at issue here is rather that which common practice in society assigns to each individual.

[9] Sumner (1996, 156–171) actually claims that well-being is identical to *authentic* happiness. This is an important point within his theory, which, however, may harmlessly be ignored here.

> The cognitive aspect of happiness consists in a positive evaluation of the conditions of your life, a judgement that, at least on balance, it measures up favourably against your standards or expectations. This evaluation may be global, covering all the important sectors of your life, or it may focus on one in particular (your work, say, or your family). In either case it represents an affirmation or endorsement of (some or all of) the conditions or circumstances of your life, a judgement that, on balance and taking everything into account, your life is going well for you. … However, there is more involved in being happy than being disposed to think that your life is going (or has gone) well. The affective side of happiness consists in what we commonly call a sense of well-being: finding your life enriching or rewarding, or feeling satisfied or fulfilled by it.[10]

According to this theory, then, a person's well-being consists in the *person's endorsement* of the conditions of her life as measuring up favourably against *her own* standards and expectations. The person's attitudes determine the conditions under which she is doing well. Note that the standards are set by the person whose well-being is at issue who is then the ultimate authority, making this view a subjective one. Note also that the standards are not about the best possible life or the excellent life, but rather about the life one deems satisfactory or "measuring up on balance".

The question now is to understand how these particular kinds of theories square with the invariantist assumptions, starting with *Death Bed*. As it is clear from the last quote above, Sumner's view does not fulfill this assumption, for the evaluation/attitude which constitutes our happiness and well-being is either global or local, depending on whether it has as its focus "all the important sectors of your life… or one in particular (your work, say, or your family)." However, *Death Bed* is a much better fit for a theory such as Aristotle's, which expressly states that even excellent activity cannot lead to perfect happiness unless it occupied "the perfect length of a life" (NE 1177b25): a day of the best activity does not constitute happiness (Lawrence 1993, 18).

Let us now turn to *Uniqueness* as stating that philosophical analysis is aimed at finding the necessary and sufficient conditions for the correct application of the concept "well-being". Sumner's life satisfaction view would indeed clearly be in agreement with this assumption. The degree to which this is problematic will once again be discussed in Sect. 3.4. As for the Aristotelian view, however, I doubt that it can be interpreted as an effort to spell out the necessary and sufficient conditions for the correct application of the concept "well-being". This would not have been standard philosophical methodology back in Aristotle's days. Also to the point is the fact that Aristotle did not think that lifelong activities that actualize the virtues of the rational part of the soul were as such sufficient for the excellent life. One also had to be sufficiently fortunate as to be placed in the right circumstances.

The picture that results from this brief review of the main types of theories of well-being tells against thinking of invariantism as what explains their lack of relevance to scientific applications, for invariantism simply fails to characterize these theories. While prudential theories fail to satisfy *Death Bed,* the two major "good life" theories respectively fail to satisfy one of the two invariantist assumptions.

[10] Sumner (1996), pp 146–147.

Someone may resist this conclusion as too hasty. While theories of well-being may as suggested here primarily focus on either the prudential or the "good life" question, surely it would be wrong to see these two questions as unconnected. On pain of incoherence, the objector would continue, the prudential hedonist, for example, will not be at freedom of choosing answers to the "good life" question other than those in terms of pleasure and the absence of pain. Hence, she will have to say, for example, that the best life is the life with highest possible net surplus of pleasure over pain, the minimally good life, the life with at least some surplus of pleasure over pain, and so on. If this is granted, the objector would continue, and we accept that theories of well-being must provide answers to both kinds of questions in order to be complete, then, there will be more chances for *complete* theories to satisfy both invariantist assumptions. That would indeed follow from the fact that while prudential theories satisfy *Uniqueness*, "good life" theories seem to bring in the perspective involved by *Death Bed.*

The premises of this argument do indeed seem correct. Ideally, theories of well-being should provide unified and coherent answers to both kinds of questions. The objector's conclusion, however, does not seem to follow, for it may well be quite hard for some *prudential* theories to specify in a way that is at all useful the standards that would make any given life best, ideal, good, worth living, bad, etc. Hedonism and desire-satisfaction theory are good cases in point here: how much surplus of pleasure over pain/satisfied over frustrated desires in a life should there be for that life to count as ideal rather than just good? Similarly, theories like Aristotle's will simply continue not to qualify as invariantist. In the light of this, while we are perhaps not in a position to exclude categorically that a given theory may qualify as invariantist, we must accept that, considered collectively, theories of well-being do not in fact display strong invariantist credentials.

3.3 Against Variantism

Even if *invariantism* is not at the origin of the problem, however, some may argue that *variantism* may be part of its solution because it is entailed by our scientific practices. If philosophy is to communicate with the sciences, it ought to endorse variantism on such pragmatic grounds. Variantism, we shall remember, is the idea that "in different contexts well-being may amount to the subject's hedonic profile, or their objective quality of life, or certain aspects of their health etc." precisely because there are several distinct concepts of well-being at play, one for each context. (Alexandrova 2012a, 6) There is, however, one argument that tells against inferring from our well-being-ascription practices the conclusion that there are multiple, distinct concepts of well-being.

This argument is grounded in the uncontroversial idea (discussed in Sect. 3.2) that well-being is a normative and practical concept. Whatever conclusions any scientific study arrives at, if these conclusions are about well-being, they will be normative in the sense that they will involve reasons for action. However, if we

accepted variantism about well-being, even if only on pragmatic grounds, the normative nature of well-being would be compromised: it would no longer be clear normatively what would follow from any claim about well-being. For consider now a person's well-being at one time, and allow it to differ substantively depending on context, as, for example, when the person is considered as an elderly by a gerontologist or as a citizen by an economist. Next consider that different substantive theories of well-being will, at least in principle and plausibly also in practice, have different and conflicting normative implications. Now you will have it that something is both in principle and plausibly in practice at the same time in this person's interest and not in her interest and hence that she (or those who care for her well-being) ought prudentially to pursue it and not to pursue it: admittedly, an unpalatable result. Theories of well-being must pay heed to this fact and, hence, are not at freedom to mix different kinds of substantive theories.

3.4 Another Look at Scientific Practice

If, as argued so far, invariantism is not at the origin of the problem and variantism not part of the solution, what exactly explains the discrepancy between the science and philosophy of well-being? And how can we make research in these two fields commensurable? I contend that one simple fact is at the origin of the discrepancy. Modern empirical science has one fundamental aim that constrains its practice that philosophical practice does not share. The aim in question is measuring, and operationalization is the constraint that it imposes. Any empirical scientist who wants to gather some facts about the well-being of *X,* where *X* is a group of individuals *qua* members of a developing country, or *qua* elderly people, or simply *qua* individuals, is required to have (i) an idea of what *X*'s well-being consists in, and (ii) an idea of how to measure it. What is more, extra constraints apply in accordance to the more specific aims of the enquiry at hand, as when, for example, it is a requirement that researchers collect very large sample of data, or data that can easily be compared across time, or nations, etc. My contention is that what Alexandrova refers to as the multiplicity of well-being "constructs" results in large part from the need to measure and the process of operationalization, and the particular type of measurements that each study is set to achieve.

To illustrate this point, consider Lips et al. (1997, 1999). In this and similar studies in osteoporosis research it appears that the aim of the psychometric tool being used is to measure the impact of osteoporosis and osteoporosis-related interventions on the well-being of those who suffer from this condition, with the further aim of alleviating the suffering and improving quality of life. The instrument used here for measuring suffering and quality of life within this population is a questionnaire called Qualeffo-41 (IOF 1997) with over forty questions distributed across 5 domains: *Pain (in the last week)* (e.g. "How severe is your back pain at its worst?"); *Physical Function (at present)*, in turn subdivided in Activities of Daily Living (e.g., "Do you have problems with dressing?"; Jobs Around the House

(e.g. "Can you do your day-to-day shopping?"); Mobility (e.g., "Can you get up from a chair?")); *Leisure and Social Activities* (e.g., "How often did you visit friends or relatives during the last 3 months?"); *General Health Perception* (e.g., "For your age, in general, would you say your health is excellent/good/satisfactory/fair/poor."); and *Mental Function (in the last week)* (e.g. "Are you in good spirits most of the day?").

If the ultimate aim of studies such as this is to assess the impact on a group of individuals of a specific intervention, we should expect the measurements to be taken twice, either longitudinally (on the same population before and after the intervention), or cross-sectionally (on two distinct but otherwise similar groups of patients, one which underwent the intervention while the other did not). Either way, it is clear that the researchers are only interested in the patient's well-being insofar as her osteoporosis affects her in the condition in which she has received no intervention and/or in the condition in which she has received an intervention. This clearly means that not all aspects and periods of a person's well-being are relevant. Researchers are not interested in a general assessment of the patients' well-being throughout her life (viz. *Death bed*) but rather in two specific selective snapshots (or time-slices): "snapshots" because they are interested in the patient's well-being here and now (or at most the week before the measurements are being taken);[11] and "selective" because from a substantive point of view, the researchers are only interested in those aspects of well-being that the osteoporosis is likely to affect.

Consider now an imaginary and yet likely set of data collected during a longitudinal study using the Qualeffo-41. Suppose that it is true of a significant portion of the patients to which the questionnaire is administered that during the intervention period their spouse passed away and, as a result, the post-intervention set of measurements showed a significant decrease in their mental health. The researchers would want to dismiss this part of the data as a confounding factor to be explained away, for the decrease in mental health would not be caused by the condition or the intervention. If they could sharpen their psychometric tools so as to avoid this type of confound, they would certainly do it. Given their purposes, this would be an entirely legitimate move. Yet, no one should take this as showing that the death of one's spouse is not a legitimate cause of ill-being for osteoporosis patients, nor that the "construct" that underlies this particular psychometric tool involves a new context-specific concept of well-being in which spousal relations are not causes of well-being. All we should be inclined to infer here is that, given their specific aims, researchers are only interested in certain causes of well-being and not others.

It is worth dwelling on this point with the help of two more examples. Consider cases unlike the one above in which questionnaires cannot be directly administered to the subjects because they cannot answer as, perhaps, when we are trying to measure the well-being of young children with various handicaps. With what tools

[11] This is true of all questions, except Question 32, which asks the patient to rate her overall quality of life compared with 10 years ago. If this question is asked before and after the intervention, this is of course another way of validating the impact of the intervention on the person's current well-being.

are scientists going to assess the dimension referred to as "suffering" for example? Sure enough, they will choose indicators that are more objective than asking patients directly about their pain levels. They will most probably ask *parents* about their child's pain *behavior*, and perhaps observe the children and infer from their impaired physical functioning the possibility of suffering. It may well-be that suffering plays a less prominent role in the psychometric tool of this latter group of scientists. Surely, however, no one would be in a position to infer from this that these scientists' well-being construct takes subjective sides of well-being including suffering to be prudentially less important for this group of children than, for example, for osteoporosis patients. Nor could we infer that these scientists' conception of well-being is more objectivistic, not even just for the purposes of the study at hand.

The same point can be extended even further, to other disciplines. Consider Partha Dasgupta's minimal set of indices, which, as you will remember, includes private consumption per head, life expectancy at birth, literacy, and civil and political liberties. Why think that this is one among many plausible *accounts* of well-being distinct from either happiness or pleasure or satisfaction of desires or an Aristotelian exercise of virtues? The most direct explanation for Dasgupta's choice is that it was in large part imposed on him by operationalization constraints given the aims of his study. Even if Dasgupta had been a desire satisfaction theorist or a hedonist, he would have not been at freedom of choosing questionnaires and other more subjective measurement in order to compare the progress in well-being of billions of people (entire developing countries), as that would have been utterly impracticable.

If this line of argument is correct, then, the original description of the discrepancy between science and philosophy is misguided. A quick look at this part of the scientific practice does not suggest, let alone grant the inference that what is at issue here is a plurality of notions, or accounts of well-being, each with its own substantive theory. A closer description of this practice rather suggests that scientists intend to measure different aspects of *one* thing, i.e., well-being, or aspects of it as it pertains to this or that group of individuals (osteoporosis patients, citizens of developing countries, children, etc.), or again, the well-being of certain groups at specific times, etc. Whatever the actual conception of well-being that each individual scientist of well-being implicitly holds, I contend that the above is the picture that is most reasonable to extrapolate from the relevant scientific practice.

In order to be more specific about this picture and its differences with Alexandrova's, the following should be helpful. As proposed here, the scientific context with its general operationalization requirement, and the specific context provided by the particular scientific question at issue (e.g., the effect on the well-being of osteoporosis patients of certain clinical interventions) have the function of narrowing down the focus of well-being evaluations to those aspects of well-being made relevant by the specific scientific question that are also appropriately measurable. To say that these evaluations focus only on certain aspects, is to say that they are *partial* evaluations of well-being, not that those who use them are working with an entirely different concept of well-being from those who are interested in

well-being in other contexts. To illustrate, if I am interested in evaluations of well-being that take into account levels of pain in one context but not in another, it is because I am focusing on different aspects of well-being (in each context) and not on different concepts of well-being (according to context).

Another fact that emerges from looking at the scientific practice is that, while the measuring instruments are often scrupulously described (due to a concern with replication), it is often less clear why the alleged aspects of well-being up for measurement should in fact be considered as aspects of well-being, and how the data collected precisely connects to these aspects of well-being. It is here, I shall think, that philosophers should be more active than they have been in providing the "framework for understanding how the great variety of well-being constructs does or does not fit together" (Alexandrova 2012a, 25). In what remains of this section, I shall sketch one way in which philosophical thinking and empirical science can work together to bridge the gap between their respective fields.

In light of our discussion in this section, we should now see the discrepancy at issue between science and philosophy not as that between variantist and invariantist approaches, but as that between practices regulated by different aims. While one practice generates countless empirical measurements of alleged (aspects of) well-being with no clear connections to conceptions of well-being, the other generates abstract conceptions of well-being with no empirical articulation. How can these two practices come together?

Consider the osteoporosis study once again. What is the philosopher to do with the five domains (pain, physical function, leisure and social contact, general health perception, and mental function) that appear in the Qualeffo-41? In line with the discussion in Sect. 3.2, the first thing that we should be clear about is whether this instrument is itself connected to prudential theories rather than good life theories or vice versa. It is quite clear that the questionnaire is not feeding directly into a good life or bad life theory, for it does not itself presuppose or afford any specific standard of evaluation against which the data that it delivers may be evaluated. We are not said anything about how to evaluate the situation of someone who scores very poorly on this questionnaires (i.e., someone who feels extreme pain, has close to no physical function, and cannot engage in any leisure or social activity). Some of us may be inclined to think that this person has at this point a very bad life and perhaps one that is not worth living. But this type of good/bad life judgements is not part of the picture here, for the study in question is aimed at evaluating *only* those aspects of well-being that are likely to be affected by osteoporosis, not all the aspects of well-being that may affect how well a life goes.

If the scientists intend to measure the impact of osteoporosis or osteoporosis-interventions on patients' well-being, as they avowedly are, they must be taking themselves to be measuring more or less directly some of the things that are likely to make lives better or worse for their subjects. This places a study such as this in direct connection to what we called prudential theories, which, as you remember, attempt to determine what kinds of things are good and bad for individuals. The scientists involved in this study must therefore assume that the five domains tapped into by the Qualeffo-41 are measuring elements that are either intrinsic or instrumental to

well-being in some way or other. Yet, while it must be assumed that, say, visiting friends is intrinsically or instrumentally good for the patients, we do not know, from a study such as this, which one of these it is and why it would be.

Finding answers to questions such as these has traditionally been the task of philosophers, and an important task at that. We could, for example, easily imagine how different kinds of intervention may differentially affect the five dimensions of the Qualeffo-41. What if one intervention is better than another at lowering pain levels but not as good at facilitating leisure and social activity: which intervention is better for osteoporosis patients? At this juncture, philosophers should intervene and determine what parts of the data could be justified in terms of their favourite account of well-being and what parts couldn't.

One could, for example, explain what's being measured in hedonistic terms: pain would of course be intrinsically bad; leisure and social activity would be relevant insofar as they were direct sources of pleasure and their absence a missed opportunity for pleasure; good health would be considered as instrumentally good insofar as it is a precondition for many pleasant activities and lack of health may be instrumentally bad as well as a source of pain (or perhaps as intrinsically good and bad if its presence somehow involves pleasure and its absence pain); finally, mobility would in large part be instrumental to activities that are likely to generate pleasure.

Similar stories could of course be recounted by desire satisfaction theorists as well as Objective List theorists. While, the hedonist explains and justifies each one of these domains in terms of pleasure and the absence of pain, the desire satisfaction theorist will have to explain and justify them in terms of rational desire satisfaction or frustration, and the objective list theorist in terms of those intrinsic goods and evils that appear on her list. If it could be shown for some element that it did not correlate with pleasure or pain, or with rational desire, or with the goods on the objective list, philosophers would have to say that the Qualeffo-41 should be modified accordingly. Similarly, if philosophers thought in accordance to their theory that there were important sources of well-being that have not been given their due in the Qualeffo-41 in its current form, then, once again, the instrument should be modified.

Unfortunately, however, in their current state of development, philosophical theories of well-being are too abstract to accomplish the task just described; they simply lack sufficient empirical articulation.[12] In order to employ hedonism in the way suggested above, for example, we would have to know whether the activities in question are causes of pleasure. This is an empirical question in principle susceptible of receiving general answers of the kind "For most people engaging in activity of kind *x* is more pleasant than failing to engage in it". This further empirical articulation of a philosophical position is necessary in order to bridge the gap between the philosophy and the science of well-being.

This, however, is not an insurmountable problem, for there is already some evidence that philosophical theories can use and more evidence can certainly be produced.

[12] Here too there are noticeable exceptions. See Railton (unpublished); Sumner (1996, Chap. 6); Tiberius and Plakias (2010).

Hence, for example, hedonists can appeal to evidence that correlates participation in social activities, and leisure and recreation, with higher levels of positive affect, which could arguably be understood as a hedonistic measure (Diener and Seligman 2002; Argyle 2001). Though this and similar findings *suggest*, rather than definitively establish, causality (there is the possibility that higher level of positive affect be explained by personality traits such as being extraverted, see Diener et al. 1992), the point here is that it is not in principle impossible for philosophical theories to become sufficiently empirically articulated to provide the normative framework that is expected from them.

Perhaps, in the process, we may well find out that empirical articulation is more troublesome for some philosophical theories rather than others. Rational desire theories quickly come to mind here.[13] What kinds of things is it in fact rational for most people to desire? With its mixture of affect measures and life satisfaction measures, it may be argued that the *subjective well-being* construct would offer evidence that could eventually put some substantive meat on the bones of rational desire theories. The levels of happiness or subjective well-being that subjects tend to experience in connection with this or that activity or domain of their lives would, on this view, provide defeasible information about their rational desires. Though this view cannot be further unpacked here, the idea behind it is not unknown to current philosophical discussion (Railton Unpublished. Subjective well-being as information guidance. http://profron.net/happiness/files/readings/Railton_SubjectiveWellBeing.pdf; Tiberius and Plakias 2010). The important point here is once again that there may be ways of bridging the gap between abstract philosophical theories and empirical work on well-being, on condition that our theories preliminarily receive the kind of empirical articulation sketched here.

As this process of articulation is carried out, it may turn out that certain philosophical theories are more directly and/or more fully operationalizable than others, given the current instruments available. Philosophers should then ponder whether to rest content with taking whatever evidence their theory can justify given the current tools and the current state of empirical research on well-being (e.g. subjective well-being constructs and the like), or whether, in collaboration with the relevant scientists, it would be wise and feasible to develop new and more appropriate instruments. Even after such developments, some theories may just turn out to be harder to articulate than others, making them blunter tools for the evaluation of empirical claims about well-being. Some may suggest that these theories should then be put aside in favour of their better performing rivals. For, if they are ethical theories, then, they must be practical in the sense of allowing for the evaluation of action: relative incapacity in this respect should partly disqualify them. Others, however, may want to resist this move by pointing out that this would be the wrong kind of reason to dismiss a theory, if that theory in fact captures the core of the concept of well-being better than its more empirically versatile rival. But this is a topic for another day.

[13] Fore relevant references see footnote 4.

3.5 Conclusion

While denying that the current lack of communication between the science and philosophy of well-being is to be blamed on invariantism, I have argued that it results from the fact that different disciplines have different aims and operate under different requirements. In particular, while empirical disciplines operate under the constraints imposed by operationalization, philosophy does not. As a result of such constraints the former generates empirical measurements of alleged aspects of well-being that often lack a clear conceptual connections to well-being, while the latter generates abstract conceptions of well-being with no empirical articulation. This, however, is not to say that a rapprochement between the two camps is impossible. The gap may be bridged by articulating the empirical consequences of theories of well-being so as to enable them to make sense of and, if necessary, correct and develop the tools currently employed to measure well-being. This process of articulation requires an increased level of co-operation between philosophy and the relevant empirical sciences.

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Chapter 4
Improving the Health Care Sector with a Happiness-Based Approach

The Case of the Happiness Route

Laura A. Weiss, Sarah Kedzia, Aad Francissen and Gerben J. Westerhof

Traditionally, academic disciplines like economics, sociology, psychology, and biomedical sciences have tended to focus more on what is going wrong than on what is going right. Historically, this made sense: with wars, poverty, social inequality, and other social issues in the first half of the 20th century, there was a high individual and societal need to identify and solve problems. After the Second World War, welfare states arose in Western Europe that took care of the needs of individual citizens by providing social security, health care and retirement pensions. Now that these societies are experiencing the limits of the welfare state in times of economic instability, there is a need for other approaches. In many academic fields, we notice a shifting focus towards happiness and positive functioning. Some examples are happiness economics (Graham 2005), positive education (Seligman et al. 2009), positive leadership (Hannah et al. 2009), positive health (Seligman 2008) and positive psychology (Seligman and Czikszentmihaly 2000). In the Netherlands, this shift is also acknowledged in care and social work, as exemplified in programs that try to change welfare policies towards individual responsibilities and self-management of citizens. In this chapter, we will describe some of the limitations of the traditional problem-focused approach as well as the need to turn

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to happiness-based approaches. As an example of a happiness-based approach, we will describe an intervention called the 'Happiness Route' as well as some preliminary studies on this intervention.

4.1 The Dutch Healthcare System: From a Problem-Based to a Happiness-Based Approach

The Dutch welfare state mainly supports people in solving their problems, rather than aim to improve their well-being. The health-care system is especially focused on problems: the diagnosis and treatment of health problems is its main aim. Economically, this is supported by the fact that health insurance companies finance treatments based on valid diagnoses. The government has a strong hold on this system through laws and regulations to ensure the quality and accessibility of health-care. However, it is an open question whether paying for treatment of disorders is actually the same as "caring for health".

The problem-based approach has been very fruitful over the past 50 years. Partly because of innovations in problem-based health care, people tend to live ever longer. However, more and more people grow older with one or more chronic diseases. Although many people cope well with chronic diseases with the help of traditional health care, some of them continue to experience problems. Their everyday functioning is inhibited by their health problems, in particular when they experience multiple conditions. Especially when they do not have socioeconomic, social, and psychological resources to resiliently manage their disease(s), they may have to withdraw from social relations, work and other forms of societal participation. The response of the welfare state is to provide more support for these people, not only in terms of health care, but also in terms of social work and social security. It is thus not surprising that long term disability goes along with high economic costs for the society as well for the individuals (Valtorta and Hanratty 2013).

In their report on the social state of the Netherlands, Bijl et al. (2011) show that people who perceive their health condition as (very) bad are less happy than others. Whereas the Dutch on average appoint a 7.8 on a scale from 1 to 10 to their satisfaction with life, the group of people who consider themselves in a weak health condition judged themselves with a 6.4. Over the past years this difference has grown (Bijl et al. 2011). Other population studies have shown that well-being is not equally distributed in the population. Besides health limitations, low socio-economic status and social isolation are among the most important conditions of lower levels of well-being (Diener et al. 1999; Veenhoven 1996; Walburg 2008; Westerhof 2013; Westerhof and Keyes 2010). In particular people who experience an accumulation of risk factors such as illness, low socioeconomic status and social isolation tend to experience low levels of well-being. Although the problem-based approach may help them to control certain problems, this approach seems less effective in helping them along in their life and in promoting their well-being.

Van der Plaats (1994) described the vicious circle in which these people get trapped. Their disease causes them to stop many of the activities they used to do, including their work. This in turn leads to a high risk of getting into idleness, which can be more stressful than having a life full of activities. This high stress level causes them to experience even more health-related complaints and, in turn, visit more health professionals for more treatment. Van der Plaats calls this group of people the 'sick sick', as opposed to the 'healthy sick'. The 'sick sick' end up in an almost hopeless situation: they clearly need some kind of help or support, but the traditional healthcare cannot provide this kind of help. New evidence-based interventions to break through this vicious circle have to be found in order to help these people with an accumulation of risk factors for low well-being. Shifting the focus away from more medical care to more well-being and better psychological and social functioning instead, is a promising start to do so (Van der Plaats 2002).

The problems with the traditional problem-based approach are not unrecognized. The professional and scientific field for prevention and treatment of mental and physical health is changing rapidly. It has recently been argued that it is important to complement the traditional focus of public institutions on the prevention and treatment of problems with a new goal: the promotion of positive mental health, well-being, and happiness (Barry and Jenkins 2007; Keyes 2007; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Walburg 2008; Westerhof and Bohlmeijer 2010; World Health Organisation 2005). Mental health has been defined by the World Health Organisation (2005) as a state of well-being, positive psychological functioning and positive social functioning and not merely the absence of disorders and complaints. From this perspective, the absence of problems and illnesses does not necessarily imply that individuals are functioning optimally. It is thus important to promote positive mental health, as the traditional focus on problems does not necessarily lead to a healthy population (Keyes 2007).

In the Netherlands this is acknowledged in social work and in public health, where changes in welfare policies towards individual responsibilities and self-management of citizens have been advocated (VWS 2010; VNG 2010; RVZ 2010a, b). Not only do local councils in the Netherlands carry more legal responsibility for the provision of preventive interventions, there is also a shift in focus. The Dutch Council for Public Health and Health Care (RVZ 2010a, b) has recently advised the Ministry of Health to shift the focus from 'illness and care' towards 'behaviour and health'. These changes ask for a more positive focus instead of the traditional problem focused approach and interventions. Not only the patients' problems, but also their well-being have to be a subject of interest. But what exactly is well-being, what are the effects of optimal well-being and how can it be improved?

4.2 Well-Being

A theoretical basis for the concept and effects of well-being can be found in the movement of positive psychology. In addition to focussing on problems and how to solve them, this movement concentrates on positive emotions, traits and civic virtues (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). The focus lies on well-being rather than on maladjustment and mental disorders.

There are different approaches on how to define and measure well-being. The two main perspectives, the hedonic and the eudaimonic view, are highlighted below. The hedonic view equates well-being with pleasure or happiness. It has a long tradition, reaching back to the ancient Greeks. In the recent hedonic psychology, Diener and Lucas (1999) established the concept of subjective well-being, which consists of life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood and the absence of negative mood. Many studies use this concept to define and measure happiness.

Hedonic Happiness with pleasure attainment as the principal criterion of well-being is rejected by the eudaimonic view. The eudaimonic approach posits meaning, growth and self-realization as core features of well-being. Eudaimonic well-being is described as a condition in which people live in accordance with their potential and values and in which they are fully engaged with their life activities. This state can be reached when people engage in activities that challenge personal growth and active goal-engagement and leads people to feel authentic and alive (Watermann 1993). Ryff and Singer (2010) have operationalized the eudaimonic approach on well-being into the concept of psychological well-being. Besides individual functioning, social functioning is acknowledged as an important aspect of eudaimonic well-being. Social well-being refers to the subjective evaluation of one's functioning in a social context (Keyes 1998).

A number of studies have indicated that well-being includes aspects of both hedonism and eudaimonia (see Ryan and Deci 2001; Lamers 2011). Therefore, optimal well-being can be characterized as experiencing both high hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Keyes 2005). Keyes developed an instrument that includes both hedonic (he calls it emotional) well-being and the two aspects of eudaimonic well-being (psychological and social well-being). This instrument is called the Mental Health Continuum—Short Form. In this paper, we use Keyes definition of well-being as emotional, psychological and social well-being.

Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have shown that well-being has many positive effects. It is related to less medical consumption, better health, personal functioning, productivity, societal participation and even to longevity (Keyes 2002, 2005; Keyes et al. 2010; Diener and Ryan 2009). Reviews and meta-analyses of hundreds of experimental and population studies show that the promotion of well-being will lead to considerable health gains for the individual and society (Lamers et al. 2011; Howell et al. 2007; Chida and Steptoe 2008; Lyubomirksy et al. 2005; Pressman and Cohen 2005; Veenhoven 2008; Cohen and Pressman 2006). But also for unhealthy populations, well-being has a positive influence on physical functioning and mortality (Lamers et al. 2011).

Experimental studies have shown that well-being can be promoted through behavioural interventions (e.g., Fledderus et al. 2010; Korte et al. 2012). Two recent meta-analyses concluded that it is possible to increase well-being (Bolier et al. 2013; Sin and Lyubomirksy 2009). Furthermore, many studies about the factors that might improve well-being have been conducted. Some factors are not changeable, like age, or not easily changeable by an intervention, like socio economic status. Other factors can be changed, thereby making it possible to improve someone's well-being. Goal-directedness and purpose in life are among the most important correlates and predictors of well-being (Diener et al. 1999). In particular, there is an abundance of studies showing that engagement in goal-directed activities is important for well-being (Westerhof and Bohlmeijer 2010 provide an overview).

In conclusion, promoting well-being by enhancing positive psychological function, self-realization and social integration is a promising new approach (WHO 2005). Up to now, most studies on interventions remained experimental and there are only few projects that use this new, designated approach in a practice-based setting. One such project is the 'Happiness Route', a short behavioural intervention to promote well-being.

4.3 The Happiness Route: Theoretical Basis

The Happiness Route is rooted in positive psychology and is aimed at people with an accumulation of risk factors for low well-being; social isolation, health problems and a low socioeconomic status (SES). The primary goal of the intervention is to increase emotional, psychological and social well-being. Enhancing well-being is an important goal in positive psychology. A means of reaching this goal is engaging in intrinsically motivated activities. This helps the target group in becoming more resilient, finding a (new) meaning in life and connecting with others again. These secondary effects, resilience, meaning in life and positive relations with others, are concepts often examined in positive psychology.

With the growing interest in positive psychology, meaning in life has received renewed attention and legitimacy (Ryan and Deci 2001; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). It is either seen as a part of psychological well-being (Ryff 1989), facilitating adaptive coping (Park and Folkman 1997) or indicating therapeutic growth (Crumbaugh and Maholick 1964; Frankl 1966). Zika and Chamberlain (1992) found a strong association between meaning in life and well-being. In the eudaimonic approach of well-being, meaning is an important concept. Ryff and Singer (1998) describe meaning as a key component for maximizing one's potentials. For a meaningful life, engaging in meaningful activities is central. Engagement in meaningful activities in turn leads to the experience of ample subjective well-being (Diener 2000).

The Happiness Route is based on the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci 2000), a theory that is widely used in positive psychology and has been extensively tested. It states that intrinsically motivated activities contribute to well-being,

because they are important in fulfilling three basic psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness and competence (Ryan and Deci 2000). These needs have to be fulfilled in order to achieve both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. The theory also acknowledges the social aspect of well-being, as it includes relatedness as one of the three basic human needs. In this sense, the theory fits our definition of well-being as well as our intervention. The Happiness Route stimulates intrinsic goal engagement and support autonomy, relatedness and the feeling of competence.

Besides psychological theories, the intervention Happiness Route draws on recent theoretical insights from economic theories. The economic theory of "nudging" (Thaler and Sunstein 2008; Tiemeijer et al. 2009) proposes that individuals do not always act on the basis of rational choices. It is therefore important to shape social systems in such a way that it is possible for citizens to act autonomously, while at the same time providing them with a gentle push in the right direction; a "nudge". The Happiness Route uses nudging to give participants a gentle push in the direction of positive development. Whereas the default nudge in the Dutch system is "What is your problem?" the Happiness Route provides the nudge: "How do you want to live your life?" and "What makes you happy?". The Happiness Route can thus serve as an example of the integration of the principles of positive psychology and nudging in practice.

4.4 The Happiness Route Intervention

The intervention is aimed at people who have become socially isolated due to health problems. They often have a low education, low financial means or both. But how can this literally invisible group be found? The project, conducted within a municipality, will locate these vulnerable citizens through intermediaries; local professionals or volunteers who are in contact with socially isolated people. The intermediaries may range from the general practitioner, the household help, the social worker, technicians working for the social housing corporation to local religious workers. The project leader of a local Happiness Route informs the intermediaries about the project and encourages them to refer socially isolated citizens to the project. They receive a package with information leaflets and forms relevant to the intervention and the ongoing study. This active, outreaching approach has proven to work well in practice. The outreach is necessary, as inactivity is one of the key features of the target group.

Participants receive between two and five home visits by a counsellor. Counsellors who deliver the Happiness Route receive training, where they learn about both theory and methods of positive psychology. After the counsellor forms a picture of the (problem) situation, he or she nudges the participant with questions like: "Let's put the problems aside and start talking about how you want to live your life. What makes you happy?". Together, the counsellor and participant explore and identify passions, interests, or hobbies that the participant really enjoys doing. The participant is encouraged to find and plan activities in accordance with his or her

passion. Participants may spend up to € 500 to engage in this activity. They receive this financial incentive, the 'happiness-budget', as most of them have few financial means. Participants receive the budget only once, as it is supposed to serve as a nudge toward a happier, more engaged and more meaningful life. For once, money is not an obstacle to start doing what the participant wants to do. Yet the money is not always needed, as some participants for example choose to do voluntary work. Most importantly, participants are encouraged to think about themselves, their wishes, values, talents and potential, rather than to think about their problems. Finally, an evaluation and early feedback session will be held. Counsellors make use of evidence-based methods during each phase, like behavioural activation and life-review techniques.

Case Description—Joe

"Unfortunately, the days all looked the same … even the food was something that I started to forget about. I didn't heat up my dinner anymore. I actually felt too miserable to heat it in the microwave. Too tired. Is it worth it to make the food hot? Would I eat it?" Joe, aged 66 years, described his situation before he followed the Happiness Route in an interview (Francissen et al. 2010). He had lost his wife after 2 years of illness, around the same that time he retired. He suffered from asthma and chronic heart problems, for which he received the best possible health care. His general practitioner made home visits to his house once a month and he visited the cardiologist four times a year. In addition he received homecare and microwave meal delivery, he had a scoot mobile and he took a lot of medication. In spite of all the care, he felt miserable. Because of the demanding care he provided for his wife he had lost most of his contacts and by retiring he also lost his outdoor contacts. "The only thing I did during a week is go to the store and once to the library". He had slipped into social isolation.

One of the household helps from homecare was the intermediary who assigned him to the Happiness Route. A trained happiness counsellor from the community service visited him three times. The first meeting served as an intake; to get to know Joe, his situation and the things that are important in his life. This is the first phase of the Happiness Route: mutual definition of the situation. During this first visit, the counsellor actively stopped discussing Joe's problems and started applying positive psychology methods. This is where the second phase of the Happiness Route started: goal orientation. The goal of this second phase was to find Joe's passions and talents: things that he used to love doing, activities he was good at, or something he always dreamed to do. To do this, the counsellor made use of methods derived from positive psychology, such as life-review. The counsellors have been specifically trained to respect Joe's autonomy rather than by directing him toward something the counsellor thinks should be good for Joe.

During the second home visit, the counsellor asked Joe what he always wanted to do in life. Joe pondered on this question for a while and then answered “Writing. I always wanted to do something with writing, but I never got to it.” After having explored other talents and wishes, it was clear that writing was Joe’s passion, something he was intrinsically motivated for. This made the third phase, choice of the activity in accordance with the passion of the participant, quite easy. Joe chose for a writing course at the local adult education centre. The counsellor asked Joe to find out more about the course, its time, place, costs and how he would get there. Although the counsellor might be quicker doing these things herself, an important part of the Happiness Route is to give the responsibility and control to the participant. Phase four, planning and doing the activity, was completely conducted by Joe himself. The only formality the counsellor had to do was filling in the application form for the happiness budget. Joe received the money on his bank account for one season of the writing course plus train tickets to travel to the adult education centre.

While following the course he performed writing assignments with other students and had to travel every week to the course location. He noticed a positive change in his life: “I was retired, but now that … during the course, well, I had to talk to my fellow students, and that also affected my life outside the course evenings. I even felt confident and found it simply easier to just speak to someone in the shop or in the street. Not very complicated conversations, but just simple matters. I didn’t do that before”. Once he started taking part in the course, Joe’s counsellor returned for the last phase. This is the so-called booster session, an early evaluation and feedback aimed at finding out whether the writing course was a successful choice.

Thanks to the Happiness Route Joe followed a full season of writing courses. After he had followed the Happiness Route, Joe explained that his heart condition and the severe asthma have not diminished. The amount of medication and homecare has not been changed. However, he described to the interviewer that despite his health issues, he now visits the general practitioner by himself only four times instead of twelve times a year and he visits the cardiologist only twice a year. He indicated that he is much happier in life and that he feels more socially related, not only directly through the course but also in everyday life. Last, but not least, he stated that he still receives home delivered microwave meals, but “now I eat them warm”.

The Happiness Route was developed by the local government of the city of Almelo in 2004 and received Dutch and European prizes for best practice. By now, Happiness Routeshave been implemented in ten local councils in the Netherlands, made possible with a grant from the province of Overijssel. Over 80 consultants have been trained and more than 500 participants have been supported through the intervention.

From this practical experience, there is some knowledge on the ingredients for a successful implementation of the Happiness Route. (1) The project needs an organisation to get it started. The organisation must have some relation to the target group. It can be a local council or a civil society organisation like a local Rotary club or a welfare organisation. (2) The project needs an intrinsically motivated project leader who has a substantial local network. (3) Money is needed for the Happiness budgets and can be sourced from (social and health related) funds and/or the local council. The number of participants of most of the Dutch projects varies between 10 to 50 participants per municipality each year. That means the project needs a reserve between € 5.000 and € 25.000 Euro for the individual, one-time-only budgets of € 500. (4) Each project needs a structured set of documentation that can be downloaded from www.geluksroute.nl. (5) A small group of experienced counsellors need a one-day training course on the specifics of the delivery of the happiness-based approach and the structure of the project. These counsellors can be both experienced volunteers and professionals. Most of these professionals work for social welfare organisations, whose job it is for instance, to support senior citizens in need. For these counsellors the Happiness Route will be one of the interventions available, for use with clients. (6) Finally, before the project can actually start, the intermediaries described above have to be informed and inspired to recruit participants. It is one of the tasks of the local project leader to do so.

4.5 Empirical Studies

Besides the positive experiences from practice, studies on the Happiness Route have shown that the intervention reaches the intended group, which belongs to the most vulnerable members of society, and is well-received by counsellors and participants (Van der Plaats 2007; Kedzia 2009, Francissen et al. 2010).

Peeters Weem (2011) conducted a study on the presence of similar projects in the Dutch welfare sector, which promote happiness and related concepts. He concluded that there are only very few interventions that use a happiness-based approach. Most of these projects are based upon pragmatic insights, but lack a theoretical base. The Happiness Route is an exception, as it is rooted in theories of behavioural economy and positive psychology.

A case file analysis showed that the Happiness Route resulted in new intrinsically motivated activities, focusing on establishing new contacts, new experiences, going out, and learning (Kedzia 2009). In this analysis of 80 case files, it was also found that most participants chose an activity that challenged their specific complaint. Given the social isolation and health problems, this analysis revealed a functional use of the budget.

A qualitative pilot study on the Happiness Routes showed that participants retrospectively rated their well-being to be increased by 40 %, and their use of health-care to be decreased by 23 % (Francissen et al. 2010). These effects were found up to 2 years after the one-time-only intervention was received.

Now that these pilot studies have shown promising results, it is time to conduct a randomized controlled trial and take a closer look at the effect of the Happiness Route. Given the practice based research setting, the study is a pragmatic, non-blind, multi-site randomized controlled trial in nine Dutch cities. The main goal of the proposed project is to study the effectiveness of the Happiness Route compared to the active control group 'Customized Care', for whom the traditional problem-based approach is used to optimize the existing health care. The primary outcome is emotional, psychological and social well-being, as measured with the Dutch Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SH). Participants will fill in questionnaires at baseline as well as 3 and 9 months later. Consumption of care will be analysed using data from Vektis, the Dutch information centre for care. Detailed information about the research design can be found in the study protocol (Weiss et al. 2013). The study is currently underway and the final results will be available in 2015.

4.6 Conclusion and Discussion

There is a great deal of evidence that a holistic approach to healthcare that does not only focus on illness but also on well-being can be beneficial for individuals and society. The traditional problem-focused system has reached its boundaries when it comes to dealing with a group of chronically ill people and the challenges of new societal and economic developments. New approaches are needed in order to help chronically ill people with less socioeconomic means and in social isolation to lead a more pleasant, engaged and meaningful life. Theoretical insight and empirical evidence show what needs to be done in order to achieve this goal. Yet these insights are not often translated into practice. The Happiness Route is one of the rare exceptions.

The example of the Happiness Route indicates that the happiness-based approach in the health sector can be effective. It may increase well-being and decrease self-reported health-care consumption. The results so far are promising, but more research is needed. The outcomes of a large RCT will show if a happiness-based approach is superior to the traditional problem-based approach in terms of well-being, psychosocial functioning and health care consumption.

Existing studies on positive psychological interventions up to now are small, carried out in experimental settings, and with rather privileged groups. The present study tackles these shortcomings and can provide new insights in the possibilities for the promotion of well-being in a naturalistic setting. If the effects of the intervention prove to be positive, this may contribute to the practical implementation of positive concepts such as well-being into policies of governments, health-care organizations and other entities of society and lead to more happiness-based interventions.

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Chapter 5
Conflict, Commitment and Well-Being

Ritxar Arlegi and Miriam Teschl

5.1 Introduction

Many people smoke but would like to quit. They may attempt to do so "cold turkey", i.e. by stopping smoking at once from 1 day to the next, by gradually cutting down or by doing more sport so that they experience more vividly the negative consequences of smoking for their bodies, which may give them a greater incentive to stop smoking. There are also many more strategies that people invoke to stop smoking, and they may even manage to do so, but after a time numerous people restart smoking and after a while they face the same decision problem once again. There are others who must decide whether they should donate some money to the latest earthquake relief fund or go and spend that money instead on something that they enjoy doing. Those same people who decided to pay into the relief fund last time may well now be observed to go to the cinema instead. The question is what can be said about these choices, especially in economic terms, what impact do they have on well-being, and what link is there between these two kinds of scenario.

Economics is usually concerned with consistency in choice because it is a major ingredient, for instance, in building the economic theory of the consumer. The basic element for analyzing an individual's behavior in economics is a "preference". According to standard economics, a preference is a binary relation that enables all the alternatives to be ranked from best to worst. An *all-things-considered* preference ordering is a single ranking of alternatives that takes account of all the different

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reasons or concerns that a person may have had for preferring one option over another. Unlike choices, preferences are not observable, but economic theory shows that if the choices of a person are observed to satisfy certain "consistency" conditions, then they can be interpreted as choices generated by an underlying binary relation of preferences. It is then said that those choices "reveal" a preference. For example, a well-known condition of consistency is the following: If a person chooses an action from a set of alternatives and this person is later faced with that same set of alternatives or a set that has been reduced for some reason, she should choose the same action again. Otherwise, the person would be said to be inconsistent and choose for example option x and not option y, which is also in the set and later y even though option x is also available. In such a case, there is no way to know which option is preferred, and therefore which option provides more welfare to the person.[1] In fact, economics takes preferences as the sole indicator of an individual's welfare, and assumes that welfare is greater the higher-ranked is the alternative that she chooses according to her preferences.[2]

In this paper we argue that the underlying characteristic of both the decision problems described above is that people act inconsistently and therefore do not reveal a preference. What we propose is that such decision problems may be better described as a situation in which people are faced with competing motivations to do certain things and are unable to compare those motivations with one another and thus form an *all-things-considered*, binary preference relation able to rank all the alternatives. Rather, they experience internal conflict.

The other common characteristic of such decision problems is that one possible solution of the underlying motivation conflict is to engage in what are generally called self-control strategies or exercises of willpower. These terms mean that a person is torn between two or more different reasons for choosing one option over another. It is also usually assumed that one reason (e.g. long-term self-interest) should prevail over another (e.g. short-term interest), while in the heat of the moment people often choose the opposite option to what they "should" do. Our discussion of motivation conflict does not presuppose any superiority of one motivation over another. By "self-control strategies" we simply mean solution concepts that lead or help the individual to stick to one particular chosen option despite the difficulty of experiencing conflict and thus not having an all-things-considered preference ordering. One particular self-control strategy is "commitment": There are at least two different discussions about commitment in economic literature which to date have not been related to each other. One was first advanced by Jon Elster as well as Thomas Schelling in particular, and is related to the idea of imposing self-binding constraints on choices, such that a person is less inclined to succumb to the temptation of smoking for example. The other is Amartya Sen's idea of commitment,

[1] This consistency condition is described in more detail in Sect. 5.2.

[2] In what follows, the words *welfare* and *well-being* are used interchangeably.

which implies a different form of rationality to the standard maximizing idea of choice. In particular, Sen's view of commitment drives a wedge between choice and welfare as they are usually considered in economics, i.e. the idea that a person will always choose her highest-ranked alternative according to her preference ranking. Commitment *à la Sen* therefore implies that a person may choose an action that is not necessarily conducive to their own personal well-being. For example, if the person decides to donate some money to a relief fund, she may benefit far less from that action than if she went to the cinema instead, but she goes ahead and donates anyway, then she would not be choosing her best option. However, what we show here is that if a person experiences motivation conflict and therefore does not have a single *best* option, commitment is a way of solving that conflict in the sense that a committed person will be able to stick to a particular option (or a particular sequence of options) despite motivation conflict and this will actually be better for her in terms of well-being. This is an insight from psychology which economics would do well to take on board, because so far economics has proved unable to evaluate the welfare of people engaging in inconsistent behavior or of people who do not choose their *best* option.

In order to show this, we first outline descriptively a theory of behavior that is able to account for inconsistencies in people's choices under the assumption that they experience competing motivations. As with any model or theory, it is not perfect, but it provides a related description of the real world, and the advantage of a model is to shed some light on particular issues in a more structured way and thus act as a starting point for understanding those real-world issues. Taking inconsistent behavior seriously also points to the fact that preference satisfaction cannot by itself be considered as the standard criterion for welfare evaluation. In this paper, we highlight the consequences for well-being in the context of motivation conflict and provide a reason why opportunities matter, that is, why it is important for a person to have the possibility of choosing between as many options as possible.

Section 5.2 introduces our model of choice under competing motivations. In Sect. 5.3, we present a way of solving motivation conflict which relies on endogenous motivation change. Section 5.4 gives a more detailed discussion of the consequences of internal conflict for well-being. Sections 5.5 and 5.6 discuss commitment *à la Elster and Schelling* and *à la Sen* respectively, and show the extent to which commitment as a self-control strategy may be solving motivation conflict. In particular, we show that a person is able to commit to a specific action as a result of committing to a particular motivation. Commitment also involves the formation of a preference in the sense that once a person has solved her internal conflict through commitment, she will act consistently from then onwards and always choose the same option. Section 5.7 discusses the consequences of commitment for well-being in more detail. Section 5.8 concludes and responds to some possible critiques that may be leveled at the ideas proposed.

5.2 Choice with Underlying Conflict of Motivations

The existence of an all-things-considered preference ordering presupposes that the economic agent has been able to compare the available options from different points of views or according to different reasons or motivations that she may have had to choose among those options. However, if the agent experiences different motivations, it may not always be possible that all options are comparable and the agent may be unable to make a clear-cut decision between different options.

As an example, assume that a person is torn between two competing motivations.[3] One is pleasure or satisfaction based, that is, the person is driven by her own immediate personal advantage. The other is goal-based, that is, the person has particular aims and goals that she would like to achieve or satisfy. These goals may be of a personal nature in the sense that they are purely person-related (e.g. becoming a medical doctor, learning a language, playing a sport, etc.), but may also be socially influenced (e.g. following particular social norms and rules). Suppose also that there are decision situations with which the person is confronted repeatedly and that on each occasion she has to make up her mind and decide what to do. For example, each morning the person will have to decide whether she gets up to do an hour of jogging before going to work or whether she sleeps in for another hour in her warm, cosy bed. Every day the person will have to decide whether she smokes less in order to conform to her goal to be a healthier person or whether she continues smoking a packet a day as she currently enjoys doing. When the person is invited to a party and offered her favorite cake, she will have to decide whether to take the largest piece or a smaller one, as politeness would dictate. We assume that the person evaluates the decision problem from the point of view of her currently chosen action. For example, when the person wakes up in the morning and needs to decide whether to go jogging or not, she will have in mind whether she went jogging yesterday. This will be her reference point or status quo, which will determine whether the two motivations will be more or less satisfied with respect to her reference point. The idea is similar to Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) concept of gains and losses with respect to a reference point. Moreover, it enables the whole theory to be articulated on the basis of the simple dichotomous question of whether or not an action fulfills a motivation. Given the status quo, distinctions can be drawn between four different types of actions: There will be actions that satisfy both motivations in the sense that there will be an improvement in terms of pleasure and goal-achievement (e.g. I enjoy eating vegetables, which helps achieving my goal of a healthy lifestyle). But there may also be actions which are worse in terms of both motivations. Finally, there may be actions that satisfy only one of the motivations, i.e. actions that are either better in terms of pleasure or better in terms of goal-achievement, but not in terms of both with respect to the status quo (e.g. getting up or not in the morning to do some exercise). If the person is confronted with the

[3] For a formal treatment of such decision problems see Arlegi and Teschl (2012).

latter type of actions (i.e. only one of the motivations will be satisfied), then we say that the person is facing a conflictual choice.

Given the conflicting nature of the decision, it is clear that assuming indifference between two "competing" options would not solve the problem. The person is not indifferent between staying in bed and going jogging because those actions satisfy different motivations to different degrees. If the person were indifferent between two actions, then she would not experience any conflict.

It may, however, be assumed that the person is not going to choose an action that is worse in both motivations with respect to her current status quo. We call this assumption "Monotonicity with respect to the Status Quo" (MRSQ). For example, if one pack per day is the maximum number of cigarettes that a person enjoys smoking, but on the other hand she also intends to smoke less in order to become healthier, then she is not likely to start smoking two packs per day. Hence, not choosing an action that is inferior in terms of the satisfaction of both motivations than her current reference level can be considered to be a weak rationality requirement that we believe it is reasonable to impose on people's choices.

When a person is faced with a conflictual choice, it is plausible to assume that on one occasion she chooses one option to satisfy one motivation, but will on another occasion chose another option to satisfy the other motivation more. The person is engaging in *choice reversal* and behaves inconsistently from the standard economic rationality point of view. This kind of choice reversal is dependent on the status quo: If the person went jogging, she wished she had stayed longer in bed. When she stayed longer in bed, she wished she had gone jogging. Such a situation may occur when, as Elster would put it, "the grass is always greener at the other side of the fence" (1989, p. 9). That is, people often wish to have (or have more of) what they currently do not have. Schelling (2006) remarks that many smokers have made several attempts to stop smoking, only to smoke again a few weeks or months later. This may count as a typical example of choice reversal.

What is interesting to observe is that choice reversal can only occur in the current context if the person is confronted with conflictual choices. If the person chooses a non-conflictual action, one that is an improvement in terms of both motivations, then given our minimal rationality condition MRSQ and the change in the status quo, she has no reason to revert to her previous situation, which would be worse in terms of the satisfaction of both motivations than her new status quo. We can therefore conclude that under our assumption of MRSQ, the kind of inconsistency that choice reversal implies is possible if and only if the person is faced with conflictual choices.

However, more general kinds of inconsistency may also be envisaged (which however include choice reversal). In standard economics, as mentioned in the introduction, it is usually assumed that a person acts consistently, which means that she is expected to choose the same option again under unchanged circumstances or when faced with a smaller set of options that still contains the option originally chosen. This consistency condition is known as "independence of irrelevant alternatives" or IIA. Imagine the following situation: A person is currently smoking too much for what she finds pleasant (say a pack of cigarettes per day) and too much to

come conveniently close to satisfying her goal of being a healthy person. The person wants to change this. Assume that the person is a little more rational than in the previous case, that is, she would not only not choose any option that is worse than her current status quo (MRSQ, as in the previous example), but would also not choose anything that is *dominated* in terms of the satisfaction of both motivations by some other available action (not necessarily the status quo). We call this condition "Domination" (DOM). That is, she would only choose undominated actions, e.g. she would not choose to smoke 15 cigarettes a day if she could experience greater pleasure *and* greater goal-satisfaction by only smoking 12 cigarettes a day. Given this new rationality requirement and the change in the status quo, the person will only be left with conflictual actions after her first choice (because if any non-conflictual actions remain after the first choice, then she must have acted irrationally in her first choice to the extent that she has chosen a dominated action). Imagine therefore that on the first day the person chooses the undominated action of "smoking 12 cigarettes" and that the next day the person has to decide again how much to smoke. The following day she is observed to smoke only 10 cigarettes instead of 12. This choice violates IIA because she could have chosen to smoke 10 cigarettes instead of 12 the first time also. This is because we know by the implications of DOM that "10" is not dominated by "12" and is therefore a possible choice. Smoking only 10 cigarettes, given that 12 cigarettes are the reference point, means that the person achieves greater goal-achievement at the cost of pleasure, that is, it is a conflictual decision. Analogous reasoning can be followed if the person is observed to have chosen to smoke 10 cigarettes one the first day, but on the following day smokes 12—the person would increase her pleasure at the cost of goal-achievement. She would again violate IIA and this necessarily happens because of the availability and choice of conflictual actions. Thus, as in the case of choice reversal, if we assume the rationality condition DOM then inconsistency (represented here as a violation of IIA) happens as a consequence of being faced with and choosing from a set of conflictual actions.

The question arises of whether the individual will ever resolve the conflict, or at least become consistent at some stage and stick to one particular choice (despite any underlying conflict) and thus reveal a preference in the economic sense of the word. The answer is yes to both questions, and we propose two different routes to it. The first considers endogenous motivation change; the second looks at "commitment", an idea often raised in the context of preference change or other inconsistent behavior. There are at least two different discussions of "commitment" in the economic literature. One is related to the idea of self-binding constraints, i.e. limiting oneself to a restricted set of options in order to reduce or prevent preference change [in particular we discuss the view of Elster (2000) and Schelling (2006)]; the other sees commitment as a reason not to take actions on the basis of egoistic desires (Sen 1977). This form of commitment may be seen as limiting or preventing the prevalence of selfishness. As shown below, the idea of conflicting motivations sheds new light on both concepts of commitment.

5.3 Motivation Change

There is no reason to assume that motivations are given and stable. It is plausible to consider that motivations may change with the actions undertaken according to certain psychological principles. Given pleasure and goal motivations, the following motivation changes may be assumed: *Reinforcement* and *dissonance reduction*. Others may be imaginable, but let us first consider what happens with those two.[4] By *reinforcement* we mean that the pleasure changes with the intensity, frequency, or level with which the person carries out a particular action. The more sport the person does, the more she will come to like it; the less she does the more she will like doing less. The more the person reads, the more interesting she will find it, the less she reads, the more she will be satisfied by reading little.

Dissonance reduction arises if the person chooses an action that gives her a greater pleasure with respect to her status-quo, but which would be in opposition to her goal. For example, a person who aims to engage in exercise almost every day would actually enjoy doing exercise at a more moderate level. However, doing so would go against her self-image of being a slim, fit person. If she chooses to reduce how often she does exercise, the person will experience dissonance, which is a negative, oppressive feeling (Festinger 1957). To alleviate this state of mind, the person engages in dissonance reduction, which in our context means that she adapts her goal to conform better to the chosen action. For example, as a consequence of choosing to do exercise less often, which is against her goal, she will come to consider it less important to be slim and allow herself to put on a few more kilos than her previously wanted weight.

Given motivation change, it must now be seen what consequences such changes have on a person's choices. Assume again that the person is rational to the extent that DOM applies, that is, she will not choose an action that is worse in terms of both motivations than another action she could also choose. This assumption, combined with reinforcement and dissonance reduction, will have the effect of reducing the set of choosable or "admissible" actions. An action will become more enjoyable as the result of reinforcement. But the pleasantness of other actions will also change with reinforcement, which involves that certain actions that were acceptable under the previous status quo will now become unacceptable, i.e. dominated by other actions. For example, before becoming a regular exerciser the person considered *going only occasionally to the gym* to be acceptable because of the pleasure of staying longer in bed. But choosing to *go to the gym three times a week*, which brings the person closer to the goal of being a regular exerciser, triggers reinforcement in terms of pleasure, and *going to the gym only occasionally* becomes a dominated action that is no longer acceptable. In fact, by choosing to satisfy more a specific goal, the person makes actions closer to the goal more enjoyable, whilst actions further away from the goal lose their appeal and are no longer choosable without violating DOM. It is in this way that the set of choosable

[4] The formal treatment of these questions is again based on Arlegi and Teschl (2012).

actions becomes smaller over time. In other words, when she approaches her goal, it is as if the "distance" between what the person most enjoys doing and what she most aims to do has been reduced. The rationality condition implies that the only undominated choices left are found within this reduced set of options.

If the person chooses a pleasant action that satisfies her goal less than the current status quo, then the action becomes more enjoyable because of reinforcement, but dissonance reduction will also adjust her goal "towards the chosen action". Again, together with the rationality assumption of DOM, this means that fewer options will be left to choose from, as the set of admissible options that satisfy what the person enjoys and/or what the person aims to do is being reduced. It can now be seen that if the person chooses different actions over time, the set of admissible actions may eventually be reduced to such an extent that both pleasure and goal motivations point to the same best action. In this case, the person who chooses this action would stick to that action and not engage in any further inconsistencies: i.e. she would eventually reveal a preference.

To understand this better, consider the following example: A person smokes several cigarettes a day, but would really like to stop smoking altogether and be a very healthy person. If she gives enough importance to her goal-motivation, she may be able to gradually increase her goal-achievement by smoking fewer and fewer cigarettes a day. This represents inconsistent behavior, as discussed in the last section (violation of IIA). Over time, through reinforcement, she will eventually find it pleasurable to smoke less and less. That is, reinforcement will help to make the goal of non-smoking an enjoyable experience. Once she finds non-smoking to be a fully enjoyable action, she will not start smoking more again because that would be against the rationality assumption implied by DOM.

However, not everyone has that much willpower. Many people engage in a "two steps forward, one step back" tactic. That is, for some time they may be able to smoke less and find that more agreeable than they expected because of reinforcement, but they may then start smoking more, because they are still torn between the two motivations and experience greater pleasure from smoking more than from smoking less. This goes against the goal of stopping smoking, which triggers an unpleasant feeling of dissonance. To alleviate this feeling, they engage in dissonance reduction or goal-adaptation. For example, they may stop thinking that the best that they can do is to stop smoking altogether and start thinking that two cigarettes a day is healthy enough. Given our rationality assumption (DOM) and the change in motivations, such a sequence of actions will also reduce the admissible set of options and both pleasure and goal motivations may point to the same *best* option. In such a case, the person will stick to that choice and not engage in further inconsistencies, thus revealing a preference.

It can therefore be observed that inconsistent choices, together with the two psychological principles and assumed rationality (DOM), not only points to an underlying conflict but may also potentially resolve that conflict. How the conflict is resolved may influence the person's well-being. In the second sequence of actions described above, the person experiences dissonance in addition to the conflictual choice and will engage in dissonance reduction by accommodating her goal to the

chosen action. In the first sequence of actions the person may eventually stop smoking, but in the second sequence of actions goal-accommodation will make this impossible. Downgrading one's goals may always be a particularly sensitive issue, but in certain cases it may help to improve a person's well-being. These issues are explored in more detail in the next section.

5.4 Conflict and Well-Being

As mentioned above, welfare or well-being in economics is primarily understood in terms of preference satisfaction. This means that the higher-ranked the alternative that a person chooses is, the greater her welfare is. Given that preferences are not directly observable but "revealed" through their choices, it is implicitly assumed that a person chooses what is best for her. Obviously, if a person acts inconsistently no preferences are revealed and hence nothing can be said about her welfare. That is why some economists prefer not to focus on preference satisfaction as a criterion for welfare, but on people's opportunities. The general idea is that the more alternatives a person has to choose from, the better off she will be. Robert Sugden (2004) for example argues that more opportunities will always be better as people will be free to choose what they want, even if such wants are inconsistent.

Our claim however is that neither the preference satisfaction account nor the opportunities account would consider the possibly negative experience of conflict as such. The experience of conflict is widely discussed in psychological literature. As Emmons and King (1988) summarize, in psychology conflict is generally seen as a necessary process for human development. The idea is that one must suffer, and thus experience conflict, in order to search for new answers and thus enter a new developmental stage (Turiel 1974, 1977). Conflict introduces change: changes in a person's beliefs, personal desires, and attachments to social norms and rules (Brim and Kagan 1980). But conflict also arises because of changes in circumstances and life tasks (Cantor et al. 1987). However Emmons and King (1988) note that "[c]onflict is not always a developmental or self-enhancing process", there is also ample evidence of the "[…] detrimental consequences of intrapsychic conflict" (p. 1040). People experience emotional stress, anxiety or depression if they go through competing personal and social values for example (e.g. Epstein 1982; Higgins 1987). More precise conflict situations have been studied, such as for example the conflict between school and leisure for pupils and students, and it has been shown that the simultaneous existence of several competing goals (academic goals versus social goals in this case) may distract young people to such an extent that they lose interest in academic activities as such, their grades worsen, and emotional stress and pressure increases (Hofer 2007, Kilian et al. 2012). This is especially the case if young people feel that they have had academic goals imposed on them, rather than when they are personally interested in academic values (Ratelle et al. 2005). To solve such conflicts it has been suggested, among other ideas, that goals should be realigned, i.e. re-evaluated. This may even include downgrading academic goals,

even though this may be seem to be problematic in our social context. Another possibility is creating habitual behavior, such that each goal is allocated a particular amount of time. There is also, of course, the option of trying to make academic goals as pleasant and interesting as possible so that students feel more "intrinsically" drawn to achieving them (Hofer 2007). The "benefit of motivational conflicts", as Hofer (2007, p. 31) says, is that they signal that the person's well-being is in danger and that something has to be done.

What our research suggests is that simply observing choice behavior or measuring the extent of opportunities does not suffice to get a sense of the well-being of the person. In particular, inconsistent behavior cannot simply be classified as irrational and left there. What we show with our research is that inconsistent behavior acts as a signal of an underlying conflict and if psychological literature is followed this implies stress and ill-being. If inconsistent behavior persists, this should be taken seriously in any welfare evaluation. We also suggest that people may come to solve their conflict over time by taking actions. According to our assumptions, people's motivations adapt in different ways (we consider reinforcement and dissonance reduction in particular) to their actions and experiences, and this may help them to find a solution to their conflict. Hence opportunities matter, as more options enable them to adapt and come to terms with their conflict on their own. However, solving a motivation conflict through dissonance reduction, i.e. goal-adaptation in our case, may not necessarily be the best solution possible for a person.

It must however be pointed out that, given our assumptions, there is no guarantee that the conflict will actually be resolved. We only assume a very limited form of rationality, namely that individuals will not choose options which are dominated by others that are more satisfying in terms of both motivations (DOM). In particular, we do not assume (in contrast to the argument set out in the next section) that the individual has any knowledge about the consequences of her actions, that is, about motivation change. In that sense the individual is rather myopic. She does not know that by engaging in inconsistencies, i.e. by acting, she may eventually solve the conflict and come to like what she aspires to do. The question therefore is whether greater knowledge of one's own motivations and psychological features such as particular motivation changes provides a different way of resolving motivation conflict and thus forming a preference. This is discussed in the following two sections.

5.5 Commitment à La Elster and Schelling

Preference change has been discussed a lot in the context of commitment. Jon Elster, one of the leading scholars on this and related questions, defines commitment (or precommitment as he calls it) as "an agent's desire to create obstacles to

his or her future choice of some specific option or options" (Elster 2000, p. 5).[5] It is a particular rationality over time in the sense that "[a]t time 1 an individual wants to do A at time 2, but anticipates that when time 2 arrives he may or will do B unless prevented from doing so. In such cases, rational behaviour at time 1 may involve precautionary measures to prevent the choice of B at time 2, or at least to make that choice less likely" (ibid.). Commitment in this sense serves to overcome preference change, hyperbolic discounting (which results in preferences changing), but also to limit the influence of passion on decision-making. A spendthrift may commit to save money by opening a saving account that does not allow money to be withdrawn for a certain period of time. This limits the possibility of revising at time 2 a decision taken at time 1. A compulsive shopper may not want to own any credit cards, but only to spend the cash that she gets over the counter at her bank. A person who has difficulties getting up in the mornings may place her alarm clock at the other side of the room to force herself to get up instead of lying in and being late for work.

It is interesting to note that the need for commitment has been explained in various ways, but never explicitly on the basis of conflicting motivations. Elster's discussion of passion as a reason for self-binding constraints may come closest to motivation conflict. He uses "[…] "passion" in an extended sense that covers not only the emotions proper such as anger, fear, love, shame, and the like, but also states such as drunkenness, sexual desire, cravings for addictive drugs, pain, and other "visceral" feelings." (Elster 2000, p. 7). Passions can have different influences on decision-making: they may (1) distort or (2) cloud cognition, they may induce (3) weakness of will, and (4) myopia. To illustrate this he discusses the example of a person who goes to a party and decides that it is safe to drink two whiskeys but no more so as to be able to drive home safely, but then this person is observed to take a third whiskey. She may have done so because (1) she engages in self-deception and now thinks that it is safe to drive home even after three whiskeys, (2) her desire to drink a third whiskey crowds out all other considerations, (3) she acts against her better knowledge, that is, although she knows that it is better just to drink two whiskeys she chooses the inferior option of taking a third whiskey, or (4) she no longer sees the danger of driving home after drinking three whiskeys.

However, passions are not the only reason for preference change: there is also time-inconsistency due to hyperbolic discounting. In this case, nothing happens other than the passage of time. Hyperbolic discounting means that the person has a

[5] Sometimes this definition may cause confusion. In fact, commitment, we think, is most commonly understood as "sticking to" or "being dedicated to" a cause, action, activity etc. and one way of doing this would be by imposing self-binding constraints. The definition by Elster cited above reads as if commitment was meant to be the desire to create obstacles with a view to sticking to a certain action or cause etc. The effect at the end is the same, but in the former case commitment is the result, while in the latter case it is the means to achieve a particular behavior. We think that commitment should not be restricted to be self-binding constraints (or the desire thereof) but to the fact that if a person is committed, she is engaged with carrying out a particular action, activity, etc.

strong preference for the present over any future, and a decision taken at time 1 may not be followed up at time 2 simply because the future has become the present. When the person is at the party, she now prefers three whiskeys to two, the number that she preferred before going to the party.[6]

Tom Schelling, another specialist in commitment, thinks that preference change could arise because "[t]wo or more values alternately replace each other; or an unchanging array of values are differentially accessible at different times, like different softwares that have different rules of search and comparison, access to different parts of the memory, different proclivities to exaggerate or to distort or to suppress" (Schelling 2006, p. 71). Thus while the person values soberness and responsible behavior before going to the party, at the party those values become less important or may even vanish and the person values the company of friends and the enjoyment of an excellent whiskey. Or the sight of whiskey changes the chemical environment of the brain and triggers a craving for more. "In common language," Schelling says, "a person is not always his usual self; and without necessarily taking sides as between the self we consider more usual and the other one that occasionally gains command, we can say that it looks as if different selves took turns, each self wanting its own values to govern what the other self or selves will do by way of eating, drinking, getting tattooed, speaking its mind, or committing suicide." (pp. 71–2).

The above-discussed example can of course easily be set in the context of motivation conflict. Suppose again that the motivations are pleasure and goal related: for one, the person likes being in the company of friends and drinking alcohol. However she also does not want to be a danger to herself and to others by driving under the influence of alcohol. But being at the party and deciding whether to drink one more whiskey or not precisely brings those motivations into conflict with each other. In such a situation, the question is whether the person sticks to her previous decision to have only two drinks or gives into her pleasure and has another.

Elster says that commitment requires a certain kind of rationality that foresees what he calls preference change such that one may engage in self-control techniques. Like Elster, we now also assume a more forward-looking rationality, or in other words, more self-knowledge. In our conflictual motivations context this means that the person has some understanding of the consequences of taking a particular action. That is, she knows that she will experience reinforcement and may in certain cases engage in dissonance reduction.[7]

Assume that going to the party and drinking two whiskeys is an action that satisfies both the pleasure of being with friends and the goal of being a prudent driver. But the person in question also knows (from previous experiences) that

[6] Elster also discusses time-discounting for strategic reasons. For this latter phenomenon, interaction with others is necessary. We do not discuss this aspect here because we are only concerned with non-strategic individual decision-making.

[7] For a formal treatment of these questions see Arlegi and Teschl (2013).

when she is at the party, reinforcement will kick in and she will enjoy the company of her friends and the drinking of two glasses of whiskey more than she currently expects to. She can react to this in two possible ways. Either she gives priority to her goal or to her pleasure. We call giving priority to the goal "committing to the goal" and giving priority to the pleasure "committing to pleasure". This must be differentiated from committing to a particular action because it may not necessarily imply the same thing. Committing to pleasure means the following: knowing the consequences of her actions, namely that she will experience even more pleasure when at the party through reinforcement, the person may reason that if she was ready to accept a certain level of pleasure before going to the party, she may well stick to that level of pleasure, and instead increase the satisfaction of her goal of being e a prudent driver. That is, she could enjoy the party as much as she now thinks she will by actually drinking less, i.e. only one glass of whiskey.[8] The repetition of such decisions (the person may be invited to more parties) may make the person not drink whiskey at all, but still enjoy the party all the same (and eventually more and more over time). In this case the person is in fact inconsistent at first as she revises a previous decision, but commitment to pleasure triggers a form of *commitment process* at the end of which the person will have fully satisfied her goal of being a prudent driver, which she enjoys being, and will act consistently from then onwards. That is, at the end of the process, she will be committed to an action and will therefore reveal a preference in the economic sense.

On the other hand, if she commits to her goal, she sticks to her two glasses of whiskey in order to be a prudent driver and she can do so because she knows that she will enjoy the party more than she now thinks through reinforcement. That is, being less myopic and aware of the consequences of her actions actually enables the person to commit to a particular level of goal achievement. In this case the person acts consistently (she satisfies IIA) and reveals a particular preference from the very beginning, as in the case of commitment to an action à la Elster and Schelling. Even on future occasions, she will be able to stick to her goal and eventually come to enjoy it more and more through reinforcement.

The above-described cases of commitment may however not hold or hold differently if going to the party satisfies only one of the two types of motivation. Suppose first that going to the party and drinking (only) two glasses of whiskey is an action that satisfies the person's goal of being a prudent driver but not her pleasure because she is usually a person who likes to drink a lot of whiskey. In such a case, only commitment to a goal makes sense. The person will be able to stick to her two glasses of whiskey because she comes to enjoy it more and more over time.

[8] Given that the current action has become more pleasant through reinforcement, the importance of an action that at first seemed to be less pleasant increases. In some sense, the person who commits to pleasure accepts that an action becomes as enjoyable tomorrow as the action she had chosen today and this is what she prioritizes when she "commits to pleasure". Therefore reinforcement as we discuss it here can be said to have the opposite effect to the "hedonic treadmill".

The difference from the situation described above is that the very first choice is a conflictual action, satisfying only the goal motivation and not both motivations.

Finally, if the choice of drinking two glasses of whiskey is an action that satisfies the person's pleasure but not her goal, commitment may be more difficult to achieve. This is because in addition to reinforcement, dissonance reduction comes into the picture and the effect of these two motivation changes are not necessarily easy to determine for a person. Suppose the person has lived under a strict no-alcohol rule over the last few months despite, in principle, enjoying drinking and going to parties. Hence deciding to drink two glasses of whiskey is giving into pleasure against the person's goal. Reinforcement again means more pleasure for drinking two glasses, which would usually (as in the cases above) induce the person at least not to drink more, if not actually to drink less. But in this case the person also acts against her goal (i.e. she would satisfy it less than has been the case so far) and she will experience dissonance and thus adapt her goal to decrease the negative experience of it. She may for example say that it is OK to drink some alcohol, as it will not do any harm. She thus slips further away from her goal of abstinence. Given this situation, the person will be faced with three possibilities: the increased pleasure and the reduction of dissonance may actually induce the person to drink even more. She likes drinking and because she now sees no problem in drinking a little, given goal adaptation, she will succumb further to her pleasure of drinking alcohol and partying with her friends. In this case, commitment will not be possible: the combined effect of motivation change and the knowledge of it starts a "perverse" or opposite process and the person ends up at a quite extreme situation in which she drinks several whiskeys. Alternatively, the person may regain control over herself after the first "slip" of drinking alcohol and may commit to a certain level of pleasure, which would then trigger the commitment process towards her revised goal (given dissonance reduction), as in first case described above. Finally, she may stick with that level of goal-commitment and come to enjoy drinking two glasses of whiskey more and more over time given reinforcement.

To sum up, in the context of motivation conflict a person may commit not to a particular action, at least at first, but to a particular motivation. This means that commitment may not lead to consistent behavior from the very first choice onwards as in those cases described by Elster and Schelling, in which the person is committing to a particular action. In our case, the person is consistent from the very first choice onwards only if she commits to a particular satisfaction of her goal motivation (which may, however, not be the best goal satisfaction imaginable). In that case, the person will reveal her preference as she acts consistently from then onwards. Committing to a certain level of the goal also implies that one's enjoyment of that decision will increase over time through reinforcement, but there may be some conflict left if the person does not choose the "highest" possible goal satisfaction. Consistent behavior will not be possible at first if the person commits to a certain level of pleasure. However, commitment to pleasure triggers a form of commitment process towards full goal satisfaction: by accepting a certain level of enjoyment and through reinforcement, the person will also be able to increase her goal-satisfaction.

5.6 Commitment à La Sen

In the context of our choice theory under motivation conflict, it also makes sense to discuss the other notion of commitment as presented by Sen (1977). Commitment for Sen is a different form of rationality, which motivates behavior that is not generally explicable in terms of standard self-interested preference maximization rationality. To be more precise, Sen distinguishes between three types of behavior: purely egoistic behavior, which is when the individual only considers her own consumption; behaviour based on sympathy, which is when the individual is concerned about the well-being of other people to the extent that it furthers her own welfare; and finally behavior based on commitment, which is when the individual is pursuing a certain cause or goal, is acting out of a sense of duty, or is following a certain social norm, without any particular gain to herself. Thus, whereas "[…] behavior based on sympathy is in an important sense egoistic, for one is oneself pleased at others' pleasure and pained at others' pain, and the pursuit of one's own utility may thus be helped by sympathetic action" (Sen 1977, p. 326), commitment is "non-egoistic": "One way of defining commitment is in terms of a person choosing an act that he believes will yield a lower level of personal welfare to him than an alternative that is also available to him" (p. 326). Hence with commitment, the norm that a person follows or the duty that she carries out is a goal that the person wants to achieve without expecting any increase in (or at least without expecting to achieve the highest level of) well-being. Moreover, Sen (1985) claims that such a goal may not even be the person's own goal, but possibly the goal of someone else (or that of society). As an example, he refers to a Prisoner's Dilemma game: relaxing on one's own goal of getting the best outcome for oneself will actually lead to a better outcome for both players.

Sen's idea of commitment has caused, and indeed continues to cause, some puzzlement. Elster (2000) refers to this kind of rationality as a form of "magical thinking" (p. 85) and claims to be unable to understand how commitment may lead to cooperation in a one-shot Prisoner's Dilemma game. Hausman (2012, p. 61) sees commitment as a purely psychological constraint and considers it to be paradoxical that such a constraint, imposed by the pure act of will, may help the individual not to choose certain options (in contrast to some objective barriers that make some choices impossible). Pettit (2005) wonders how is it possible for someone to act on a goal that is not hers. Pettit argues that while he would understand a "goal-modifying commitment", which would mean that if the case arises, the person changes her preferences to take account of particular norms or other people's goals, he cannot conceive of a "goal-displacing commitment", i.e. exchanging one's goals for those of others. In Pettit's understanding, therefore, commitment does not prevent preference change as Elster and Schelling see it, but rather induces preference change and it is this change, it could be said, that prevents the individual from acting on her self-interested preferences.

The problem with Pettit's view again is that "preferences" change. As explained in the introduction, we can only talk about preferences if people are consistent.

But if their preferences change then they are precisely not consistent. In fact, according to Sen, commitment is a behavior that does not reveal any preferences: It is a "counterpreferential" choice (Sen 1977, p. 328). This is not to say that the individual is irrational, as standard economics would assume. One would need to know the "external reference" (Sen 1993) of what the individual is trying to achieve in order to know why she behaves in the way that she does.

We can however interpret commitment à la Sen as a situation in which the individual has not been able to compare all options with each other and to make up her mind. That is, the person may be torn between two competing motivations, which may again be called pleasure-oriented (e.g. choosing the largest piece of cake) and goal-oriented motivations (e.g. choosing the second largest piece of cake). This means that we go along with Pettit by saying that a person cannot follow a goal outside of her own "privateness" (Sen 1985) or subjectivity other than by being obliged to do so. But we also go along with Sen in arguing that the goal that a person has set for her does not necessarily contribute to maximize her own (personal) pleasure or satisfaction. When the person at a party never chooses the largest piece of cake, even if it is her favourite one, then she clearly acts in a way that does not give her the greatest personal pleasure. She is also not choosing the largest piece of cake on the grounds that she prefers her friend to have it (which would be a case of sympathy): The goal is to be polite and to respect certain social norms.

Given the context of conflict between pleasure and goal motivations, commitment à la Sen can be interpreted as a particular form of commitment as discussed above. In fact, Sen's understanding of commitment would mean in particular that priority is given to a person's goal-motivation. As stated above, a person can commit to a goal in two different situations: in one, the action that the person chooses following her goal commitment satisfies her goal only, that is, the person is faced with a conflictual action because the action is not pleasant for the person. In this situation, committing to the goal is "costly" to the personal satisfaction or enjoyment of the individual, which is how Sen defines commitment. However, Sen does not exclude the possibility that commitment may lead to an action that both satisfies the goal and increases the personal satisfaction of the person. In our context, commitment to a goal is also possible when there is an action that satisfies both motivations, that is, when the person engages in a non-conflictual choice. Contrary to Sen though, in our framework, when people commit to their goal-motivation they stick to that particular action and will therefore act consistently from then onwards. That is, they reveal a preference. Commitment à la Sen, according to this argument, is therefore not a counterpreferential choice but one that leads to the formation of a preference. It can also be deduced from our analysis that if people commit to a particular level of the goal, then over time they will come to enjoy that level of goal-achievement more and more through reinforcement. Commitment à la Sen may be costly at the beginning, but doing it again and again makes it more enjoyable.

5.7 Commitment and Well-Being

Commitment as discussed by Elster and Schelling, does at first not seem to mean the same thing as when the term is used by Sen. In the first case, commitment means sticking to a particular action and taking tempting alternatives out of the range of choices. This kind of commitment sounds counterintuitive to an economist insofar as it assumes that it is *better* to take away options so that they cannot be chosen. The common economic understanding is that more options are always better. In Sen's case, the rationality behind commitment is different: it goes beyond self-interested utility maximization. However, it may be said that Sen's commitment refrains from choosing self-interested options. This becomes clear if we analyse Sen's commitment in the context of motivation conflict. Indeed, as we have seen, if the two discussions of commitment are set in the context of conflicting motivations they prove to be very similar in structure and solution. Yet those solutions presuppose that the person has a good self-knowledge to the extent that she knows about motivation change and its consequences. Our approach does not imply per se that it is necessary to remove tempting options in order to help to stick to a particular choice, although people may want to do so, especially when they commit to a goal, which would mean sticking to their choice from then onwards. However, commitment to pleasure necessarily involves a commitment process, which implies that a larger set of possible options is needed to undergo that process. Removing options from the set of choices may therefore have a damaging effect on commitment.

Commitment to a particular action is widely seen, in both economics and psychology, as something that solves a conflict and thus improves a person's welfare. The general view in the psychological literature on motivational conflict is that people should be helped to achieve their goal, as failing to do so may have dramatic negative consequences in terms of well-being for an individual. Such consequences may include obesity, not enough saving for retirement, becoming a drug addict or an alcoholic or failing to earn a high school diploma (Milkman et al. 2008). There is also an important line of research that explores how policy makers could increase the chances of people committing to their goal without restricting choice or opportunity (in contrast to the research that explores the possibility of different commitment devices, which would restrict choice). For example, Bazerman et al. (1998) show that when a particular motivational conflict between what the person "wants" to choose and what the person "should" choose exists in evaluation exercises, people tend to choose the "should" option in joint evaluations, but their "want" option in separate evaluations. This clearly indicates that the availability of more options actually helps the individual to focus on what she "should" do, or on her goal options, as we call it here. This brief discussion suggests that research into psychological conflict and its solution provides new insights into human behavior and well-being. We believe that taking this account would certainly enrich economic literature and its depiction of individuals.

5.8 Conclusion

This paper shows that, under particular assumptions, inconsistent behavior is the consequence of conflictual choices. These are choices that satisfy at least one but not all of the underlying motivations that an individual may have. When people engage in inconsistent behavior (e.g. choosing one option at one time but another option at another time even if the previous option is also available), economics is usually unable to characterize their well-being because the prevailing assumption is that people are able to form an *all-things-considered* preference ordering over all admissible options and choose the option that they consider best for them. However, if people are unable to compare all options with each other, e.g. because, as assumed here, of an underlying motivation conflict, there is no *best* alternative to be chosen. Psychological research however shows that internal conflicts can be a cause of much pain and illfare for individuals. Hence if internal conflict leads to inconsistent choices then, as we claim here, economics should start considering those choices seriously and not only as pure irrationalities, especially if it wants to be able to measure individual welfare.

We also show that internal conflict can be solved either by acting through endogenous motivation change (we considered reinforcement and dissonance reduction as examples), or through commitment. This raises the question of when commitment, seen as sticking to one action, is possible in the context of choice under competing motivations. Clearly, commitment may be achieved or at least its achievement can be helped if obstacles are imposed. However, we attempt to show that knowing about one's underlying motivation conflict in addition to knowing how motivations change with the choices made may also create an environment in which people achieve commitment. Commitment is therefore seen here as a "volitional" solution to motivation conflict. Commitment is also in this sense a way to improve one's well-being.

Critical thinkers may argue that our approach to commitment, whether it is commitment to a particular goal-achievement or to a particular level of pleasure, relies on the same magical thinking that Elster sees in Sen's analysis of commitment, simply because it is based on, as Hausman would say, the paradoxical idea that a person can constrain her set of options to a particular choice by an act of will. We can give three answers to this critique. One is that in our context the person who commits to a particular goal or pleasure forms a preference, but does not commit to act against a preference, as is the case in both the accounts of commitment refereed to here (Elster/Schelling and Sen). In fact, following Hausman (2012), "preferences are total comparative evaluations, more like judgments than feelings" (p. 135, see also p. X). Commitment as we describe it is such a judgment: It is a conscious decision based on the fact that the person is aware of her motivation conflict and of the consequences of her actions and is thus helping to *form* a preference.

Second, as mentioned above, even if our commitment is a form of psychological process, comparable to an act of will, it does not exclude the fact that people may impose objective barriers in order to take or not to take certain actions.

For example, a person may join a sports club in order to have more incentive to get out of bed in the mornings before she goes to work. But even such an objective barrier does not abstract from the decision problem at the time when the person wakes up and has to decide whether to get out of bed or lie in for another hour. Also, in many cases there are no objective barriers to help take decisions. In following the social norm of politeness, there is no objective barrier that a person can impose on herself that helps her not to take the largest piece of cake. It is something that she has to decide by herself.

Finally, an act of will is obviously a form of self-control. There have been many experiments, starting with the Stanford marshmallow experiment conducted by Mischel et al. (1972), that have demonstrated that people, and in this particular case even 4 year old children, are capable of resisting the temptation of eating a cookie immediately without any objective barriers. It is also known from these experiments that those who are capable of greater self-control tend to have a greater intellectual aptitude. There are of course other psychological theories on self-regulation that discuss psychological and cognitive procedures that determine how to deal with intrapersonal conflict or other aversive subjective experiences (e.g. Bandura 1977; Carver and Scheier 1990). Self-control as an act of will is therefore an important aspect of people's life and in this paper we show when that act is more likely to occur. Therefore, it is not quite clear what is so magical or paradoxical about an act of will, especially if, as we propose here, there may be changes in motivations that help to strengthen the will.

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Chapter 6
Can Technology Make Us Happy?

Ethics, Spectator's Happiness and the Value of Achievement

Andreas Spahn

6.1 Introduction

We live in an age of technology. Contemporary society is shaped in many ways by the unique modern combination of science and technology; scientific and technological progress influences almost all domains of our living. But does technology contribute to human happiness? Ever since Rousseau there is uneasiness within a prominent strand of philosophy of technology about the contribution of science and technology to the human quest to happiness. Especially philosophers of the continental tradition have pointed out that progress in technology and increase in individual happiness go not hand in hand–on the contrary: technological knowledge perfects our powers to achieve any given end, but our moral capacities to choose which ends are worth striving for are being diminished. According to Rousseau the progress of science leads at the same time to a decay of virtues.

In this chapter I would like to investigate the relation between technology and the quest for human happiness from the perspective of a moral philosopher. I will present and critically evaluate key arguments from the tradition of moral philosophy, why technology can only play a limited role for true human happiness. It will turn out that philosophers often argue that technology is directed at improving the circumstances we live in (our external conditions), but does not contribute to the building of inner happiness (our virtues). Therefore technology fails to contribute to the creation of a meaningful life, including moral character development and striving for moral perfection. Following a distinction by Mitcham (1994), I will analyse an optimistic and a more pessimistic perspective on the potential contribution of modern technology to human happiness. Despite these critical voices, I will argue that technology may indeed play a more substantial role in the striving

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for true happiness than is often acknowledged. But in order to do so, it needs to be directed towards what I will call achiever's happiness and needs to overcome the limitations of mere spectator's happiness.

I will start by distinguishing two elements that contribute to human happiness (Sect. 6.2). Next, I will look at this distinction from the perspective of classical ethical approaches, such as virtue ethics, deontology and utilitarianism. My aim will, contrary to the usual philosopher's business, not so much be to stress the differences between these approaches, but to see, whether one can find common ideas about what should count as true human happiness in the western ethical tradition (Sect. 6.3). The results are than used to investigate in how far the picture changes once modern technology is taken into account (Sect. 6.4). Finally, I will investigate a type of technology that might be able to fulfil all of the requirements for combining the three discussed elements: ethics, happiness and technology in a promising way. I will argue, that under certain circumstances technology can indeed play a more prominent role in the quest for true human happiness (Sect. 6.5).

6.2 Spectator's Happiness and Achiever's Happiness. On the Two Principle Elements of Well-Being: Personality and Circumstances

In psychological and philosophical literature there are different very elaborated ways to distinguish different types of happiness, pleasure and well-being. The aim of this paper is not to contribute to the rich literature on the conceptual clarification and experimental investigation of various elements of well-being in psychology (see e.g. Eid and Larsen 2008; Diener 2000; Ryff 1989; Diener 2000; Ryff and Keyes 1995). Rather it aims at identifying two core elements that play a role in almost all pleasant mental states that we refer to as 'being happy'.

From the perspective of moral philosophy one straightforward dualistic distinction is therefore enough for the context of this chapter: Since all earthly forms of happiness are naturally linked to the experience of a fulfilling relation of a human being living in this world, one can in principle distinguish two elements that contribute to happiness: One that focuses on the person involved, and one that focuses on the circumstances. Both, the circumstances you live in, and the type of person you are, certainly contribute to whether or not you experience your situation as e.g. comfortable, miserable, and whether you report to be happy. If you are unhappy, most likely you will try to change something in your situation-e.g. remove or avoid the factors that contribute to you being unhappy. But sometimes it is also a wise strategy to work on your character in trying to get a different perspective on your life.[1]

[1] Therefore there is some wisdom in the old saying: Give me the strength to change those things that I can change, the patience to endure the things that I can not change and the wisdom to distinguish the former from the latter.

In the reminder of the chapter, I would like to thus distinguish between one strategy to achieve happiness that focuses the external circumstances: in this way happiness is linked to either improving the situation you find yourself in or the enjoyment of external goods if you are in a pleasurable or agreeable situation. At most time this type of happiness consist in the striving for the enjoyment of goods, those that fulfil basic or advanced needs and give rise to satisfaction. I will label this type of happiness circumstance-directed happiness or spectator's happiness. The second type of happiness, which I would like to address, is what might be called person-related happiness or achiever's happiness. This type focuses on one's personality and on working on your character traits, be they mental or physical aspects of your personality. In this context the striving aims at changing your person (and not primarily your situation), starting from ordinary attempts to give up smoking or other bad habits, building up capacities or skills, all the way up to working on your character strengths in trying to become a more moral person.[2]

Let us look at two simple examples to distinguish these two types of happiness and the role technology might play in contributing to spectator's happiness. Imagine two persons, Jim and John. Jim wants to climb a mountain in Switzerland. This is by no means an easy enterprise; therefore he spends a long time preparing himself for this task. He buys the right equipment, uses physical exercise to bring his body into shape and tries out his walking and climbing skills on smaller mountains, until he finally feels ready for the task. He trains his discipline and endurance and other virtues needed to be a good mountain climber. He then goes on to climb the mountain. Once he is on top, the view is overwhelmingly beautiful. Jim enjoys this magnificent view. He is happy.

John wants to reach the top of a mountain in Switzerland. He decides to buy a ticket at the local cable railway that brings him to the top. The cable railway is a quite complex technological artefact, and it successfully transports visitors to the mountain top. John arrives at the top and enjoys the magnificent view. He is happy. Even though in this little story both persons end up being happy, they both might enjoy quite a different type of happiness. Similarly, technological artefacts play quite a different role in achieving these two types of happiness. The first is an example of 'achiever's happiness'. As argued above, it is linked to the pleasure one gains from successfully working on one's skills and character traits while trying to reach a set aim. It entails the pride of overcoming obstacles, of hard work and the

[2] In psychological literature this difference is sometimes discussed along the lines of hedonic enjoyment and person- or character related eudemonia. I differ from this distinction insofar as I want to focus not on different qualities of happiness, but on the objects (circumstance or the subject) that these are directed to. It is plausible that there is still a close relation between hedonic pleasures and external circumstances and eudaimic pleasures and person related experience. See (Deci and Ryan 2008; Huta and Ryan 2010; Waterman et al. 2008). Dualistic typologies are of course in most cases oversimplifications, but they are justified in that they serve the purpose of this chapter. One does not need to be a Hegelian to come up with a third type—and in fact even more categories—e.g. a type of happiness that lies in the expression of personality in the outside world, as e.g. in the case of expressing you creativity in art.

satisfaction of having become a different type of person: a trained and experienced successful mountain climber in our example.

John's happiness, on the other hand, can serve as an illustration 'spectators happiness': it is the joy of indulging in a pleasant and fulfilling moment, in his case with the help of enabling technologies, while the actual achievement lies somewhere else (it has been prepared by the engineers and construction workers that designed and built the cable rail way in our example). This example illustrates a worry, which I would like to address in the reminder of the chapter: Is it a fair characterization of modern technology that it helps enabling a kind of spectator's happiness in many fields of human experience, while at the same time eliminating the need for achiever's efforts (and thus the resulting type of happiness)?

If we look at positive psychology, we see that this distinction of a person-centred strategy to achieve happiness and a strategy that aims at improving the situation you find yourself in, plays also a role in Seligman's approach to human happiness. He famously defines the elements that contribute to life-satisfaction in his happiness equation as: "H = s + c + v" where "H is your enduring level of happiness, S is your set range, C is the circumstances of your life, and V represents factors under your voluntary control." (Seligman 2004, 46). The formula is not meant to represent a precise mathematical model, but tries to express the elements that determine your enduring level of happiness. In line with the distinction made in this paper, the equation starts with a personality-element and the importance of circumstances. S represents your set-range of happiness, which is according to Seligman mainly determined by your biological heritage. It is thus mainly linked to the type of person you are (with regard to happiness related features such mood, optimism or pessimism, etc.). On the other hand C represents your life circumstances, such as income, social status, but also life events such as falling in love, winning the lottery or getting fired from your job.

Amongst the things that you can voluntary control are partly the circumstances, but -most importantly- the way you interpret and experience your life. Seligman accordingly analyzes the relation to the future and to the past, as these two are not determined by immediate emotions, and can be altered by working on the way you cognitively and emotionally relate to past and future events. Gratitude and forgiveness e.g. are ways to relate to your past in a way that is more conducive to long-term happiness (Seligman 2004, 62ff).

We can learn many important insights about possible approaches to the elements that contribute to enduring happiness from positive psychology.[3] For our context it is relevant that, however complex the question of true happiness is, at least two elements contribute to happiness: the type of person you are and the circumstances you live in. As argued above, this gives you in principle two strategies to be happy: working on your character or trying to control (and if possible improve) the

[3] For an overview about the scientific evidence for the various elements that contribute to enduring happiness (see Dolan et al. 2008). For a recent study that focuses on the circumstances that contribute most to enduring happiness in the UK (see Sebnem and Salah 2013).

circumstances you live in. Empirical evidence seems to show, however, that the circumstances you live in affect short-term happiness very much (e.g. loosing your job, having a severe accident or winning the lottery), but do have surprisingly little effect on long-term happiness (Brickman et al. 1978; Seligman 2004, 46ff). This explains, why many authors suggest focusing on the strategy to work on your character as a more reliable and more important road towards happiness (Thompson 2009; Seligman 2006). Based on this experimental work, one might conclude that enjoyment of goods as given by luck or external circumstance ('spectator's happiness') is not the golden road to true happiness. More important is to take voluntary action, and most important to direct these effort towards improving your character skills by e.g. practicing virtues such as gratitude and forgiveness ('achiever's happiness'). The relation of positive psychology with many philosophical theories about happiness, most of all of course virtue ethics, seems obvious and has often been noted (Schwartz and Sharpe 2006; Richardson 2012). In the next section, we want therefore to look at the 'philosopher's ideal' of true happiness. What has moral philosophy to say about these two roads towards happiness?

6.3 Philosophy and the Ethical Ideal of Happiness

If one looks at the human striving for happiness from the perspective of a moral philosopher, several things need to be noted. To state the obvious first: as is often the case in philosophy, there is little consent about what should count as true happiness -if it exists at all- or about the precise relation between our desire to be happy and our moral obligations. But I will argue that despite these disagreements there is nevertheless a common theme in many traditional approaches to ethics and happiness. Given the general tendency of philosophers to disagree about almost everything, there is a surprising amount of consensus in western tradition about how to evaluate different roads to happiness across different ethical systems from different times and different schools.

Many philosophers agree that it is natural for humans to strive for happiness, a conviction we can find again and again in philosophical anthropology. The desire to be happy is often regarded to be an universal feature of mankind: "How to gain, how to keep, how to recover happiness, is in fact for most men at all times the secret motive of all they do, and of all they are willing to endure", as James argues in the 20th century (James 1985, p. 71).

It seems difficult to find philosophers that explicitly deny that all humans, by their very nature, strive for happiness. But in how far this striving is relevant for ethics, and which types of goods and states of the world we *should* strive for from a moral point of view, is of course a central debate in ethical theory, in which only little agreement has been reached. Also one may ask, whether the vision of what counts as true happiness changes over time and is thus historically determined and leads to different answers of what we should seek for (McMahon 2006).

One theme strikes, however, as a prominent claim often defended by otherwise very different philosophers. In ethical theory from Socrates to Kant we find multiple warnings, to seek inner happiness and peace of mind, and to mistrust external pleasures, based on the enjoyment of earthly goods. Many moral philosophers of the tradition seem to express a preference to favour achiever's happiness over spectator's happiness; and within achiever's happiness they tend to favour a special version: morally earned satisfaction. Let us first very briefly look at the philological evidence for this claim, before summarizing the main arguments that lead to this preference.

We find variations of this idea in Ancient Greek philosophy and Christian thinking. In the Greek tradition we find a shift from the emphasis on *olbios*, which refers to external possessions and lucky circumstances, to *eudaimonia,* which in Aristotle's influential account links happiness to the inner activities of a virtuous soul. Already Democritus stresses that happiness does not rest in the possession of gold or herds, but has its proper place in the soul. In classical Greek philosophy we find an elaboration of the idea that true happiness has its root in the character and not in external fate (McMahon 2006, 40ff.). Aristotle does of course recognize that external fate is important. We cannot praise a man to be truly happy before his death, as in the case of Priamos. But nevertheless true happiness is deeply interwoven not with the external circumstances, but with the personality: true happiness is an activity of the soul that expresses complete virtue (Aristotle, NE 1102a5).[4] Furthermore, there is a hierarchy of different life forms, in which the life of mere enjoyment of external goods, the life of pleasure, ranks below the life of honour and political activity and the life of study (NE 1095b17-1096a5). The pleasurable, the political and the intellectual life form a hierarchy of different vision of happiness.[5] While the first one is most compatible with spectator's happiness, the other two require forms of achieving set-goals and working on your personality, most notably your virtues.

Throughout the Christian philosophy of the medieval age and early modernity we find a deep mistrust in earthly goods and a dualistic vision of the immortal soul and the finite body, with a clear emphasis that most of all you should seek the salvation of your soul. The *vita contemplativa* is praised; a life dedicated to contemplation is a Christian ideal, whereas the *vita activa* is important but of less moral significance. Thus both the Greek and the Judaeo-Christian tradition point towards an ideal of happiness that accepts a hierarchy of life-forms, guided by the idea that the pleasure of the body—often linked to external factors, that are difficult to control—are less valuable than the pleasures and achievements of the soul. A moral approach to happiness directs humans towards working on their virtues and moral

[4] In the Christian tradition the emphasis on external fate (or *fortuna)* is even further diminished in the interpretation of the Priamos passage in St. Thomas (Leonhardt 1998, 143).

[5] The idea of three different life forms devoted to the quest of happiness is also discussed by Seligman in his distinction between the *pleasant life*, the *good life* (of virtuous engagement) and the *meaningful life* (in which one tries to serve something larger than oneself, e.g. an institution dedicated to moral or otherwise meaningful goals) (Seligman 2004, 260f.).

qualities and urges them to be sceptical with regard to the striving for richness and indulging in life's earthly pleasures. We can find echoes of this tradition in the two most important ethical systems of modern moral philosophy.

But while in the Greek world happiness, morality and intellectualism are combined, modernity—especially in Kant—is less certain that all three dimensions point in the same direction. In Utilitarianism we find still the attempt to bring these three together: morality is linked to happiness and there are higher or lower forms of pleasures. Bentham argues: "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do." (Bentham [1789] 2007, p. 1). Utilitarianism thus identifies moral actions with those that bring about the greatest happiness for the greatest number. But even within utilitarianism we find an acknowledgement, that not all types of happiness are equal. Mill distinguishes higher, more intellectual and lower, more sensualistic pleasures. "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied" (Mill [1863] 2012, p. 284). This already points to the idea, that it is not only mere happiness that matters in ethical context.

For Kant, finally, seeking moral perfection is, at least at first glance, completely disconnected from gaining happiness (Kant *GMS*). If the ultimate aim of nature were to make humans happy, it would have been better not to equip them with reason. Kant rejects eudemonistic ethics, as it bases moral duties on an external motive (to become happy); a motive that both destroys the purity of the moral law and may just as often lead to immoral behaviour, if this turns out to make you happy. To make a man happy and to make a man moral requires two very different sets of rules. However, Kant does not rule out that ultimately in the higher plan of the world, true happiness and morality might be reconciled by God in an afterlife. But for human life the striving should be to be worthy to be happy (*glückswürdig*), rather than happy (*glückseelig*) (cfr. McMahon 2006, 250ff).

But is the Kantian ideal really that far away from the general caveat that we find in moral philosophy that not all types of happiness are equal and should count the same? As seen, most ethical systems grant that there are higher or lower forms of life (as in Aristotle) or higher or lower pleasures (as in Mill) and that certain pleasures are immoral. Maybe Kant is just taking this position to its logical extreme: happiness and morality are completely independent. But, as said, even Kant is willing to consider religious visions of re-unifying these two (as all human hope lastly goes to happiness and divine justice might be the reconciliation between worthiness to be happy and happiness). Finally also Kant stresses that it is a moral duty to promote the well-being and happiness of others.[6]

[6] The relation between Kant and Aristotle with regard to happiness is discussed in detail by (Fischer 1983). See also Kant's discussion of the notion of the highest good in his Critique of Practical Reason (KpV A 198ff.). Many Kant scholar's focus on Kant's sharp rejection of happiness and eudemonism in his Groundwork, but tend to neglect the more balanced passages in his Metaphysics of Ethics and the Critique of Practical Reason.

Since we are for the sake of this chapter not so much concerned with a historical reconstruction of different positions, we may not decide the matter here.[7] But if one were to distil some kind of philosopher's consensus (if this word is not a *contradictio in adjecto*): it seems that most of the citied ethical traditions in the West, maybe with the possible exception of Kant, would subscribe in one way or another to these three arguments against putting too much faith in spectator's happiness:

(a) *Argument from the uncontrollability of fate*

Relying on spectator's happiness (i.e. the enjoyment and attempt to exercise full control over external circumstances) as a road to enduring happiness is highly questionable due to the uncontrollable nature of fate and life events.

(b) *Argument from the moral caveat about Happiness: Deserved and Un-deserved Happiness*

Not all forms of happiness are equal. Spectator's happiness is problematic, as it fails to establish an inner connection between person and circumstances. It contains no relation between effort and reward, or between moral worthiness to be happy and actual happiness. True happiness should strive to consist in an inner connection between character and activities that is also linked to moral perfection.

This argument starts from the insight that from a moral point of view, good people should be happy and evil people do not deserve to be happy in the same way. As mentioned this idea is most elaborated in Kant's distinction between 'worthiness to be happy' and 'happiness'. But it is already present in Plato's famous discussion in the *Politeia* that it is better to suffer injustice than to do injustice and that an immoral person cannot be praised to be happy in a philosophical sense.[8]

(c) *Argument from the priority of intellectual pleasures over bodily pleasures*

All three ethical theories—virtue ethics, deontology and utilitarianism—know a hierarchy of happiness. It is better to seek pleasures that are linked to intellectual activities and that require the cultivation of higher faculties of the mind, than to dedicate one's life to the mere enjoyment of bodily pleasures that we share with other animals, like the pleasure we get from eating food.

Ethical theories therefore often stress the importance to train your soul just as well as your body: the aim of working on your character is that you become a wise

[7] I am aware that it is difficult to get philosophers to agree on a claim, or to find agreement amongst different philosophers from different traditions such as virtue ethics, deontology and utilitarianism on the notion of 'true happiness'. Indeed in a insightful review an external anonymous referee disagreed with my statement about alleged agreement to prefer achiever's happiness in different traditions. I cannot settle the issue in this chapter. The question of the similarities and differences between different strands of ethical theories and their likely vote on spectator's or achiever's happiness certainly merits a closer investigation that cannot be given in detail in this chapter.

[8] This argument motivates also much of Plato's critique on poetry: it should not depict the Gods to do immoral things and evil people to end up being happy. This might be referred to as the famous Plato-Hollywood-Ending-Defense Argument.

person, that is both virtuous and content with his life (in the case of Aristotle), moral in maximizing overall happiness (in the case of Utilitarianism), fulfilling ones duty to become worthy to be happy (though the actual state of being happy is not guaranteed, in the case of Kant). All three theories, however seem to suggest in one way or another that the deepest happiness comes from meaningful activities.[9]

Looking back at the distinction between circumstance-directed attempts to increase happiness and personality-related happiness, one can see, that most philosophers favour personality related happiness. But within this type -that was labelled achiever's happiness above- they add a moral caveat: true moral happiness comes not so much from working on your bodily skills. Rather you should focus on those character skills that contribute to you being a moral person. To reformulate the conclusion from above in the light of moral theory: True happiness is the pleasure one gains from successfully working on one's skills while trying to reach a set ethical aim. It entails the pride of overcoming obstacles, of hard work and the satisfaction of having become a better moral person: a trained and virtuous character.

It must be noted that all these classical ethical theories, that are still discussed and defended today, have been developed in the past, before the emergence of contemporary technologies. In how far can their insights still be relevant for contemporary society in which technology has fundamentally changed many aspects of human life? Can contemporary technologies contribute to this moralized notion of happiness? This question will be analyzed in the following section.

6.4 Modern Technology and the Quest for Happiness

How does modern technology change the picture? After all, technology has always existed, so why should we have to reconsider the philosopher's consensus, as I would like to call it, in the light of modern technology?

Hans Jonas has famously argued that the emergence of modern technology urges us to rethink many of our classical ethical categories (Jonas 1984). His main argument is that modern technology has systematically altered the power-relation between man and nature.

According to Jonas all previous ethics could take two main assumptions for granted that are no longer true in the age of technology. The first assumption is that human nature is given and that ethical theory could develop guidelines based on a fixed human essence. Modern technology, however, opens up the possibility to radically alter human nature, as is discussed e.g. in the debate about transhumanism and enhancement. Jonas himself discusses the possibilities of gene engineering and

[9] In positive psychology this philosophical insight is most famously reproduced in the attempts to systematically compare exercises of fun and of gratitude, as in the gratitude days during his teaching duties, that Seligman reports (Seligman 2004, 72f.).

of the striving to overcome mortality as examples for new ethical questions that no longer take the human condition for granted. We do not only need to ask ourselves what types of lives we want to live, given that we are human beings, but for the first time in human history we need to radically reconsider what types of beings we want to be in the first place. Should we strive to overcome mortality and should we try to genetically alter our mental set-up as to overcome e.g. aggression or anger?

But also a second assumption is no longer true, namely that the powers of nature always exceed the power of humans. It is of course still true that man is subject to uncontrollable natural events, like earthquakes or eruptions of unpronounceable Icelandic volcanoes. But all in all, technology has significantly altered the relation between humans and nature. Jonas analyses the profound changes that modern technology brought about and concludes that for the first time in human history our actions have far reaching global and temporal consequences and might even—in the case of the environmental crisis or nuclear disasters—lead to the destruction of human and animal life on earth. Nature—once the supreme powerful kingdom, in which all human activities were embedded—has now become an object of human responsibility, a realm we have to protect and deal with carefully.

If we follow Jonas, the fact that technology changes these two fundamental assumptions seems to have important consequences for an ethical notion of human happiness. If many of our moral categories must be re-considered in the light of the tremendous powers of modern technology, than also the classical arguments presented above, for the ethical superiority of achiever's happiness might no longer hold, or might at least need some modification. What does the increased power of modern technology mean for our human quest to become happy?

In order to answer this question, I will follow a helpful distinction between two fundamentally different approaches to modern technology that has been suggested by C. Mitcham in his remarkable book *Thinking through Technology* (Mitcham 1994). According to Mitcham contemporary approaches to the philosophy of technology are prefigured by the debate between what he calls the Enlightenment Optimism and the Romantic Uneasiness about technology—two of the early reactions to the profound social changes brought about by modern science and technology in the Industrial Revolution. This tension between approaches praising the benefits of technology (in the spirit of enlightenment) and approaches focusing on negative consequences (in the spirit of romanticism) arguably still forms the background for most of the contemporary philosophical debate between analytic and continental philosophy of technology (Snow 1959; McDermott 1969). In the context of this chapter, I am again not so much interested in a detailed historical reconstruction of these two positions, but in an analysis of the main arguments of both approaches and what they have to say about the relation between modern technology and the human quest for happiness [for a more historical overview see (Mitcham 1994; Spahn 2010)]. Let us look at the optimist's camp first.

6.4.1 Enlightenment Optimism About Technology and the Quest for Happiness

As we have seen above, philosophers have expressed two main worries about the attempt to seek happiness in earthly goods and a life of enjoyment of possessions. The first was that fate and nature are impossible to control, whereas working on your inner character and achieving virtues seems a perfectly reachable goal. The second worry—most notably expressed by Kant—was, that we should not so much strive for happiness directly, but seek to be worthy to be happy in the first place: the quest for happiness is limited by a moral caveat.

Enlightenment optimism mainly targets the first argument. It argues that modern technology does indeed increase human powers such, that it promises to make happiness reachable by controlling the forces of nature and taking away most hardships that have tortured mankind for ages: hunger, diseases, poverty can be overcome by the usage of technologies. Also comfort in lifestyle, luxuries, access to all sorts of goods have increased dramatically over the last centuries, making modern life in the Western world look like paradise compared to the many hardships, the short life expectancy, and struggles of earlier times.

It does thus not come as a surprise that we find numerous praises of the benefits of modern science and technology from Francis Bacon to contemporary transhumanism. Already Francis Bacon praises the role that modern science and technology play for progress (Bacon [1620] 2000). According to him printing, gunpowder and the compass have had a greater impact on human history than any emperor or any philosophical school ever had. Empirical research is thus important; the pure *vita contemplativa* loses its priority. In his vision of the future of mankind, science and technology serve to improve society (ibid.).

Some recent visions about glorious future achievements of technologies are comparable in optimism and tone with Bacon. If one reads e.g. R. Kurzweil's anticipation of the promises of future technologies in *The Singularity is Near* one is reminded of the unbroken optimism, that we find in so many early modern visions of moral and technological progress from Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), to J. V. Andreae's *Christianopolis* (1619) to Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627). As in these old utopias, Kurzweil sketches a highly positive and optimistic vision of the future benefits of ICT and the expected merger of humans and technology (Kurzweil 2005). According to him humans are about to transcend their biological limitations. We will move beyond our "version 1.0" bodies by merging with technology and this will "allow us to transcend the limitations of our biological bodies and brains. We will gain power over our fates. Our mortality will be in our own hands. We will be able to live as long as we want […]. We will fully understand human thinking and will vastly extend and expand its reach." (ibid., p. 9). Drawing on the fact of the exponential growth of computing capacity, the laws of accelerating returns and the tendency of evolutionary processes to built up order and often also complexity, Kurzweil tries to convince the reader that in the future intelligence—"the most

powerful force of the universe"—will gain almost complete control over matter with the help of technology (such as robotics, nanotechnology and genetics).

If one looks thus at the role that technology can play for human well-being, *Enlightenment Optimists* would claim that these modern technologies bring about a profound change in that they (a) take away one argument, that tradition used against spectator's happiness. It is plausible to maintain that the *argument from the uncontrollability of fate* at least needs to be modified. One does not have to subscribe to radical visions a là Kurzweil to accept that technologies have helped humans to gain more and more control over external factors that limit our capacities and negatively affect wellbeing. The conclusion from this would thus be:

(a) *Argument from the power of technology to gain increasing control over external factors*

Modern technologies allow controlling more and more external circumstances that govern the fate of human life. Increasingly they might take away what I have called above the worry of the uncontrollability of fate, which was one key argument against spectator's happiness. On the contrary, technological progress promises to continue this exercise of control and power over nature and fate, such that even ideas to stop the process of aging, decoding the function of the human brain and creating powerful artificial intelligence seem less outlandish than only one or two centuries ago.

If one subscribes to the enlightenment optimist vision of technology the question thus arises: should we still be sceptical with regard to spectator's happiness when technology helps us to achieve more and more of our desires and dreams? Of course the moral and psychological arguments against spectator's happiness might still hold—and I believe they do—but with increasing technological capacities, the *argument from the uncontrollability of fate* at least loses some of its power.

But even if one is more sceptical with regard to these radical promises of modern technology, there is a second aspect in which contemporary technology might helps us to gain happiness, and might contribute to a higher form of happiness, namely achiever's happiness. This is expressed in the idea that technological progress actually helps reaching what was asked for above in the *argument from the priority of intellectual pleasures over bodily pleasures.*

(b) *Argument from the liberating aspects of technological progress*

Increasingly technological progress frees humans from the hardship of bodily work and frees thus capacities for the engagement in intellectual activities. It may be true that technology increases sensual pleasures: it is easy nowadays to buy nice wine and exotic fruits from all countries around the globe. But along with this—so the optimist's argument goes—comes an ever-increasing opportunity to engage in cultural, intellectual and spiritual activities. As technology takes away obstacles to engage in higher forms of pleasure (if you are starving and freezing, you will not be able to enjoy the pleasure of reading scientific books), it also allows the engagement with culture and education, which once was the privilege of elites. To give just a few examples: books containing the greatest treasures of human literature, philosophy

and all sciences are available for little money to anybody; social interactions are fostered by the internet, Skype and Facebook. One might thus read the progress of technology as a key enabling factor that contributes to the realization of many enlightenment ideals, including the moral vision of allowing education and the engagement of intellectual activities for more and more persons.

To summarize: from the enlightenment optimist perspective there are thus two main positive ways in which modern technology can and should contribute to different forms of human happiness. Let us now look at the argument from the opposed camp.

6.4.2 *Romantic Uneasiness and the Worry About the Loss of Virtue and Ethical Wisdom Through Technological Rationalization*

Even though there is certainly some truth in these two claims of the optimist camp, there are also plenty of reasons to have a more nuanced perspective and be more sceptical with regard to the promises of modern technology.

While enlightenment optimists argue that technology can significantly contribute to human happiness, it might be more reasonable to merely ascribe to it the role of an amplifier or a potential great enabler. It is true that modern technology enables more people to engage in achiever's happiness (including the vision that true happiness lies in a moral character transformation). But it also amplifies the possibilities for spectator's happiness, since it very often takes away the need for human efforts, like in the example of John and Jim in the beginning of this chapter.

In best case, one might argue, technology does not change the picture too much as it can be used for all types of happiness (let alone that it also leads to new threats to happiness, see below). In that sense technology would at best be a neutral tool and not significantly alter the options of moral right or wrong-doing (Peterson and Spahn 2011).

Romantic uneasiness about technology, however, would go one step further (Mitcham 1994). The main worry from this perspective is precisely, that modern technology is *not* a neutral tool or a neutral amplifier of possibilities, but actually works against achiever's happiness and diminishes the possibilities of gaining moral types of happiness. What are the arguments for this claim and how convincing are they?

If one were to summarize the main worry of the philosophers that Mitcham includes in the romantic camp from Rousseau to Heidegger and the Frankfurt School, one could probably say that despite their differences (or at times even hostilities against each others), we find one common intuition: technological progress, so the argument goes, comes with a price. It has its anthropological root in a will to dominate nature that leads away from or even threatens the impact of moral knowledge, social traditions and philosophical wisdom. Roughly speaking the

progress of technological knowledge and power leads at the same time to a decay of moral knowledge and related social practices. But why should this be the case?

Technological rationality is means-end rationality. It is about knowing *how*, and not about knowing *whether*. It teaches you how to reach a given end, but not how to choose between various ends—a tasks that belongs to moral philosophy and practical wisdom. Science and technology are independent of moral values. Their huge success, however, makes scientific knowledge and technological rationality the role model for knowledge as such, whereas moral beliefs are more and more regarded as a less reliable type of knowledge, subject to private opinions (Hösle 1994).

We find variations of this argument in different philosophers that are critical with regard to the increasing influence that science and technology gain in the modern world. As mentioned in the introduction, already Rousseau argued that the advancement of modern knowledge and science goes hand in hand with a decay of virtues and immediacy (Rousseau 1750). The impact of the industrial revolution on social structures, both in the west and in developing countries, has been analyzed thoroughly from Marx to contemporary sociology and anthropology (Marx 1938; Pressnell 1960; Bodley 1975; Haferkamp 1992). Most famous is probably Heidegger's analyses of technology, which discloses nature under a very limited perspective. Nature is only seen as a standing resource for human usage, while other approaches to nature—that according to Heidegger are equally valid, as in poetry—get threatened (Heidegger 1977). Echoes of this idea can be found in Adorno and Habermas. The early Frankfurt School is particularly critical of what they call 'scientism'—the exclusive focus on scientific and technological knowledge. For Adorno self-preservation against nature is the key idea that lies at the heart of the modern combination of science and technology. The will to dominate nature and to free oneself from the externalities of fate are for him and Habermas the main motives behind the striving for technological progress (Habermas 1971). This brings forth a type of rationality that seeks to manipulate firstly nature, before it facilitates a domination of fellow human beings (Adorno 1979). Heidegger and Adorno both regard therefore art as an alternative approach to reality, which can serve as an antidote to an overemphasis of science. For Habermas art is not the answer, but ethical knowledge is. He famously distinguishes two different types of rationality, thereby combing the enlightenment belief in reason, with the romantic uneasiness about technology. Strategic reason aims at domination and manipulation and is the main interest of technological and scientific knowledge. Communicative rationality, on the other hand, aims at agreement on moral and social values and lies at the heart of the everyday lifeworld (Habermas 1987). But Habermas agrees with thinkers like Heidegger and Adorno, that a one-sided orientation towards technological knowledge endangers moral knowledge. It is therefore important to strengthen moral knowledge in an age of technology, to counter the expansion of strategic rationality at the expense of communicative rationality.

All of these approaches look thus at technology with a capital 'T' and make bold claims about broad trends, roughly arguing that technological progress endangers

moral wisdom. I will try to translate these broad claims into an argument about the role that technology can play for spectator's and achiever's happiness.

(c) *Worry from the one-sidedness of technological rationalization*

Technology is meant to improve spectator's happiness, by allowing us to manipulate nature and external circumstances. But this increase of strategical (technological) knowledge, leads at the same time to a decrease of communicative or moral knowledge, thus diminishing the quest for achiever's happiness.

The first part mirrors the first argument from the *Enlightenment Optimist* camp (Sect. 6.4). But instead of applauding the power of technology to increasingly control external fate, the worry is added that this leads to a shift away from "knowing whether" to "knowing how", a shift from achiever's happiness to spectator's happiness.

According to this position there seems to be no role for technology with regard to our moral perfection. On the contrary, since technological knowledge is aimed at the expansion of our power over nature, it creates powerful tools to reach almost any end, that we possibly could desire; but it leaves a moral vacuum with regard to the question, which ends we *ought* to strive for. We seem to choose to "make the circumstances such" that we have more things to enjoy and less to be worried about. But will this strategy alone truly make us happy if it is not complemented by a meaningful answer to the quest to work on our moral character and give an ethical meaning to our strivings?

The argument can be read as an attempt to re-introduce the old argument from the hierarchy of intellectual pleasures over other types of pleasures (Sect. 6.2) into contemporary discourse. It can in part be read as a secular modern version of this old Greek and Christian ideal of the priority of the soul over the body.

That there is some truth in this argument can be illustrated if one again looks e.g. at the predictions of Kurzweil, who can be called an impassionate defender of technological optimism. In the remarkable documentation *Transcendent Man*, the vision is developed that humans will achieve some of the classical predicates of God. In this highly optimistic future vision, we might become all-knowing, by connecting our brains to internet databases and simply downloading all kinds of knowledge into our brains. We become virtually all-powerful by merging with artificial intelligence, whose computing power exceeds those of all human brains joint together. We may become immortal, by stopping the process of aging and getting rid of our outdated biological bodies.

It is not my point here, to discuss how likely any of these triumphant future scenarios are, but it is noticeable that one classical predicate of God is never mentioned throughout the whole documentation: the idea of benevolence (thus of moral intelligence) is strikingly absent. But that mankind needs first and foremost moral wisdom, is something we can learn from *Romantic Uneasiness*. Similarly, that the gap between our capacity to reach more and more aims, and our capacity to contemplate which aims are worth striving for, needs to be closed; this aspect of the argument is also something worth considering. After all man is still, as the saying goes, the animal that *wants* more than it can reach, and *can* do more things, than it

ought to do. Whether we will find true happiness and blessing in an ever-increasing power of our technological capacities or in an inner satisfaction and contentedness of reaching moral virtue by working on our moral character traits remains to be seen. Being a philosopher myself, I have a bias for the road towards achiever's happiness, especially in its moral version, over extension of external control.

But even if one is thus critical with regard to the contribution of technology towards true happiness, is there not a point to be made, that technology can in fact also contribute to a type of happiness that comes close to the philosopher's ideal discussed above?

6.5 Combining Ethics, Achiever's Happiness and Technology

One of the classical arguments made against any of the claims of continental philosophy (that are meant to support the *romantic uneasiness* camp), is that they focus on technology in general, losing sight of actual concrete technologies. It might well be, that the claims of the pessimists are true with regard to *some* aspects of modern technology, but they might overlook ways in which *specific* technologies can and do in fact contribute to deeper forms of happiness. In the reminder of this chapter I would like to point out ways in which future research in philosophy of technology can try to contribute to the quest to combine technology, morality and true happiness.

What we seek then is not so much a technology that address the *argument from the uncontrollability of fate*, that Enlightenment optimism targets, but one that renders both justice to the *worry of the one-sidedness of rationalization* from the romantic uneasiness perspective, as well as to the *arguments from the priority of mental pleasures* and the moral caveat expressed in what was labeled the *philosophers consensus on happiness*. Can these three requirements help us identifying concrete technologies that can combine morality and happiness?

Recent philosophy of technology has indeed started to not only look at concrete technologies [what has been labelled the *empirical turn* (Kroes and Meijers 2001)], but also started to investigate more broadly the possibilities in which technology can contribute to moral visions of the good life, mostly in line with virtue ethics [the *axiological turn*, (Higgs et al. 2000; Brey et al. 2012; Spence 2011)]. The aim is to not only approach ethics of technology via disasters, risks, dangers, side-effects and collapsing bridges; but to seek for ways in which technology can make us both, more happy *and* more moral. It might be more than an accident that this turn happens in a time in which we also observe within psychology a turn towards positive psychology, that does not only address mental illness, but seeks to explore conditions of true happiness.

Different philosophers have tried to identify technologies that meet these requirements. I would like to suggest that there is one type of technologies that fulfils these criteria, namely so called *persuasive technologies*.

Persuasive technologies are technologies that are meant to intentionally change the behaviour and/or attitude of users by persuading him to behave differently (Fogg 2003). Some of these technologies are specifically designed to help the user achieving moral goals. With computers becoming ubiquitous, more and more applications are being developed, that support users in achieving a set moral aim. Take for example the recent trend in interactive eco-feedback systems. Persuasive technologies in the domain of eco-feedback try to help people achieve the ethical goal of living a more sustainable life. Some of these technologies can be implemented in households, like the Wattson Energy Meter, in cars, like eco-dashboards, some can be downloaded to smart phones, like green-meter apps. These tools give direct feedback on energy consumption and often suggest ways of saving energy. If sustainability is a moral value that we need to adhere to in our time, then these technologies can help achieving a more sustainable lifestyle by supporting the user in two important matters. On the one side they help to make visible the often abstract and hidden effects of energy consumptions: Classical car dashboards only give you feedback about your speed, while new eco-assist-systems are signalling whether or not you are driving sustainably. The engineers of the Honda Insight Hybrid e.g. have completely redesigned the car dashboard with the value sustainability in mind. Little 'leaves icons' grow to indicate energy efficient driving, while in the case of inefficient driving these leaves will disappear again. The speed display changes the background colour as another element of a subtle feedback. This is a playful way of reminding you on your goal to drive sustainably, and to motivate you to change your driving behaviour accordingly.

The other important aspect next to visualization is the training effect that these technologies are meant to have. In the line with the ethical versions of achiever's happiness, the idea is that you learn a new behaviour, which contributes to you being a better moral person. Persuasive technologies are currently being developed for many different domains, covering moral values such as health, sustainability, well-being, education, thankfulness and gratitude, etc. (Kort 2007). One can argue that persuasive technologies thus meet the three criteria that were the outcome of the discussion above about an ethical vision of happiness: they target and support ethical behaviour and thus train ethical virtues; they do not take away the effort, since the user needs to be the one, that is to execute the desired behaviour; and they can lead to the satisfaction of having achieved a moral goal.

Of course many questions can be raised about persuasive technologies from an ethical point of view, and a thorough analysis of these technologies goes certainly beyond the scope of this paper (Berdichevsky and Neunschwander 1999; Baker and Martinson 2001; Spahn 2012). But they seem to have some promising features. The worry from *Romantic Uneasiness* was, that modern technologies often lead away from moral reflection and virtuous behaviour. Persuasive technologies, however, can be designed to help people reach their goals, including moral ones. A concrete analysis of the promises and pitfalls of persuasive technologies for achiever's

happiness is in any case a promising task for future research, both within positive psychology and ethics of technology. To go back to our moral version of true happiness, one might reformulate it as follows: Persuasive technology is one promising type of technologies that can help to achieve the pleasure one gains from successfully working on one's skills while trying to reach a moral aim, such as sustainability. It entails the satisfaction of having become a different type of person: one that exercises virtuous moral behaviour.

However, there are various objections to the idea that persuasive technologies can be the road to achiever's happiness. For one, persuasive technologies can persuade people into behaviours that are not contributing to their happiness. Indeed, much research about the design of persuasive technologies is connected to marketing and advertisement, creating technologies that persuade people to buy certain products (like online shopping recommendation tools). But even if persuasive technologies promote moral values the question remains, which moral values a specific type of persuasive technology promotes: those of the user or those of the designer or other parties? In fact, the debate about persuasive technologies can be placed in the context of the debate about Libertarian Paternalism (Thaler and Sunstein 2008; Anderson 2010; Hausman and Welch 2010). Can we design persuasive technologies to promote moral values, while at the same time respecting individual autonomy and freedom of choice?

The answers to these worries deserve a more elaborated discussion than can be given here (Spahn 2011; Karppinen and Oinas-Kukkonen 2013). Probably the best approach to counter them would be to turn them into design guidelines. Persuasive Technologies *should* be created such, that they take the values of the user into account, require informed consent and are compatible with voluntary behaviour change (Baker and Martinson 2001; Smids 2012). Only if they meet certain ethical criteria can these technologies really contribute to the quest for achiever's happiness.

6.6 Conclusion

The aim of the essay was to distinguish a person-related and a circumstance directed type of happiness. Looking at the ethical tradition, we found that philosophers have certain expectations about what should count as true happiness for human beings, who can act in accordance with moral values. The best types of technology for human happiness might thus not be those that try to 'control the external circumstances'. In best case they can take away obstacles rather than contribute actively to true meaningful happiness. How technology can move beyond what enlightenment optimism suggests, and in how far it can not only be an enabler but a true contribution to the deeper quest for moral perfection and true human happiness is an important question for future research.

Enlightenment optimism might be mistaken by mainly praising technologies for their advancement of controlling fate and fighting external threads to happiness. Here Romantic Uneasiness seems to have a valid point. But if the philosopher's

consensus is true, that real happiness must have some connection to the moral character or human beings, then we can try to find a different way in which technologies can contribute to this ideal. To identify the various types of technologies that can serve this aim is a promising task within the ethics of technology, as task that might well serve to complement positive psychology and could be labelled positive philosophy of technology. A philosophy of technology that does not mainly warn about the shortcomings, risks and dangers, but that helps to identify ways in which morality, happiness and technology design can be combined.

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Chapter 7
A Biomedical Shortcut to (Fraudulent) Happiness? An Analysis of the Notions of Well-Being and Authenticity Underlying Objections to Mood Enhancement

Birgit Beck and Barbara Stroop

7.1 Introduction and Central Question

After having originally been developed to treat recognized mental illnesses like major depression, the so-called 'mood enhancers' such as antidepressants are being taken increasingly for non-therapeutic purposes in order to promote feelings "better than well" (Kramer 1997: xii). In the current bioethical debate on mood enhancement it is pointed out that people are likely to view mood enhancing technologies as a useful means for directly increasing their well-being[1] with lesser effort compared to traditional means—as a "biomedical shortcut" (Juengst 1998: 39) to happiness. It is maintained that it is a popular conception on the part of proponents of mood enhancement that "the new means seek the same goals [as the old means], but they achieve them more quickly or efficiently; therefore, the new means are good, perhaps even better than the old means" (Cole-Turner 1998: 153). A new "pharmacological road to happiness" (President's Council on Bioethics (PCB) 2003: 251) seems to have emerged.

However, this view has received fierce criticism. Opponents of mood enhancement argue that it is a common but largely mistaken assumption that these new mood brightening procedures promote individual well-being: When mood enhancers are applied we are "missing something important" (Cole-Turner 1998:

[1] In the following, if not explicitly indicated otherwise, we use the terms *happiness* and *well-being* interchangeably, referring to the broader concept in terms of a good life.

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153) and there is a danger of a "fraudulent happiness" (PCB 2003: 212). The President's Council on Bioethics envisages a "prospect of mistaking some lesser substitute for real happiness" (PCB 2003: 252). The danger of falling short of 'real' happiness by using mood enhancing technologies seems to be a common concern and has received a lot of affirmation.[2]

Intuitively, this objection seems at first sight to be highly plausible and convincing. No one wants to be deprived of real happiness in their lives and so we should abstain from seeking this goal through possibly detrimental means. However, on closer scrutiny, it becomes apparent that the claim for a moral (or even legal) ban on mood enhancement *for the reason that it cannot promote our well-being* rests upon a variety of implicit assumptions which usually remain rather vague. Therefore, in this article, we provide an attempt to disentangle various presumptions underlying the concern of a 'fraudulent happiness'. To gain a better understanding of this charge, we focus primarily on the examination of two concepts: the notions of *well-being* and *authenticity* both of which play a major role in the debate about mood enhancement. The final aim of the article is to address the following question: *Does mood enhancement inevitably lead to* '*fraudulent happiness*'?

7.2 The Phenomenon of Mood Enhancement

Imagine a person who is too stressed about work to enjoy a friend's wedding celebration. With the aim of inducing the feelings appropriate for the wedding, namely feelings of joy and pleasure, she ingests psychiatric drugs. Thus, one could argue, the desired feelings which the person lacks in this specific situation because of the particular circumstances in which she finds herself, are induced 'artificially'.[3] She, therefore, takes the 'biomedical shortcut' in order to be in a cheerful mood for the wedding. This case is a common example on mood enhancement to be found in the literature (Wassermann and Liao 2008; Liao and Roache 2011). Obviously, there are many occasions in everyday life in which we experience that those emotions which seem appropriate for certain situations are not forthcoming naturally or in which we would like to brighten our mood. Would it not be tempting simply to take a pill which directly improves our mood to the desired level?

Currently, among the most frequently applied methods of mood enhancement appears to be the use of psychiatric drugs such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and recreational drugs. An increase in the sales of SSRIs is already apparent and gradually more and more people ingest SSRIs to counteract

[2] See for instance Elliott (2003), Brülde (2007), Schermer (2013).

[3] However, at this point it is important to note that most psychiatric drugs such as antidepressants do not have an immediate effect. They need to be taken for several weeks until the desired effects occur.

less severe mental states than depression. Furthermore, it is discussed in the literature on mood enhancement whether interventions such as transcranial direct current stimulation or even deep brain stimulation will be applied as means for enhancement in the future (Krämer 2011: 52; Schermer 2013). However, since these procedures are not easily accessible and at least the latter represents a highly invasive intervention on the human body these scenarios are not considered as very probable, at least in the near future, from an empirical point of view (Hildt 2012: 89).

But what exactly characterizes interventions which are considered as mood enhancement? In order to gain a better understanding it appears to be fruitful to examine, on the one hand, what is meant by referring to the term 'mood' and, on the other hand, what characterizes the interventions which are considered as enhancement.

A definition provided by Guy Kahane (2011: 167) sheds some light on the various categories of affective states: He defines *moods* as very broad "dispositions that govern one's entire emotional orientation for a certain period." Additionally, he distinguishes moods from *feelings* and *emotions*: "Feelings are episodes of consciousness. There is something it feels like to feel angry or sad. Emotions are broader behavioural dispositions which include dispositions to have certain feelings, as well as dispositions to behave, think, and attend in certain ways" (ibid.). It is important to point out that the notion of 'mood enhancement' serves as an umbrella-term and refers to the improvement of all three categories of affective states. People use 'happy pills' in order to ameliorate their feelings as well as their emotions, and moods.

Now, let us move to the concept of *enhancement*: Usually, the term 'enhancement' is applied as opposed to 'therapy' or 'treatment' respectively. This particular understanding stems from a definition given by Eric T. Juengst, who states that "[t]he term *enhancement* is usually used in bioethics to characterize interventions designed to improve human form or functioning beyond what is necessary to sustain or restore good health" (Juengst 1998: 29). As the statement suggests it encompasses all (medical)[4] interventions that are not meant to either contribute to or restore health or prevent disease. For our present purposes, we presuppose an exclusively *descriptive* understanding of this definition and do not intend to infer any normative claims from this purely methodological distinction.

However, the treatment/enhancement-dichotomy has raised serious objections,[5] since it appears to be an insurmountable task to find an incontestable notion of 'health' and 'disease' which could serve to justify the distinction. Although there are cases in which the classification of interventions as either treatment or

[4] There is a separate discussion as to how far other than medical measures of improving performance or well-being should also be labelled some sort of "old-style enhancement" (Nagel 2010: 183), e.g. training and exercise or traditional 'mood enhancers' like Saint John's Wort or small amounts of alcohol. Since such procedures are socially accepted or even recommended, they are not usually seen as problematic or as 'enhancing' means at all.

[5] See for instance Bostrom and Roache (2007), Heilinger (2010), Savulescu et al. (2011).

enhancement seems less doubtful, there also exists a large grey area. Particularly in cases of prevention (like e.g. vaccination), the respecting intuitions diverge (Schöne-Seifert 2009: 347). Even theories of 'normal' or 'species typical' functioning (Daniels 1985) cannot provide mere descriptive or 'naturalistic' criteria for health and disease, since what is considered as 'normal' is not simply explicable in biological terms, but to a high degree a matter of social conventions (Merkel et al. 2007: 305; Synofzik 2009: 53 ff.).

Some authors (mainly proponents of enhancement) therefore distance themselves from the treatment/enhancement-distinction in favour of a so called *welfarist account*: From this perspective the term 'human enhancement' encompasses "[a]ny change in the biology or psychology of a person which increases the chances of leading a good life in the relevant set of circumstances" (Savulescu et al. 2011: 7). This account, however, seems too widely based to provide a clear definition, for whether or not something counts as human enhancement under this description depends on how we understand the notion of a 'good life'. Alternative theories of well-being and the specific aspects on which they lay emphasis are, however, likely to result in divergent classifications. Furthermore, when following the welfarist account, enhancement procedures can only be defined as such after the impact of an intervention has become apparent and has been shown to be a contributive factor to a person's well-being. This proceeding seems to be of little help when aiming at evaluating for example the off-label use of drugs *before* it has become a common practice in our society. Finally, it is questionable whether the wide understanding of enhancement, which the welfarist account offers, properly meets the moral concerns critics of enhancement usually articulate. If everything that actually contributes to (the chances of) leading a good life is considered as enhancement, then it is not obvious how enhancement could be in the least objectionable (Merkel 2009: 177).

Having illustrated the problems of providing a convincing definition of enhancement in the first place it is not our intention to elaborate further on this topic. Due to the fact that usually opponents of biomedical enhancements use the treatment/enhancement-distinction in order to refer to "the class of interventions they oppose" (DeGrazia 2005a: 264) we simply endorse this view in the following for the sake of argument while at the same time being aware of its problems. Furthermore, we base our analysis on the hypothetical assumption that the procedures in question actually lead to the desired effects and do not have severe medical side-effects.

Taken together, if we combine the standard definition of enhancement with the explication of mood provided in the above, mood enhancement would be the improvement of feeling, emotion, and mood 'beyond what is necessary to sustain or restore health'. Following this suggestion, the application of antidepressants in order to improve mood in a case of severe or persistent depression clearly does not constitute an instance of enhancement. Such cases can be considered as straightforward therapeutic intervention. In numerous other cases however, it might not be so evident whether the improvement of mood has therapeutic purposes or can be considered as enhancement (Talbot 2009: 333 f.).

Frequently, when giving examples of cases of mood enhancement, authors refer to the case of Tess described by the American psychiatrist Peter D. Kramer in his book *Listening to Prozac* (Kramer 1997). Tess, a woman who primarily started to administer medication in order to recover from clinical depression, is elevated to a state which Kramer considers as "better than well" (ibid.: xii). He describes her "transformation" (McMillan 2010: 187) the following way:

> I had never seen a patient's social life reshaped so rapidly and dramatically. Low self-worth, competitiveness, jealousy, poor inter-personal skills, shyness, fear of intimacy—the usual causes of social awkwardness—are so deeply ingrained and so difficult to influence that ordinarily change comes gradually if at all. But Tess blossomed all at once (Kramer 1997: 7 f.).

The case of Tess is often used to demonstrate that Prozac not only functions as means for treatment. Kramer points out that he is concerned with "fairly healthy people who show dramatically good responses to Prozac, people who are not so much cured of illness as transformed" (Kramer 1997: xvi). Moreover, this estimation makes it obvious that Prozac is not only useful as a medical means for enhancement, but beyond that it also raises questions concerning enhancement and personality: By taking the pill, Tess not only recovered from illness, but had the sense of gaining a whole new personality with which she identified much more than with her former self. When Kramer took her off medication, she felt she was literally *losing herself* rather than simply returning to her former anxious personality which was characteristic for her before she sought therapeutic assistance.

However, as DeGrazia (2005a: 263) points out, "[o]ne might argue that, since such patients [like Tess] struggle with psychological phenomena that can be ameliorated with medication, it means little to say that they are not ill whereas someone who, say, barely qualifies as having depression or clinical anxiety is ill." Certainly, it remains a matter of dispute whether the depicted examples (the wedding example as well as the Tess case) constitute instances of enhancement since, as illustrated, the treatment/enhancement-distinction does not provide a concept with clear boundaries. Nevertheless, these cases shall function as examples of mood enhancement in the following.

7.3 The Two-Fold Threat of Fraudulent Happiness

As we have already mentioned in the introduction, mood enhancing interventions have been confronted with a lot of criticism. Opponents of mood enhancement frequently refer to individual well-being or happiness within their line of reasoning. In the study *Beyond Therapy. Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness* the President's Council on Bioethics, one of the fiercest critics of enhancement, envisions a "two-fold threat of fraudulent happiness" (PCB 2003: 212) if mood enhancers are administered. In the following we provide an exemplary analysis of

this charge in order to examine whether mood enhancement inevitably leads to 'mood enhancement'.[6]

To begin with, let us examine what exactly the accusation refers to: Firstly, the Council expresses the fear that "an unchecked power to […] brighten moods, and alter our emotional dispositions could imperil our capacity to form a strong and coherent personal identity" (PCB 2003: 212). The other concern put forward by the PCB is that "by disconnecting our mood[…] from what we do and experience, the new drugs could jeopardize the fitness and truthfulness of how we live and what we feel" (ibid.: 213).

Taken together, the charge of a 'fraudulent happiness' at first glance refers to two concerns as it is said to be threatening two important constituents of our well-being: *an authentic personality* on the one hand, and *authenticexperiences* on the other.[7] Both are obviously regarded as indispensable for *authentic* or *real happiness*. However, these two concerns still appear to encompass various worries and for this reason require closer examination.

7.3.1 The Threat of an Inauthentic Personality

In order to clarify the situation, let us, first of all, turn to the threat to 'personal identity' with which the PCB is concerned in order to examine what this charge constitutes. The PCB provides no further qualification of the term 'personal identity'. However, there are different interpretations of this notion that can be depicted from the Council's argumentation which refer to different problems concerning 'personal identity' and, therefore, should be distinguished in order to avoid conceptual entanglement. In the following we provide a short overview.

Chatterjee (2004: 971), for example, states that a "fundamental concern is that chemically changing the brain threatens our notion of personhood. The central issue may be that such interventions threaten essential characteristics of what it means to be human." Precisely this concern is expressed by the PCB in arguing that new biomedical technologies "impinge directly upon the human person […] in ways that may affect our very humanity" (PCB 2003: 5). The Council neither provides a differentiated explication of the special characteristics of a 'human person' nor of the notion of our 'very humanity'. However, the PCB advises avoidance of "challenges to what is naturally human, what is humanly dignified, or to attitudes that show proper respect for what is naturally and dignifiedly human" (PCB 2003:

[6] Obviously, the PCB is not the only critic of mood enhancing procedures. However, an extensive examination of the arguments of the various critics would go beyond the scope of this article. Hence, the ensuing sections provide an analysis of the lines of reasoning as exemplified by the PCB and their charge of a 'fraudulent happiness'.

[7] It should be noted that the PCB does not explicitly refer to the concept of authenticity. However, the concerns the PCB expresses are frequently discussed under this heading (see for instance Krämer 2011). For this reason we will use the term in the following.

286 f.). From this point of view biomedical enhancement is likely to endanger the "appreciation of and respect for 'the naturally given,' threatened by hubris" (ibid.: 287). It can be noticed, therefore, that the term 'personal identity' in this case appears to be used as encompassing ideas of a *human nature*and *personhood*, and even using these notions interchangeably.

Another concern brought forward by the PCB is that people might worry about *remaining themselves* after using enhancing substances. Assuming this understanding, the threat concerns "the preservation of identity, threatened by efforts at self-transformation" (PCB 2003: 287). This threat in turn is considered to be detrimental to well-being: "We would not want to attain happiness (or any other object of our desires) if the condition for attaining it required that we become someone else, that we lose our identity in the process" (ibid.: 211). In this context the term 'personal identity' appears to be used referring primarily to *diachronic identity*, i.e. personal identityover time or persistence respectively.

A third interpretation of the notion of 'personal identity' that can be depicted from the lines of argument of the PCB is the idea of (a kind of virtuous) *personality* or *character* (Chatterjee 2004: 971). What is likely to be altered by administering mood enhancement, according to this interpretation of the problem, are *psychological attributes* of the person including "self-conception, biography, values, and roles as well as psychological characteristics and style" (Schermer 2009: 46). Influencing (at least parts of) one's own personality via pharmaceutical means is considered to be suspicious. This apprehension mostly seems to stem from a special notion of an authentic or 'true' self, providing "ordinarily unseen and untapped resources of meaning and purpose" (Guignon 2004: 82 f.), which we are obliged to cultivate and which could be endangered by the use of biotechnological mood enhancers. As the PCB argues "[a]cknowledging the giftedness of life means recognizing that our talents and powers are not wholly our own doing, nor even fully ours, despite the efforts we expend to develop and to exercise them" (PCB 2003: 288).[8]

Hence we can perceive that the first part of the threat of fraudulent happiness seems to consist in the worry of losing one's fraudulent happiness: There is a fear of not being 'true to oneself' or 'true to one's (human) nature' respectively. This involves the danger of self-deception as well as of feelings of alienation (PCB 2003: 294) from one's own true beliefs and values.[9] There seems to be a special notion of authenticity underlying this line of reasoning, and we will come back to this

[8] Moreover, this idea frequently seems to be combined with a metaphysical dualist conception. According to the Council, it makes a fundamental difference which ontological level (the realm of the 'mind' or that of the 'physical') the striving for happiness relies on: "[T]he happiness we seek we seek […] for our *self* or embodied soul, not for our bodies as material stuff" (PCB 2003: 211).

[9] We do not deal with the closely related question for a concept of *autonomy* in the present context (concerning this issue cf. Bublitz and Merkel 2009). It should be noted that this problem is addressed by the PCB as well: "I am no longer the agent of self-transformation, but a passive patient of transforming powers. Indeed, to the extent that an achievement is the result of some extraneous intervention, it is detachable from the agent whose achievement it purports to be. 'Personal achievements' impersonally achieved are not truly the achievements of persons" (PCB 2003: 294).

question in Sect. 7.4.2. Since this is only one of the two concerns linked to the 'fraudulent happiness' charge, let us now take a closer look at the second concern.

7.3.2 The Threat of Inauthentic Experiences

As we have seen in the above, the second part of the threat is closely linked to the concern that *authentic experiences* are missing where mood enhancement is applied. In this respect, the PCB is concerned with the "possibility of severing the link between feelings of happiness and our actions and experiences in the world" (PCB 2003: 207 f.) as well as "the dignity of human activity, threatened by 'unnatural' means" (PCB 2003: 287). Felicitas Krämer puts the question the following way: "Do artificial substances lead to *inauthentic* results?" (Krämer 2011: 55). Using mood enhancers, however, is viewed as leading to inauthentic experiences in a number of different ways. Therefore, the deeper reason for the presumed inauthenticity, again, demands closer examination.

First of all, one line of argumentation provided by the PCB seems to imply that feelings of pleasure resulting from mood enhancers could *disconnect ourfrom reality* and thereby provoke an *illusion* of happiness. It is pointed out that real happiness needs to result from certain actions and activities—if this is not the case, they are *illusory*: "[W]ithout the activity there is and can be no happiness" (PCB 2003: 265). Obviously, there is a certain 'reality requirement' (Sumner 1996: 158)[10] in the PCB's understanding of authentic experiences. This might be backed up by the fact that many critics of mood enhancement frequently refer to Robert Nozick's thought experiment of an "experience machine" (Nozick 1974: 42–45, 2006: 104 ff.). In this the reader is asked to imagine a machine which is directly attached to the brain and able to provide any kind of experience one desires without a corresponding action or event in the real world. What exactly does the assumed illusion in the case of mood enhancement against the background of Nozick's thought experiment consist in?[11]

[10] In Sumners view, the reality requirement, however, must be rejected as presumptuously dogmatic (Sumner 1996: 159).

[11] It has been argued that the illusion consists in *not really experiencing* authentic pleasurable feelings at all, but instead something else, perhaps some hedonic 'chimaera' or the like. Krämer (2009: 202) quotes an example from Stephan (2003: 309, 311) according to whom "lightheaded melancholy" would be a case of an "artificial" feeling. However, Krämer maintains that for the person actually experiencing lightheaded melancholy, there is not necessarily a sense of emotional inauthenticity. The instantaneous quality of an experience is indifferent to questions about naturalness or reality (see also Krämer 2011). Thus, from a phenomenological point of view, the felt quality of pleasurable states of mind by all means cannot be illusory and hence not inauthentic in this way (regardless of the way of their arousal) (Krämer 2009: 202 f.). It is not possible to err about *feeling* happy, although there may be a potential for erring about having good reasons—or reasons at all—for doing so. The *qualitative authenticity* of pleasurable feelings, however, cannot account for the difference between authentic and inauthentic experiences.

One possible interpretation relies on the belief that feelings of joy and pleasure have to be *adequate responses to events or states of the world* in order to lead to real happiness and not to an illusion. There must be *reasons* for us to be happy, otherwise we fail to acknowledge the real circumstances of our lives, which might, at least, be prudentially problematic. According to Guy Kahane there are two possible ways of objecting to mood enhancement on the grounds of this intuition: "First, positive mood enhancers make us feel *contrary* to reason, by making us feel good (or even just 'neutral') when we should feel bad. Second, even when mood enhancers make us feel good when we *should* feel good, they prevent us from genuinely responding to our reasons. […] We feel good *when* we ought to, but not *because* we ought to" (Kahane 2011: 170). In this respect, mood enhancement is suspected to "corrupt our emotional lives" (ibid.).

As was already hinted by one quote from the PCB above, another way of explaining the alleged failure to achieve authentic well-being by means of mood enhancement is by pointing out that *producing* happiness through means of enhancement is considered to be *artificial* or *unnatural* respectively: "In seeking by these means to be better than we are or to like ourselves better than we do, we risk […] confounding the identity we have acquired through natural gift cultivated by genuinely lived experiences" (PCB 2003: 300). This quote suggests that pleasurable feelings can only be accepted as authentic if they are generated by means of natural sources. The opposite term to 'natural' aimed at in this special context seems to be 'technological' in a wide sense. However, the notion of 'nature' can adopt various meanings in different contexts (Birnbacher 2006). Therefore, it is not clear from the start what exactly the PCB is aiming at when referring to '(human) nature'. Usually this kind of argument is backed up by a *normative understanding* of 'nature' or 'human nature' (PCB 2003: 289 f.) as a morally binding and reliable guideline.[12]

Yet another way of failing to gain authentic happiness which is considered is the following: a state of pleasure which is not brought about by *appropriate means*, but instead by *improper ones* – such as the ingestion of a pill and therefore taking the 'biomedical shortcut'. In this context the PCB is concerned with the question: "[W]hy would one need to discipline one's passions, refine one's sentiments, and cultivate one's virtues, […] when one's aspiration to happiness could be satisfied by drugs in a quick, consistent, and cost-effective manner?" (PCB 2003: 208). The application of mood enhancement might "estrange us from the forms of pleasure that depend upon discipline and devotion" (ibid.). In this case it is argued that the happiness resulting from mood enhancement is not *properly earned*, that one is somehow *cheating*, not really deserving to be happy: "The erosion of character concern is wrapped around a 'no pain, no gain' belief. Struggling with pain builds

[12] This view, however, again raises difficulties which we are not able to address further in the present context; cf. instead for instance Bayertz (2005), Birnbacher (2006), Krämer (2009), Heilinger (2010).

character, and eliminating that pain undermines good character. Similarly, getting a boost without doing the work is cheating, and such cheating cheapens us" (Chatterjee 2004: 971). Serious self-improvement, as stated in the argument, takes a great amount of time and effort, otherwise it cannot guarantee authentic well-being in the end. Arguments like these are mostly ascribed to a particular position which is often referred to as "pharmacological Calvinism" (Nagel 2010: 312; McMillan 2010: 194).[13]

This line of argumentation is closely linked to another distinction playing a major role in the context of inauthentic experiences: namely the differentiation between the *direct* and *indirect* promotion of happiness. The PCB states that "our pursuit of happiness and our sense of self-satisfaction will become increasingly open to *direct* biotechnical intervention" (PCB 2003: 207). Seemingly, interventions that—with immediate effect—bring about some change in the 'chemical makeup' of the users' brains influence their feelings of happiness more 'directly' than, say, psychotherapy (Schöne-Seifert 2006). But what exactly can be the meaning of the term 'directly' here? Stefan Schleim points out that "when we discuss the possibility of pharmaceuticals, the means in question can *directly* or *indirectly* aim at increasing happiness. The latter is achieved by influencing other dimensions which in turn increase well-being" (Schleim 2011: 384, translation by the authors). 'Direct' interventions, however, are regarded as suspicious on grounds that, as is assumed, it *takes an amount of time and effort to become happy*.

To conclude, the second part of the threat of 'fraudulent happiness' seems to consist in the worry that when administering mood enhancers we might have emotions which are *disconnected from reality* in that they are no fitting responses to actual circumstances or which are *brought about in the wrong way*. This can imply that they were induced *artificially* and/or were *not properly earned*. For these reasons, the alleged direct shortcut to happiness is viewed as leading to inauthentic experiences. However, a closer look at the various concerns encompassed by the objection that mood enhancement leads to inauthentic experiences suggests that the depicted lines of reasoning rest upon a specific conception of well-being, which we ought to put under scrutiny.

Nonetheless, for the time being we conclude that the supposedly 'two-fold threat' of mood enhancement has turned out to be a *manifold* allegation which appears to be based upon specific notions of *well-being* and *authenticity*. We will take a closer look at these concepts in the following section.

[13] This view also encompasses the conviction that, generally speaking, earnest and rather melancholic character traits are often valued either for being intrinsically worthwhile or for their assumed interrelation to creative and profound personalities like those of artists, writers and other culturally engaged people (Kramer 2000) who may also count as especially 'authentic' and lead especially 'valuable' lives.

7.4 Prevalent Notions of Well-Being and Authenticity in the Debate on Mood Enhancement

There are different and partly conflicting notions of well-being as well as authenticity that are (often implicitly) referred to in the debate on mood enhancement. Let us take a closer look at the arguments of critics of mood enhancement to see on which concepts the concern of a resulting 'fraudulent happiness' is likely to be based.

7.4.1 Prevalent Notions of Well-Being

On scrutinizing the lines of argumentation connected to the charge of a 'fraudulent happiness' in the debate on mood enhancement, it becomes obvious that the reference to well-being and the question of what constitutes a good life play a dominant role. Critics such as the PCB explicitly base their argumentation on the hypothesis that when utilizing pharmacological assistance "[i]n the end, it is happiness understood as complete and comprehensive well-being […] that we seek" (PCB 2003: 270). When asserting the concerns examined in the previous chapter the lines of argumentation appear to be based upon a specific concept of happiness or well-being respectively. Moreover, it appears as if the choice of a specific concept of well-being has a great impact on the stance one takes concerning the question as to whether or not mood enhancement should be a legally, morally or, at least, prudentially justified procedure.

Although some critics seem to apply their concept of well-being as a matter of course,[14] generally speaking there is no suggestion of agreement as to what 'well-being' actually is, according to which criteria it should be evaluated, and who should have the ultimate authority to determine it. Indeed, since antiquity, there has been considerable debate about these questions and various alternative concepts have been developed. Today, most authors in philosophy refer to the three-way division of theories, which goes back to Derek Parfit (1987) and has become a standard in the debate on well-being: *hedonism*, *desire-fulfilment theories* and finally *objective list theories* (Brey 2012: 15–21).

The defining feature of hedonistic theories of well-being is the experience requirement (Griffin 1986: 13). Particular activities or the state of health are only taken into account in as far as they affect the conscious experience. In simple terms, according to the hedonist doctrine, well-being consists of the greatest balance of pleasure over pain. However, the doctrine has been confronted with many

[14] For example, the question as to what constitutes well-being only receives a short mention on pp. 210 f. of *Beyond Therapy*. In the following the PCB appears to base the argumentation on a specific concept of well-being without explicitly addressing this matter.

objections and contemporary advocates in philosophy are rarely to be found.[15] We will return to this criticism in more detail at a later point in this section.

The objections to hedonism have led thinkers to an alternative account of well-being, namely the desire-fulfilment theory. According to this approach, well-being results from satisfying personal desires and preferences. Most proponents of this perspective reject the experience requirement. However, in the latest philosophical discussions more elaborate versions of fulfilment theories are suggested, which focus on informed desires (Griffin 1986) and view the best life as "the one I would desire if I were fully informed about all the (non-evaluative) facts" (Crisp 2008: Sect. 4.2). The informed desire theory is based on the assumption that well-being is the result of our informed desires rather than our actual desire satisfaction since we are frequently mistaken when estimating what might promote our well-being due to lack of information.

Proponents of the so-called objective list theories take a different stance and reverse the priority. They maintain that the recognition of an objective good leads to the development of a preference for it rather than the other way round[16]: "Friendship and love may also seem to be things whose goodness explains, rather than results from, people's preferences for them" (Wolf 1997: 208). According to objective list accounts, there are a number of different objective goods which promote individual well-being. To a different extent specific items which are viewed as constituents of well-being are listed.[17] These lists, for instance, are based on the anthropological assumption that all human beings share certain essential basic needs or capabilities. Thus, in following this approach pleasurable experience or desire-satisfaction are not the measure of importance as a person's goods are independent of them or already exist prior to them. Items in an objective list theory might include, for example, health, friendship, autonomy or knowledge.

One might call into question whether this threefold distinction is the most appropriate way to structure the competing positions in the debate (Schramme 2008). However, in the following it should function as a means of classification in order to give us some kind of starting point. So let us take a closer look at some arguments the PCB brings forward to justify the charge of 'fraudulent happiness' concerning mood enhancement. This will be helpful for analyzing the concept of well-being on which the objections are based.

Generally speaking, critical comments on mood enhancement often seem to rest upon arguments stemming from the traditional criticism of *hedonist theories of happiness*. The PCB for instance stresses the point that well-being is more than "good mood" (PCB 2003: 235). The Council maintains that it depends on factors

[15] Torbjörn Tännsjö is considered a contemporary advocate of hedonism. See for instance Tännsjö (1998). Fred Feldmann (2004) argues for a different form of hedonism that he terms *attitudinal hedonism*.

[16] Griffin (1991) contrasts two models: the *taste model* (valuable because desired) and the *perception model* (desired because valuable).

[17] An example of an approach which is based on a concrete list of items which contribute to well-being can for instance be found in the works of John Finnis (1980).

such as effort, activity, social interactions, and relationships. Mood enhancement is considered as disregarding these other factors.

One instance of the disapproval directed towards hedonism which closely resembles the opposing lines of argumentation portrayed above is the objection that we seem to care about truth or authenticity besides our pleasures. Robert Nozick's 'experience machine' thought experiment, which we have already introduced in the last section, has been cited again and again in order to illustrate this point.[18] Would people choose to be hooked on to the machine for the rest of their lives? Nozick argues that people would not want to hook on to the machine as they want their experiences to be real and to have contact with reality. Thus, he concludes, we—at least sometimes—value something other than mere pleasure.

It also is a common objection that the hedonist doctrine "lacks the resources to draw distinctions between sources of pleasant affect" (Tiberius and Plakias 2010: 406). Therefore, according to the critics the doctrine is not able to distinguish different kinds of pleasure and differences in terms of quality of conscious experience. In order to do so additional criteria would be needed. According to the hedonist doctrine the pleasure which is taken in activities that engage our capacities can, for instance, be substituted by the pleasure induced through drugs.

We see that the criticism of mood enhancement as a means of achieving well-being is very similar to the objections leveled at hedonism. Therefore, critics of mood-enhancement appear to distance themselves from a hedonist doctrine, while at the same time insinuating that proponents are bound to embrace it.[19]

The critical arguments encompassed by the 'fraudulent happiness' charge presented above suggest that the PCB takes an *objective view of well-being* as a theoretical foundation: It is stated that "[w]e desire not simply to be satisfied with ourselves and the world, but to have this satisfaction as a result of deeds and loves and lives worthy of such self-satisfaction" (PCB 2003: 251) and that "the happiness of the soul is inseparable from the pleasure that comes from perfecting our natures and living fruitfully with our families, friends, and fellow citizens" (ibid.: 270). If these factors are missing, as in the case of mood enhancement, this "may ultimately result in a shallower life, instead of a richer life" (Berghmans et al. 2011: 161). Thus in the discussion of mood enhancement, factors such as social relationships and 'real' activities are universally considered to be integral parts of well-being. This assumption lies at the heart of objective list accounts of well-being.

Hence, we can conclude that the charge of a 'fraudulent happiness' actually tends to be based upon an objective list account whereas pure hedonism is strongly rejected. However, this still leaves further options open for proponents (as well as

[18] For criticism of the 'experience machine' thought experiment see for instance Sumner (1996: 95, 96) and McMillan (2010: 191 ff.).

[19] Kahane (2011: 167) acknowledges that "many supporters of the biomedical enhancement of mood explicitly or implicitly base their case on such appeal to hedonic reasons." However, he emphasizes that besides hedonic reasons we also have overriding "affective reasons" (ibid.: 167 ff.), i.e. reasons to express specific emotions and feelings as proper and suitable responses to the real circumstances of our lives.

opponents) of mood enhancement, such as desire-fulfillment theories, or hybrid forms. One might argue that also proponents of an 'ideal informed preference theory' could have objections to mood enhancement. This might be true, but this view itself takes problematic assumptions as its basis. Valerie Tiberius, for instance, points out that there is an epistemic as well as pragmatic problem with the notion of ideally informed preferences: "Given that we are not, nor ever will be, ideally or perfectly rational, it is not obviously helpful to be told that we should choose whatever we would choose if we were" (Tiberius 2008: 7). Moreover, an ideal information requirement is likely to push the theory in an objectivist direction, so that again the arguments given below apply to it. Let us now turn to the analysis of the concept of authenticity to which the objections of mood enhancement are likely to be tied.

7.4.2 Prevalent Notions of Authenticity

There has been much discussion in the literature as to what a meaningful interpretation of the reference to 'personal identity' and 'authenticity' in the enhancement debate could consist in.[20] According to Eric Parens (2005) there are two equivocal, but rival concepts of authenticity and authentic personality which are—often implicitly—presupposed by critics as well as proponents of enhancement.[21] This in turn results from different "ethical frameworks" the antagonistic notions of authenticity are grounded in: the "gratitude framework" and the "creativity framework" (Parens 2005: 37 f.). These frameworks can be understood as "outlooks on human life; conceptions of how we best live. Are we most human, do we live most meaningfully, by accepting our distinctive natures, or do we live most meaningfully by transcending limitations?" (Levy 2011: 312).

Based on these alternative approaches, there is, on the one hand, the tacit notion of an *essential self* (DeGrazia 2005a: 270; Bublitz and Merkel 2009: 360). This is part of our 'nature', given and unalterable, and has to be discovered and nurtured rather than actively formed. Also, this concept encompasses teleological ideas: "Authenticity then means to connect one's present person-stage to such a pre-given, rather static self, through an introspective journey of self-discovery, and to life accordingly" (Bublitz and Merkel 2009: 370). This view provides objective criteria for 'human flourishing' and what it means to be 'truly' oneself. Personality consists in being 'who one is' in the first place; every attempt to intentionally interfere with 'the given'—at least in an inappropriate way—can only lead to confusion and self-loss.

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[20] Cf. Parens (2005: 41): "Anyone who has used the word 'authenticity' or has tried to track how others use it knows how slippery it is."

[21] See also Bolt (2007: 286), Bublitz and Merkel (2009: 360), Levy (2011).

The second prevalent notion, on the other hand, is one of "self-creation" (DeGrazia 2005a: 268), implying that psycho-pharmaceutical means can help users to *become* who they 'really' are or who they really want to be. According to this view, authentic personality requires an *existential self* (Bublitz and Merkel 2009: 361) which is entirely determined by subjective individual ideals, preferences, believes and values, ideally unaffected by external (social) influences. This concept includes a strong notion of autonomy and—in an extreme case—a somewhat paradoxical sense of construing or designing oneself at every moment by radical choice (Noggle 2005). Related to this concept is a normative ideal of authenticity (Taylor 1991) in terms of an individualistic attempt of "self-fulfillment" as a "crucial aspect of a meaningful life" (Bolt 2007: 288).

Certainly these antagonistic notions of the self constitute only the far ends of a spectrum, and there are more subtle positions in between. Parens himself points out that usually we are attracted by both notions of the self because we are able to move between the frameworks and therefore give some plausibility to each of them, a stance which he appreciates (Parens 2005: 34, 38, 40). Despite this observation, opponents as well as proponents of mood enhancement, at least in academic debate, often tend to adhere to one of the opposite ends of the spectrum. As Parens puts it, they "are speaking out of the framework in which they feel most comfortable" (Parens 2005: 38).

Coming back to the concern of a 'fraudulent happiness' and its underlying concept of 'personal identity' and authenticity respectively let us classify the PCB's stance against the background of the alternative concepts provided. With regard to the arguments and quotes analyzed above, it has already been hinted at that the Council mostly seems to endorse the *essentialist view* on authenticity. Furthermore, the PCB's commitment to the gratitude framework becomes obvious in that the Council insists that "only if there is a *human* 'givenness,' or a given humanness, that is also good and worth respecting, either as we find it or as it could be perfected *without ceasing to be itself*, will the 'given' serve as a *positive* guide for choosing what to alter and what to leave alone. Only if there is something precious in our given human nature—beyond the fact of its giftedness—can what is given guide us in resisting efforts that would degrade it" (PCB 2003: 289 f.).

Concerning the alternative notions of 'personal identity' examined above, it can be stated that, apart from conceptual entanglement, some of the concerns about a possible alteration of 'personal identity' that were addressed by the PCB seem to stem from rather improbable empirical assumptions. As we have seen before, there are several possibilities to understand this term depicted from the arguments of the PCB: *human nature/personhood*, *diachronic identity*, and *personality*. Two of these interpretations, however, have been powerfully contested by many authors in the debate.

Firstly, the idea that being human and being a person are necessarily coextensive has frequently been challenged. Instead, it is assumed that there can be humans that are not (yet) persons, either as an interim state or irreversibly. Being a person in this view depends on certain properties and abilities—so-called "*person-making characteristics*" (Quante 2013: 256)—which one can, to various degrees, develop and

lose (partly) during lifetime (Merkel et al. 2007: 211–232). For the assumption which considers mood enhancement as a threat to personhood to be true, the possibility would have to be taken for granted that e.g. the ingestion of a 'happy pill' could have very severe side effects eventually leading to a state or condition in which all usual person-making characteristics (whatever criteria one proposes concerning this matter) would cease to apply. From an empirical point of view, though, this consequence seems rather unlikely.

The second threat, concerning diachronic identity, at first glance, looks more true to life as we have seen in the case of Tess. But why should someone 'lose her identity' by becoming a happier person? Tess still was Tess, even if she could no longer positively identify with her 'old self'. We cannot take the expression of 'losing one's identity' literally in the sense of mood enhancement being a threat to diachronic identity or persistence. For this to occur, the potential must be assumed that the application results in a *complete switch of one person to another*. This idea would in turn imply some sort of "psychological death" (Merkel et al. 2007: 282)—again a consequence that is rather unlikely to appear from an empirical point of view (Schermer 2009: 46; Galert 2009: 181).

As was indicated above, the third understanding of 'personal identity' referred to psychological attributes as part of personality. It should be noted that (intentionally) altering *some* of these properties under ordinary circumstances can be considered as the very aim of an enhancement intervention and, again, does not imply the creation of a whole new personality. Supposing that personality is not a once and for all fixed and static set of traits (a kind of preformed 'true self'), we are able to develop and shape it—by interaction with our social environment—constantly over a lifetime, notwithstanding the possession of "robust natural inclinations" (Schermer 2009: 46). Neil Levy also affirms that "we can point to the fact that people *do* have dispositions and talents and personalities, which fit them better for some activities than for others and which make some ways of life more fulfilling for them than others, without committing ourselves to the claim that people are immutable, and even without denying that genuinely profound change is possible" (Levy 2011: 312). Therefore, it has been pointed out by several authors in the debate that the most reasonable interpretation of the term 'personal identity' in this context is to be understood in terms of *narrative identity* (DeGrazia 2005a).[22]

As the examination of the critics' lines of argument has shown, we can conclude that although authors rarely explicate their underlying premises concerning the notions of well-being[23] and authenticity, there is a tendency to rely on specific concepts on the part of opponents: the concern of a 'fraudulent happiness' appears to rest heavily upon an *objective list theory of well-being* as well as *essentialist assumptions concerning authenticity*.

[22] See also DeGrazia (2005b), Merkel et al. (2007), Bublitz and Merkel (2009), Galert (2009), Schermer (2009), Nagel (2010).

[23] For a detailed analysis of underlying concepts of well-being in arguments in favour of and against enhancement see also Bayertz et al. (2012).

7.5 Contesting the Charge of a Fraudulent Happiness

We have ascertained that the charge of a 'fraudulent happiness' requires assuming certain premises which comprise an *essential self* on the one hand, and an *objective theory of well-being* that gives us generally accepted guidelines with regard to proper reasons, circumstances, and quality of happiness, on the other. Obviously, these theories are not the only ones possible and, furthermore, presuppose some anthropological and (meta-)ethical premises worth questioning—namely a kind of essential human nature as well as an objectivism or realism about ethical values which, under the conditions of a factual pluralism of individual and socially determined ethical beliefs, are far from self-evident and might be hard to justify.

If we assume, in contrast, a moderate version of the existentialist understanding of authentic personality (as supported by the creativity framework) or a kind of narrative identity theory, as has been suggested by many authors, and combine it with a desire-fulfillment or hybrid theory of well-being, the concern might very well turn out to lose its initial plausibility and credibility. All in all, if one supports alternative accounts of well-being and authenticity as against the concepts of the critics, it appears as if the charge of 'fraudulent happiness' can be attenuated.

Furthermore, as Neil Levy has suggested, mood enhancement "can be a means to authenticity, *no matter* [which one turns out to be] the right account of authenticity" (Levy 2011: 313). This statement rests on the assumption that even if we acknowledge that (most of) our personality traits are given 'by nature', as stated by the self-discovery view on authenticity, this does not imply that we have no reason to try and alter our traits: "Self-discovery might *require* change from us, and to that extent it is entirely compatible with the use of various enhancements" (ibid.: 316). Moreover, there might be cases in which the 'true self' of a person is trapped by the circumstances and in which "enhancements can be tools whereby we bring our outer selves into line with who we most deeply are" (ibid.: 317).

Finally, even if one presupposes an objective theory of well-being, mood enhancement will not necessarily constitute a *direct shortcut* to fraudulent happiness: This line of reasoning is tied to the ancient notion (commonly known as the 'hedonic paradox') that happiness or well-being can best be pursued *indirectly*. It has already been mentioned that enhancement can be used for *both the direct* and *indirect* promotion of happiness. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between *two different ends* which can be pursued when applying mood enhancers.

The first aim is *promptly bringing about a pleasurable state of mind* and, therefore, a direct shortcut to pleasure in situations such as the above-mentioned case of a friend's wedding. Such usage of mood enhancers resembles the consumption of drugs and often conflicts with objective accounts of well-being. However, mood enhancers such as anti-depressants do not have an immediately uplifting impact but their effect rather comes about continually after a period of time without leading to feelings of ecstasy or feelings contrary to reason. Hence, the suspicion that mood enhancers inevitably disconnect our feelings from reality by provoking an illusion appears exaggerated, at least from an empirical point of view.

As Guy Kahane points out: "[I]t is possible that what [mood enhancers] do is help us better *appreciate* the good things in life – they might just make it easier for us to recognize and respond to our positive affective reasons" (Kahane 2011: 172).[24]

Hence, the second aim is *providing a condition* which in turn reliably constitutes a basic motivation and foundation for whatever one regards as beneficial for the pursuit of one's well-being. In this latter case the goal is to establish a kind of alertness and openness towards valuable activities which in turn promote well-being. Therefore, far from entrapping us in some chemical 'experience machine' and thereby leading to inauthentic experiences, mood enhancers might in some cases assist us in coming to grips with the 'real' world. This *indirect* promotion of happiness via mood enhancement does not necessarily conflict with an objective account of well-being. If the goods on the respective list can be achieved reliably by improving one's general outlook on the world and one's interaction with the social environment, it is hard to see how this could be disadvantageous for leading a good life.

In the light of all of these considerations, we can ascertain that mood enhancement *does not inevitably* lead to fraudulent happiness. The charge of a 'fraudulent happiness' requires more careful attention and one should avoid giving premature credibility to it. Even if mood enhancement should gain widespread acceptance in our society, the danger of people becoming deprived of their authentic personalities and 'real' happiness neither necessarily holds from a conceptual perspective, nor does it appear to be convincing from an empirical point of view. Hence, we can conclude by saying that at least in some cases mood enhancement might provide an *indirect road to happiness* without the risk of inevitably leading to fraudulent happiness.[25]

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[24] Kahane goes on to state that whether or not mood enhancers are really in a position to help us better appreciate and respond to the good things in life is an empirical question.

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Chapter 8
Increasing Societal Well-Being Through Enhanced Empathy Using Computer Games

Judith Annett and Stefan Berglund

8.1 Introduction

Well-being has been the focus of much discussion within a diverse array of disciplines. These discussions tend to define well-being from one of two general philosophical conceptualizations, namely hedonism and eudaimonism. Well-being from a hedonic point of view can be roughly understood as 'pleasure focused' while eudaimonic well-being can be regarded, roughly speaking, as 'meaning and virtue focused'. In today's society, well-being and/or happiness is often understood in a hedonistic and non-eudaimonistic way. To reconcile hedonism with pro-social behavior, intending to benefit others, it is tempting to assume that pro-social behavior necessarily increases the agent's individual subjective hedonic well-being. However, even if this is sometimes the case, pro-social acting—e.g. being truthful or brave—is often linked to *diminished* subjective well-being for the agent, bringing about more distress than pleasure. The hedonistic conception of individual well-being as pleasure is therefore problematic since it is difficult to see how society could function effectively or societal well-being be promoted without people sometimes being prepared to care for the well-being of others even when this might imply negative consequences for their own individual subjective well-being. Consequently, one of the oldest issues in ethics is the investigation of the reasons why one should sometimes sacrifice one's own hedonic well-being for the well-being of others.

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8.2 Empathy

Much has also been written recently about empathy, both in scientific sources and in the popular press. However, there is a lack of clarity about what various authors actually mean when they talk about empathy, and what the real significance of it might be in terms of the daily life of the individual and also for the society in which we live.

Since its introduction into the English language in 1909 the term empathy has been interpreted and used in various ways. For example, Batson (2009) identifies eight distinct phenomena that have been called empathy. He suggests that each of these relates, to a greater or lesser extent, to the two fundamental questions: 'How can one know what another person is thinking and feeling?' and 'What leads one person to respond with sensitivity and care to the suffering of another?'. In general, however, people have a relatively fair understanding of what terms like empathy, sympathy and compassion refer to and even if promoting empathy is not always psychologically and ethically unproblematic (see Hoffman 2001a, b; Prinz 2011a, b), it is intuitively plausible to claim that, both at the individual and societal level, more empathy and empathic concern, prima facie, is better than less (see Slote 2007).

Thus, at a general level, empathy relates to the ability to understand and share what other people might be feeling and experiencing, with the caveat that we do so without ever losing awareness of the distinction between ourselves and the other. We appear to share this ability, to some extent, with other species (see de Waal 2008, 2009) and its roots can be traced through an evolutionary pathway (see Decety 2010; Decety and Ickes 2009a, b; Hoffman 2001a, b; Batson 2009; Churchland 2011). Moreover, empathy can be seen to include a motivational aspect which leads us to want to respond with care and sensitivity to the experience of others (Batson 2009).

Batson's first question, '*How can one know what another person is thinking and feeling?*' has evoked explanations based on phenomena such as: postural mimicry or matching the neural responses of an observed other; coming to feel as another person feels; intuiting or projecting oneself into another's situation; imagining how another is thinking and feeling; and imagining how one would think and feel in the other's place. The second question *'What leads one person to respond with sensitivity and care to the suffering of another?*' can be addressed by invoking two further phenomena. These are (1) feeling vicarious personal distress at witnessing another person's suffering, and (2) feeling for another who is suffering. These two are not sources of knowledge about the other's state, but are reactions to that knowledge (Batson 2009). Certainly, feeling distress at witnessing another person in distress can produce motivation to help that person, even if the ultimate goal may not necessarily be directed towards relieving the other's distress (i.e. altruistic motivation) but may be directed towards relieving one's own distress (egoistic motivation). These may be evidenced, for example, by explicit behaviors, self-report of experienced mental states, assessment of attitudes, neuropsychological investigations of brain activity and neurophysiological and neuroendocrinological study.

Based on an examination of how empathy might be conceptualized from a psychological, neurocognitive and philosophical perspective and a comparison of definitions proposed by Decety and Jackson (2004), de Vignemont and Singer (2006), Hoffman (2011) and Batson (2009) we propose the following as a pragmatic, working definition of empathy in which to frame our subsequent discussion.

> Empathy is the ability to subjectively experience emotional states that are both significantly similar to, and caused by, awareness and/or knowledge of the emotional states of other people with whom one is in contact through direct perception, and/or through imagining their hypothetical emotional states. Empathy requires awareness that the cause of one's empathic emotion is another person's emotion (i.e. it is essentially an other-related/altruistic ability) and must be accompanied by a disposition to respond in a careful and sensitive way to these emotional states of others.

8.3 Empathy as a Link Between Individual Well-Being and Societal Well-Being

The rise in popular interest in what has been a longstanding philosophical subject may lie in the suggestion that empathy and empathic concern plays a fundamental role in social interaction and moral development (Hoffman 2001a, b) and can be invoked to aid our understanding of both our individual sense of position and well-being within society and our evaluation and promotion of the well-being of our society in particular and humanity in general (Persson and Savulescu 2012). As noted by de Waal (2009), society depends in part on a *second* 'invisible hand' which reaches out to others. He suggests that a community true to the meaning of the word is not possible if human beings are indifferent to one another. Thus empathy may be seen as the 'glue' that binds individuals together, giving each individual a stake in the welfare of others. At the same time, empathy can be, as described by Baron-Cohen (2011), the 'universal solvent' for individual and societal problems. Lack of empathy, at least emotional aspects of empathy, is associated with psychopathy and other personality disorders. A society lacking empathy could therefore be viewed as undesirable and lacking in crucial aspects of well-being. At an anecdotal level, there would appear to be a sense that we live in a less caring and less empathic society than that of the immediate past, with this being experienced as feelings of reduced personal well-being and loss of faith in the 'goodness' of the society in which we live. This view is supported by studies such as Konrath et al. (2011) which reported that measured empathic concern (EC) and perspective taking (PT) (two basic components of empathy) amongst American college students showed decreases of 48 and 34 % respectively from 1979 through to 2009. Extension of such a trend would be generally considered undesirable and leads to the question of whether or not it is possible to reverse the trend and how that might be addressed. In the remainder of this paper we explore the view suggested by recent empirical research, that empathy might be one of mediators between individual and societal well-being. If people spontaneously feel, or learn to

feel good/bad when in contact with others who feel good/bad a possible reason why one should care for others is because it makes one feel good to see that others feel good and it makes one feel bad to see others feeling bad. Obviously other possible sources of pro-social behavior that are independent of empathy (e.g. duty) are not excluded (see Hoffman 2001a, b). Computer game play has increased exponentially in popularity in recent years and there is currently much debate about the implications of this. We consider the effects of computer game playing on empathy and pro-social behaviour at various levels of analysis including psychosocial and behavioural, neuroscientific and neurobiological and how research in this area might relate to both understanding and enhancing societal well-being.

8.4 The Neurobiology of Pro-social Behavior

Why is it that for species less social than humans, 'well-being' is in principle individual survival while for humans well-being is often linked partially to *others'* experience? Levels of pro-social behavior range from the basic care of and attachment to offspring through to more complex care for the well-being of humanity with its possible consequent loss of some individual well-being. In philosophy, Aristotle and Hume were prominent proponents of the social nature of human beings. Today, for example, Van der Weele (2011) considers the evolutionary roots of morality as inextricably linked with human nature and for de Waal (2008, 2009) we are moral beings to the core and he identifies that core, among other elements, as empathy.

It has been widely suggested that it is helpful to distinguish between the two *main* aspects of empathy, namely affective empathy and cognitive empathy, which are not necessarily completely dissociated (e.g. Walter 2012; Shamay-Tsoory 2009; Baron-Cohen 2011). Discussion of these aspects of empathy has proceeded through the various levels of analysis and theoretical modelling mentioned earlier, from self-report to neurobiological study. Although much is known about observable behaviour when people are empathic, it is only more recently that social neuroscience and neurobiology have contributed significantly to the debate. In support of the cognitive and emotional distinction, Walter's (2012) review of the basic brain circuits associated with empathy delineates a cognitive 'high road' and an emotional 'low road' to empathy that reflect the basic features of the cognitive and emotional categorization. 'High road' activation relates to empathy initiated by cognitive processing of contextual or situational information and involves activation of brain regions such as the temporo-parietal junction, superior temporal sulcus, dorsomedial prefrontal cortex, posteromedial cortex and ventromedial prefrontal cortex. 'Low road' emotional activation includes the anterior insula, midcingulate cortex, amygdala, secondary somatory cortex, and inferior frontal gyrus while the ventromedial cortex appears to provide a link between cognitive and affective aspects of empathy. Neurobiological studies suggest a role for a widespread mirror neuron system, displaying the properties of responding both when action is initiated and also when that same action is observed

(see also Goldman 2006; Iacoboni 2011; Shamay-Tsoory 2009, 2011; Baron-Cohen 2011; De Vignemont and Jacob 2012).

At the neuroendocrine level of analysis, according to neurophilosopher Patricia Churchland (2011), the causal underpinnings of human sociability are to be found in the evolution of the mammalian brain. The long post-natal period of mammalian brain immaturity and vulnerability necessitates strong parental care. This strong attachment between mother and off-spring originates in more ancient mechanisms that previously only guaranteed the survival of the individual organism. According to Churchland, evolutionary changes in the neurochemistry/neuroendocrinology of the mammalian brain extended "care for just oneself", to "care for oneself and one's off-spring" and conceivably even to "care for oneself, one's off-spring and larger groups (the tribe, the community, society)".

The mechanism underlying care, according to e.g. Churchland (2011) and Churchland and Winkielman (2012), lies partly within the brain's reward system, with a key role for the neuropeptide oxytocin. Oxytocin plays a central role in bonding in non-human species and human social emotions are linked to the function of oxytocin receptors in the brain's reward system. Other substances such as vasopressin, serotonin, testosterone, and dopamine are also implicated (which in turn have been related to aggression and stress). Recent neurogenetic studies support this view (see Rodrigues et al. 2009; Domes et al. 2007; Van Hook et al. 2011). Social emotions can thus be conceptualized as an evolution of older primitive biological mechanisms, with attachment/trust being the platform for moral values; that is, the basic dispositions that shape social space.

At a more specific level, Zak (see Zak 2011; Barraza and Zak 2009) outlines an empathy based model which he calls HOME (Human Oxytocin Mediated Empathy). In this model Zak has represented the critical role of moral sentiments in producing pro-social behavior (irrespective of whether the behavior is altruistically or egoistically motivated) and also evidence of the attendant brain mechanisms. Zak suggests that there are three primary elements to the HOME circuit, namely oxytocin (c.f. Churchland 2011; Uvnäs-Moberg 1998), dopamine and serotonin, which interact with, for example, epinephrine, cortisol and testosterone following appropriate triggering stimuli (see also Ronay and Carnay 2013). Of fundamental importance to Zak is whether or not empathy can be manipulated through physiological intervention. He demonstrates that, in male participants, intranasal infusion of oxytocin increases generosity, and topical infusion of testosterone inhibits generosity and increases desire to punish others. In addition, elevated testosterone is associated with reductions in oxytocin, the ability to infer emotions and pro-social behaviours and it is also associated with increases in aggression and competition. Zak concludes that the evidence indicates that human beings have a manipulable physiological moral compass.

This is an important point to make and raises the issue of precisely what other routes might be available to induce such changes in empathy and pro-social behaviours. In addition to Zak's methodology, which involves direct pharmacological intervention, this necessitates consideration of other approaches such as behaviourally based training for example (see e.g. Baron-Cohen 2011). A recent

study of particular significance is that of Klimecki et al. (2012). This small scale study showed behavioural and neural evidence of empathy malleability through compassion training. Irrespective of what approach is taken to enhancing empathy, be it behavioural or pharmacological or otherwise, there is a fundamental, implicit assumption that any observed changes are underpinned by neurophysiological changes.

8.5 Environmental Influences

Cumulative neuroscientific evidence points towards plasticity of the human brain across the lifespan. This is arguably one of the most important features of the human brain, especially of the immature brains of children and teenagers. The brain adapts itself to all sorts of environments: physical, social and cultural. Zak (2011) suggests that development of the HOME system depends in part on childhood nurturing. In non-humans there is evidence that lack of parental nurturing results in reduced volume of brain areas typically associated with high densities of oxytocin receptors and resulting in lifelong social withdrawal. Consistent with the evidence from non-humans, it has also long been the established view that nurturing failure in human infants is associated with impaired social function (see Ainsworth and Bowlby 1991). A widely discussed example of this was the evident emotional deficits manifested by children reared without appropriate social interaction in state orphanages during the former repressive regime in Romania. Furthermore, research suggests that neurological processes involved in self-regulation and control play a significant part in empathic responding and that immature prefrontal areas underlie the poor inhibitory control exhibited by infants. Development of the inhibitory prefrontal areas continues throughout adolescence and parallels development of understanding of others' feelings and cognitions. (see e.g. Eisenberg and Sadovsky 2004).

As underlined by Greenfield (2011), the brain is susceptible to everything, more so the developing brain, and she suggests that evidence of a link between computer game use, at a general level, and attentional and behavioural problems is accumulating. Relatedly, Zak et al. (2005) reported that about 2 % of tested college students have an oxytocin regulation deficit, characterized by failure to release oxytocin following appropriate stimuli and associated with difficulty in forming relationships, lack of trust, deception and unfavorable childhood and life experiences. At an organizational and societal level, Zak also argues that perceived trust/mistrust in the institutions of one's country and society or work induced stress may, in part through the effects of oxytocin, influence pro-social behaviors. Predictability and interpersonal trust reduce stress, and high levels of stress inhibit oxytocin release. Zak claims that moral sentiments are therefore measurable and significant and knowing the *physiology* of moral sentiments is the key to understanding when pro-social behaviours occur. In other words, the general well-being of both individuals and society may have a neurobiological basis mediated by empathy, and that this is influenced by environment, in the most general terms.

8.6 Empathy and Computer Games

We live in a digital age, and many children spend many hours per day in front of a computer, often using products (e.g. computer games) which although in principle regulated at the point of sale are often unmonitored at the point of use. In their meta-analysis Konrath et al. (2011) found that dispositional empathy among American college students has significantly declined from 1979 to 2009. One suggested explanation is that if people are constantly bombarded with images of violence, war, terrorism, and so on, particularly from an early age, they may become desensitized to the plight of others (e.g. Bushman and Anderson 2009). Over this period, there are indications that the violent content of many computer games has increased and become more realistic in its depiction. So, from this perspective, a decline in empathy might be understandable, although one must be careful to not assume a causal relationship without specific evidence. Another by-product of these trends might be increased feelings of personal threat and vulnerability. One limitation of much of the research available so far is that the issue of gender/sex differences has not been dealt with adequately. Many studies have used only male participants, partly because the majority of game players are male. That in itself must be of some significance to the overall debate. Interestingly, a recent study reports some differences in the overall relationship between gender, empathy and the so-called 'dark triad': psychopathy, narcissism and Machiavellianism (Jonason et al. 2012).

8.7 Possible Effects of Playing Violent Computer Games

Many extremely popular computer games include different forms of violence and aggression. Although not uncontroversial, (see e.g. Dahlquist and Christofferson 2011; Kierkegaard 2008) there has been extensive research that indicates a link between playing these games, aggression, and reduced disposition to pro-social behaviors (see e.g. Bartlett et al. 2009; Engelhardt et al. 2011; Gentile et al. 2009; Greitemeyer 2011; Lemmens et al. 2011). Longtitudinal studies such as Anderson et al. (2008), Gentile and Gentile (2008), Möller and Krahé (2009) indicate that it is specifically violent game content that is associated with increased aggressive tendencies. As noted by Lemmens et al. (2011), theoretical models of aggression such as the General Aggression Model would predict and account for such an association. If violent actions are viewed and rehearsed, then aggressive scripts and attitudes can be reinforced and general desensitization to violence occur (see e.g. Carnagey and Anderson 2005). An extensive meta-analysis (Anderson et al. 2010) concluded that playing violent computer games is often predictive of increases in aggressive affect, aggressive cognition and aggressive behavior. Ortiz de Gortari et al. (2011) identified evidence for what they called Game Transfer Phenomena (GTP) wherein some game players integrate game experiences into their real lives. In that study, in depth

interviews with 15–21 year old participants revealed that some game players transfer their screen experiences into the real world, prompting thoughts of 'violent solutions' to their problems. Half of the participants reported looking to use something from a computer game to resolve a real-life issue.

Significantly, Anderson et al. (2010) concluded that increases in aggressive outcomes are coupled with decreases in empathy and pro-social behaviours. Bluemke et al. (2010) also provide evidence to support a link, possibly causal, between violent exposure in computer games and aggression. Furthermore; Zhen et al. (2011) demonstrated that empathy played an important role in mediating the relationship between adolescents' beliefs about aggression and actual physical violence. They suggest that empathy training could reduce adolescents' positive beliefs about violent behaviours. According to Steinberg (2008) mid adolescence is a particularly vulnerable stage of development of the socio-emotional system and the cognitive control system. This is associated with increased risk-taking behaviours, for example, and is thought to be associated with destabilization within the dopamine system, interpretable also as indicative of malleability within the neuroendocrine system.

Greitemeyer and McLatchie (2011) (see also Greitemeyer and Osswald 2009; Greitemeyer et al. 2010) propose dehumanization as a mechanism by which violent computer games increase aggressive behavior. They suggest that the moral disengagement involved in players in relieving themselves of guilt when engaging in virtual violent acts may trigger real-life aggression through perceiving a victim to be less than human. This could be extrapolated to mean viewing the victim in a less empathic way. Moreover, Bastian et al. (2012) demonstrated that engaging in violent computer game play diminished players' perceptions of the humanity of co-players who were targets of violence and also diminished players' perceptions of their own human qualities. Bastian et al. concluded that such effects could not be explained by mood, self-esteem, gender or game characteristics such as excitement and enjoyment.

A common feature of many of the reported experimental studies looking at the behavioural effects of games with violent content is that the experimental time frame is usually short, with the measured effects being short-term. Whilst these short-term effects are obviously important to understand, it is the cumulative effects of more long-term exposure which is of particular interest in understanding everyday computer gaming. As noted by Hasan et al. (2013) longitudinal studies tend to employ correlational methods and so it is problematic to draw causal inferences. Nevertheless, there is an argument to be made that short-term effects are likely to have a cumulative effect. An analogous situation mentioned by Hasan et al. and by Greenfield (2011) is that of smoking. Smoking one cigarette may not cause lung cancer, but repeatedly smoking greatly increases the risk. Hasan et al. report an experiment wherein the experimental time frame for exposure to a violent computer game was three days, still relatively short term compared with the many hours per day over months or years of many 'real' players. They noted a cumulative effect over the three days.

Important though such behavioural studies are, research which addresses these issues from a physiological point of view are also important and part of the body of

converging evidence to support causal inferences. Carnagey et al. (2007a, b) reported physiological desensitization to real world violence after exposure to computer game violence. Participants who played a violent computer game showed lowered physiological reactivity to subsequent real life violence which could, theoretically, lead to increased aggressive behavior and/or reduced pro-social behaviours. This work is important in that it showed robust effects across individuals irrespective of game preferences or pre-existing trait aggressiveness. Individuals who play violent computer games habituate physiologically to the violence. Whilst systematic desensitization is well established in e.g. therapeutic programs of repeated exposure to anxiety producing stimuli and situations (e.g. phobias) much modern entertainment could be described as a very effective violence desensitization tool. As Carnagey et al. say, pro-social helping behaviour is likely to be diminished by such desensitization, partly through the reduction in physiological arousal, as people are more likely to help a victim for example when they are more highly aroused, over and above any reduced feeling of sympathy (or empathy) which might have been engendered. Carnagey et al. also established that desensitization could occur after relatively short exposure times. This finding was contrary to the established and hence prevailing view that desensitization took a relatively long time over numerous exposures (see e.g. Bartholow et al. 2006).

A key supporting piece of research which provided the first experimental evidence for the proposed theoretical link between violence desensitization and increased aggression is that of Engelhardt et al. (2011). Moreover, this research has shown that the causal link between violent computer game exposure and aggression could be at least partly accounted for by a neural marker of the process. Specifically, Engelhardt et al. found that participants who played a violent computer game rather than a non-violent game subsequently showed changes in brain wave recordings which were indicative of violence desensitization. In this study they examined changes in the amplitude of the P300 (P3) component of the event related brain potential (ERP) elicited by viewing violent images after playing a computer game for a relatively short period of time, 25 min. (The P3 is an established marker of aversive motivation based on arousal in response to potentially aversive stimuli such as violent images). Engelhardt et al. found that participants who played a violent computer game showed reduced P3 amplitude in response to violent images. Furthermore, P3 amplitude mediated the effect of game content on aggressive behavior towards an assumed opponent. This was seen in participants with low prior exposure to violent game playing, but not those with high prior exposure although both showed increased aggressive behaviour following violent game playing.

This finding is interesting in that even short-term game playing can affect brain processes and subsequent overt behavior in naïve players. However, it is unclear if the absence of significant brain changes in participants experienced in violent gaming is a result of prior gaming, with 25 min of experimental play having no effect on an already desensitized brain *or* if a third factor explains both being attracted to playing violent games in the first place and also showing reduced P3. Nevertheless, both high and low prior exposure participants showed an increase in

aggressive behavior after short duration violent gaming. As Engelhardt et al. remark, people's self-reported game playing behaviours reflect real differences in the gaming experience. Implied also is the conclusion that such self-reports reflect actual brain states during the game play.

Montag et al. (2012) found that expert players of so-called 'first-person-shooter' games such as *Counter-Strike* displayed significant differences in brain response to emotional pictures of high ecological validity. Control participants showed significantly higher activation of a brain region know to be involved in the integration of cognition and emotion, the left lateral prefrontal cortex. This finding can be interpreted as reflecting the operation of a repression strategy in response to the unpleasant stimuli, which is absent in the games players. An alternative interpretation is that the lowered lateral prefrontal activity exhibited by games players reflects a lowered level of experienced empathy, given that the lateral prefrontal cortex has been implicated in the evaluation and labeling of emotions (Montag et al. 2012).

Chou et al. (2013) examined cerebral blood flow (CBF) in young adults and found decreased CBF in brain regions whose functions include regulation of aggressive emotions, regulation of cognitive and emotional behaviour and linking cognitive and affective processing after violent but not non-violent game playing. These brain areas included the right dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) and left fusiform gyrus. Moreover, decreased CBF in the ACC correlated with the number of killings executed by male (but not female) participants during game play. This finding is important given that reduced CBF in the dorsolateral cortex has previously been detected in patients with mental disorders, in a manner correlated with severity of symptoms.

Although strongly indicative, the evidence presented to support the view that playing violent computer games has behavioural and physiological effects associated with reduced pro-social behaviours is neither complete nor unequivocal. There are significant knowledge gaps, particularly in relation to effects on neuroendocrine function (e.g. testosterone, oxytocin, dopamine—c.f. HOME system) and possible links to empathy and pro-social behaviour and ultimately well-being. Possible effects of increasing availability of first-person immersive violent gameplay are virtually unknown.

8.8 Possible Effects of Pro-social Computer Games

Much less research has been conducted on the potential positive effects of computer games, particularly those with pro-social and non-violent content. Some evidence exists for positive effects of some educational games which serve as effective teaching tools and also for beneficial effects of action games on skills such as visual attention (see e.g. Dresler et al. 2013; Gentile 2009) irrespective of the nature of the content with respect to violence, for example. Nevertheless there is some evidence that exposure to pro-social computer games is correlated with both short-term and

long-term increases in pro-social behaviors and traits. Representative of these studies are those of e.g. Gentile et al. (2009, 2011a, b), Greitemeyer (2011), Greitemeyer et al. (2010). However, the precise elements of computer games that underlie these observed associations are not yet fully understood. Although most research to date has focused on the content of the games, Gentile et al. (2009) suggest that there are at least five dimensions along which games can produce an effect on behaviour. These include amount of exposure, content, context, structure and mechanics. Most research to date has focused on content, particularly on the extent of violent content and its possible negative effects.

As noted by Sestir and Bartholow (2010), many studies reflect an implicit assumption that violent content is associated with reduced pro-social effects and that non-violent content, often used as a 'control' condition, produces no effect. They concluded that this assumption was erroneous because in their reported experiments, non-violent game playing actually produced pro-social benefits relative to a no-game control, even when the content was not explicitly pro-social.

Gentile et al. (2009) reported three studies, with three age groups, conducted in three different countries which examined the relationships between non-violent, pro-social game content and subsequent behavior. Findings were interpreted as converging evidence for negative effects of violent game content and positive behavioural effects of non-violent game content and that length of exposure matters. The outcomes were consistent with the GAM/GLM discussed earlier, but do not allow for definitive causal effects to be inferred. Interestingly, Gentile et al. suggest that there may be a bidirectional relationship between pro-social behaviour and pro-social gaming, resulting in an upward spiral of pro-social gaming and behaviours. This stands in contrast to a possible 'downward spiral' of violent gaming and aggression and is reminiscent of the upward spiral of well-being described by Fredrickson (2013) in her 'Broaden and Build' theory of well-being (see also Garland et al. 2010).

Greitemeyer et al. (2010) reported two studies which examined pro-social (empathy) and antisocial (schadenfreude) responses to pro-social and neutral computer games. They found support for an hypothesis, consistent with the GLM, that exposure to pro-social games is positively associated with empathy and negatively associated with schadenfreude. They noted that this effect was observed even though the game used in the study was not rated as being particularly pro-social and speculate that an even larger effect might have been obtained using a more pro-social game.

Using a slightly different approach, Whitaker and Bushman (2012) examined whether playing relaxing games would affect pro-social behavior. They found that participants who played relaxing games subsequently displayed less aggressive and more helpful behaviours, effects which they attribute to mood manipulation. They propose that a state of relaxation, promoted by playing a relaxing game, promotes empathy and fosters connectedness with others resulting in pro-social behaviour, consistent with prior research which has demonstrated that positive affect is associated with more pro-social behaviour (see Fredrickson 2013; Garland et al. 2010). As well as considering these findings within a behavioural and psycho-social

explanatory framework, it is plausible also to interpret these findings as being consistent with the earlier discussion of physiological underpinnings of empathy (e.g. Churchland 2011; Churchland and Winkielman 2012; or Zak 2011) wherein stress is posited as a possible mediating factor in empathy, higher stress being thought to inhibit oxytocin activity, for example.

As with games with violent content, studies with a more neurobiological focus in relation to the possible effects of non-violent and pro-social games are lacking. However, one relevant study is that of Barraza and Zak (2009) which, although not using a computer game, had participants watch an emotional video. The authors reported that after watching an emotional video, participants showed a 47 % average increase in blood oxytocin, which was associated with increased empathy ratings and pro-social behaviors. Watching a video is not the same as playing a computer game and there has been some discussion about the relative strength of possible effects on behaviour of computer games compared with film and TV. One recent study (Lin 2013) indicated that interactive games with violent content produced higher increases in aggressive cognition, aggressive feelings and physiological arousal than recorded game play or film. Perhaps a related, inverse pattern might be found in measures of e.g. oxytocin (c.f. Barraza and Zak 2009) if non-violent, more pro-social materials were to be used in a similar experimental design. Nevertheless, the findings of this study are important in that they form part of the link between the psychosocial/behavioural aspects of the current discussion and the physiological and neurobiological aspects.

The current situation is therefore that although there is mounting evidence that playing violent computer games influences the behavioural, psychosocial and physiological responses of players, this is not the whole story. Also, the available evidence is not so strong or comprehensive for pro-social effects of non-violent games. Moreover, there is not yet a comprehensive model, other than at a very general level, of a proposed causal relationship between playing pro-social games, neuropsychological function, neuroendocrine function (e.g. oxytocin release), empathy, pro-social behavior and individual and societal wellbeing and so on within which to capture such evidence. There are only partial models which often reflect one particular disciplinary approach and level of analysis (e.g. Zak 2011; Engen and Singer 2013). To develop such a model would be a significant advance.

8.9 How Could Pro-social Computer Games Enhance Pro-social Behavior?

As well as trying to understand the neurobiological and psychological aspects of cognitive enhancement (e.g. McGaugh and Roozendaal 2009), the desirability of cognitive enhancement and enhancing pro-social behavior has also been recently discussed within moral philosophy. For example, Persson and Savulescu (2008) have defended the view that to improve tools that support moral enhancement is imperative in today's society since the development of different forms of cognitive

enhancement increase drastically the destructive power of immoral people. Despite expressing worries about the present-day feasibility of enhancing moral capacities using pharmacological means they conclude that research to develop tools for cognitive enhancement must be accompanied by research into moral enhancement (see also Persson and Savulescu 2012). Coeckelbergh (2007) provides a discussion of various aspects of computer games in terms of potential harm (and also good) that they might have on one's moral character. He suggests that simple condemnation would be ineffective, but advocates a form of moral enhancement that would parallel the views of philosopher Martha Nussbaum and complement a behavioural reinforcement and extinction approach.

Cognitive capacities can today be enhanced through different means (Illes and Bird 2006), some risky but fast and seemingly effective (e.g. neurochemical) and others not risky but slow and probably less immediately effective (e.g. traditional class-room education) (see e.g. Dresler et al. 2013; Farah 2002, 2010; Farah et al. 2005). A middle way of obvious special interest here is represented by IT-based educational tools that target cognitive and sometimes affective capacities in more selective and focused ways than traditional education without having the risks of direct chemical interventions in the brain. An early example is exemplified by e.g. the computer-game-like educational tool developed by Baron-Cohen and colleagues to help children and adults, particularly people on the autism spectrum, to learn about emotions and improve emotion recognition skills (*Mindreading*, Baron-Cohen 2004, 2011).

Given that there exists a body of literature describing IT based approaches to cognitive enhancement, as stated earlier, the question is whether (and why) pro-social behavior could be selectively enhanced using technologies such as pro-social computer games, that would have a direct effect on the neuro-affective mechanisms described above that underlie empathy and related psychological states and traits. Instead of intervening directly on the biochemistry of the brain (with the obvious safety risks it represents due to the present lack of enough knowledge about the long-term consequences of these interventions) or using relatively low-effective traditional methods of pro-social/moral education, we wonder whether the use of new technologies, that allegedly selectively influence concrete brain functions related to empathy, could eventually demonstrate less risky but perhaps more effective means of increasing pro-social behavior and ultimately societal well-being.

There is empirical evidence that oxytocin release, which, as we have discussed earlier, is one of the neuroendocrine processes involved with empathy, can be triggered by a wide array of behaviors (e.g. social recognition, maternal attachment, pair bonding, hugging, interacting with pets etc.) (Zak et al. 2005; Zak 2011; Handlin 2010). Other behavioral interventions that produce enhancing effects on some aspects of empathy and increased activity in relevant neural regions are meditation (Mascaro et al. 2012) and, as described earlier, Klimecki et al. (2012) showed behavioural and neural evidence of empathy maleability through compassion training. Furthermore, role-playing, through acting, has been associated with increased self-reported empathy (Goldstein and Winner 2010). The question is

whether the use of computer games could be equally or even more effective as such interventions. There is a growing industry of non-violent and pro-social computer games (see e.g. Connolly et al. 2012) although there remains a major gap in the area of personal and social learning and ethics (Pereira et al. 2012). Lacking also is much of the fundamental neurophysiological and neuroendocrinological research necessary for theoretical understanding of the processes involved in empathy development and manipulation, and how this relates to the specific attributes of computer games and the way in which players engage with them.

8.10 Some Research Issues

Despite its limitations, the body of knowledge outlined and discussed above provides the basic theoretical framework for empirical research on the effects of pro-social computer gaming on pro-social behavior and its implications for societal well-being. Our basic assumption is that the neural mechanisms underlying empathy are a key factor in understanding the link between individual well-being and pro-social behavior. Given the known plasticity of the developing brain, the key question is whether tasks performed, especially by young people, in a digital environment (e.g. computer games) can be associated with brain changes and neuroendocrine expression related to empathic responses and hence to more pro-social behavior. (c.f. Belman and Flanagan 2010).

There are a number of important issues related to any such research. At a basic level, one could begin by evaluating the eventual empathy enhancing capacities of existing pro-social games such as *Journey* (developed by Chen 2012) or *Hush* (developed by Antonisse 2008). This might be followed by approaching the design issue through a carefully controlled experimental route. As in any project of this nature, the issue of measurement of outcomes is a critical one. There are established measures of various aspects of individual well-being, of societal well-being and of empathy. These cover a full biopsychosocial spectrum, from the social psychological level to the neural. Answers will lie in establishing not only correlational evidence but in developing experimental protocols that would allow for examination of meaningful causal relationships and mechanisms at multiple levels of conceptualization and explanation. Measures embedded as part of the game play may be a promising route to explore.

Particularly significant in research of this nature is consideration of the factors which might contribute to any observed effects, irrespective of level of measurement. Coeckelbergh distinguishes between two approaches, which in a general sense subsume more detailed analysis of game characteristics and context. The external model he relates to the content of games and the relationship between playing a game with a particular content and subsequent behavior in the real world. Indeed, Coeckelbergh does not limit this to computer games, but would include books, films, TV-programs and so on. However, he introduces also the idea of an internal model, by which it is the internal, interaction content of the games and the

nature of the medium which come into focus. For instance, whilst a book reader might identify with a particular character, the active and interactive nature of increasingly realistic computer games enhances the degree to which a player may become identified with a character, ultimately veering towards 'becoming' the character. Behaviour and its consequences within the game also fall with the internal analysis. This might include examination of the consequences of certain actions within the game, which might train the player in a way that may corrupt the character of the player. He thus argues that it may not be e.g. violent content per se which should be of concern, but how that game content is interrelated with consequences within the game.

As mentioned above, Gentile et al. (2009) consider the defining factors of interest to be: amount of exposure, content, context, structure and mechanics. These fall more or less within the external/internal dichotomy and are open to various shades of precise definition. Moreover, Belman and Flanagan (2010) proposed a number of design principles they suggest could be useful to consider when designing games to foster empathy. First, the game must induce *intentional effort* to empathize early in the game. Otherwise, they suggest there will be little or no effect as was the case in Batson's studies using videos (c.f. Lamm et al. 2007). Bellman and Flanagan suggest the necessity for 'mindful' play, not just moment to moment engagement but meta-level reflection, which is not usually engaged without prompting. Second, game design should avoid creating empathy feeling without also providing some way out for the player, such as *opportunity for helping*. In other words, players could be given specific guidance on how their actions can address the issues raised in the game. Third, both *cognitive and emotional* aspects of empathy should be integrated into the game. Fourth, emphasizing *points of similarity* between player and intended object of empathy should facilitate change, but only insofar as this is done in such a way as to avoid inducing a defensive reaction. Bellman and Flanagan note that some of these design features are already embedded in relatively older, existing games such as *Peacemaker*, *Hush* and *Layoff*.

Some more recent research has focused on degree of immersion/virtual reality in games designed to promote pro-social behaviour, which take us far beyond traditional methodology such as acting lessons as discussed above. For example, Lim et al. (2011) describe early stage trials of an educational, multiplayer, virtual environment, role-play game designed to educate adolescents about intercultural empathy. They report that players learned to behave cooperatively and also exhibited empathic feelings and behaviours towards an 'alien' culture.

Similarly Lorenzo et al. (2013) report the successful use of immersive virtual reality systems in education of students diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, including development of social competencies. Rosenberg et al. (2013) also examined the effects of a pro-social, immersive virtual reality game. However, they extended the research by examining how inclusion of the superhero ability to fly might affect helping behavior and they found that participants who occupied a 'superhero' avatar transferred greater helping behaviour to the real world than participants who merely flew in a helicopter.

8.11 Conclusion

What is clear is that we live in an increasingly technological age and the influence of that technology is not just at a superficial level but pervades every aspect of our lives at a practical level but also at a more fundamental level of our very being. The challenge is to harness the power of that technology in a positive way and to reduce the opportunities for negative influences, whilst being aware that deciding what is positive and what is negative is fraught with moral philosophical difficulties.

Sander (2011), suggests that the power of 'Positive Computing' must be engaged in the pursuit of societal well-being. However, the concept of flourishing or the good life, remains controversial even after two millennia of philosophical reflection. Our suggestion is that such a state is unlikely to be achieved either at the individual level or societal level unless empathy forms a key ingredient. Interestingly, Sander concludes by suggesting that "a promising experiment for positive computing would be to pick target behaviours from the list of positive actions and to investigate if and how persuasion techniques can support their adoption". Amongst his examples of persuasive techniques and possible applications he includes operant conditioning through positive reinforcement, and using virtual reality to introduce principles of mimicry, empathy and appropriate emotional responses. This certainly reflects the views expressed in this paper, but perhaps only a small part of them and in a rather mechanistic way.

Rather than focusing only on the end product, our thesis is that there is a need for a more integrative approach that will lead to understanding at different levels of explanation. This differs somewhat from the more fragmented approach of those who seek first to identify the mechanism that encourages empathy and then design technology and computer games to promote pro-social behavior in the real world, or indeed ignore neuroscience research. Why not actually use technology and computer games to identify the mechanisms? To a large extent the fundamental tools to achieve this are already in place and will continue to develop. Theory, research design and measurement within psychosocial and behavioural approaches to well-being, empathy, aggression and so on are increasingly insightful and sophisticated. Cognitive neuroscience has advanced from the study of isolated brain processes to what we now call 'social neuroscience' or 'social cognitive neuroscience' or even 'social cognitive and affective neuroscience' with a focus on the 'social brain' with 'computational social neuroscience' a fledgling subfield (see Dunne and O'Doherty 2013). Indeed as noted by Adolphs (2010) the need to apply an interdisciplinary multilevel analysis to understanding social behaviour and cognition is hardly new. However, the number, depth and scope of both levels and disciplines continues to increase. Similar advances in neuroendocrinology allow complex systems modeling and the level of sophistication and rate of development within computer gaming is clear. All of this can be utilized in the study of empathy and its relationship to pro-social behaviour and ultimately individual and societal well-being. In this endeavour, computer technology plays a dual role, being a part of the research stimuli (e.g. computer game) and also in measurement of outcomes.

Answers will lie in establishing not only correlational evidence but in developing experimental protocols that would allow for examination of meaningful causal relationships and mechanisms across multiple levels of conceptualization and explanation. The ultimate aim is to not only understand and model the mechanisms of empathy especially in relation to computer game play, but also to develop the facility to use video game play as a measurement tool for empathy, pro-social behaviour and well-being. Measures embedded as part of the game play may be a promising route to explore.

The general issue of model building can be approached from one of two perspectives, namely precision versus breadth. Whilst at first our proposals might appear ambitious in terms of breadth, they are underpinned by careful consideration of what is already known in terms of precision within each level of analysis and discipline.

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Chapter 9
Well-Being, Happiness and Sustainability

Bengt Brülde

9.1 Introduction

The average level of well-being is pretty high in wealthy countries, and it has been increasing in many parts of the global South. However, there are several trends and developments that might have a negative effect on many people's well-being, and thus constitute challenges to most contemporary societies. One of the greatest challenges is global warming, and the changes in climate that this process will give rise to.

In a 2012 report from the World Bank, the authors argue that "[w]ithout further commitments and action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the world is likely to warm by more than 3 °C above the preindustrial climate. Even with the current mitigation commitments and pledges fully implemented, there is roughly a 20 % likelihood of exceeding 4 °C by 2100. If they are not met, a warming of 4 °C could occur as early as the 2060s." (World Bank 2012, p. xiii).

A 4 °C world would have dramatic effects on people's well-being, especially in "many of the world's poorest regions, which have the least economic, institutional, scientific, and technical capacity to cope and adapt" (p. xiii). It would be a world of "unprecedented heat waves, severe drought, and major floods in many regions, with serious impacts on human systems, ecosystems, and associated services" (xiii–xiv). As Jim Yong Kim (president of the World Bank) puts it in his foreword:

> The 4 °C scenarios are devastating: the inundation of coastal cities; increasing risks for food production potentially leading to higher malnutrition rates; many dry regions becoming dryer, wet regions wetter; unprecedented heat waves in many regions, especially in the tropics; substantially exacerbated water scarcity in many regions; increased frequency of

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> high-intensity tropical cyclones; and irreversible loss of biodiversity, including coral reef systems.
>
> And most importantly, a 4 °C world is so different from the current one that it comes with high uncertainty and new risks that threaten our ability to anticipate and plan for future adaptation needs. (p. ix)

It is clear that we should try to avoid a 4 °C world, and it still seems possible to do so. According to the authors of the report, "there are technically and economically feasible emissions pathways to hold warming likely below 2 °C . Thus the level of impacts that developing countries and the rest of the world experience will be a result of government, private sector, and civil society decisions and choices, including, unfortunately, inaction" (p. xiv).

The question of how the well-being of future generations might be affected in different scenarios is of course very important, and so is the question of how future societies might best adapt to global warming. This book is about well-being in *contemporary* society, however, and I will therefore focus on how the well-being of *present* people might be affected *if* we decide to reduce our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to a more sustainable level.

9.2 The Necessary Reduction and Its Achievement

According to experts in emission pathways, the 2 °C goal can most likely only be reached if our total GHG emissions are reduced from the present 48 gigatonnes (Gt) of CO_2 equivalent to 20 Gt by 2050 (Rogelj et al. 2011). If we assume that the world population will increase to around 9 billion by 2050, this means that we need to reduce emissions from 6–7 to 2 tonnes per person and year by 2050. Moreover, the reduction probably needs to continue, so that we reach 1 tonne per person by 2100. It is worth noting that 6–7 tonnes is the global average, and that emissions are very unequally distributed between nations. If we disregard countries like Qatar and Kuwait, the US had the highest per capita emissions of CO_2 in 2010, namely 18 tonnes per person and year (according to Gapminder World). Other examples are Australia (16 tonnes), the Netherlands (11), the UK (7.9), China (6.1), Sweden (5.1), India (1.7), and Bangladesh (0.34 tonnes).[1]

At present, the necessary decrease in GHG emissions cannot be achieved by technological change alone: a more sustainable lifestyle is also needed. This assumption is well corroborated by the findings of the "One tonne life" project that was conducted in Sweden a few years ago (Hedenus and Björck 2011). The purpose of this project was to help a test family reduce their private emissions from 7 tonnes

[1] These numbers are calculated from a production perspective: if we would take a more consumption-oriented approach (cf. below), Sweden would rank much higher than China.

per person to 1 tonne.[2] (Our individual CO_2 footprint also includes emissions from public consumption, which amounts to 1.8 tonnes in a country like Sweden.) To achieve this goal, they were assisted by companies and experts. It was relatively easy for them to reduce emissions to 2.8 tonnes, since this reduction was mainly due to technological changes. Their petrol-powered cars were replaced by an electric car, they got an exceptionally energy-effective house and energy-effective household appliances. But some changes in lifestyle were also necessary, e.g. vacations by airplane were replaced by vacations by train, and some of their meat consumption was replaced by fish and vegetarian meals. These changes were not perceived as sacrifices, i.e. family members could still lead a life that they perceived as comfortable. However, major sacrifices were required to reduce emissions from 2.8 to 1.5 tonnes (this is how far they got). To get this far, the family had to adopt a fully vegan diet, and bring their own food to work. They could no longer visit cafés or restaurants. They also had to reduce their living space, use very little water, abstain from all travelling, and reduce their shopping radically. To conclude, the family's emissions could easily be reduced to 2.8 tonnes because they had access to the very best available technology, but some lifestyle changes were necessary to reach even this level. The energy system of the future might be much better than today's system, however, and Hedenus and Björk speculate that it might be possible to reach a "comfort level" at less than 2 tonnes (including public consumption) by 2050, at least in countries with rich access to hydropower (like Sweden).

This project strongly suggests that major behavioural changes are needed if we are to reduce per capita emissions to 2 tonnes by 2050, especially with regard to diet and transportation. If we assume that emissions should be distributed equally between nations, this means that the average American needs to reduce her emissions by 16 tonnes per year, whereas the average Indian is allowed to increase her emissions somewhat. This egalitarian scenario might seem too unrealistic, but it is widely agreed that wealthy countries should carry most of the burden of mitigation, e.g. because developing countries have a right to the same level of development as wealthy countries.

9.3 The Questions of This Chapter

Different strategies can be used to get people to behave more sustainably, e.g. to fly less or consume less red meat. Some strategies are political, like taxation of unsustainable consumption. In these cases, people are given incentives to behave

[2] A consumption approach was used to calculate these numbers. As Hedenus (2011) points out, the purpose of the project was to "capture most of the effects that an altered consumption pattern would have on emissions." For this reason, the authors of the report did "not only consider direct emissions from fuels used by the family, for instance, but also emissions from fuels and electricity consumed by the companies that produce the goods and services consumed by the family." (ibid.) In the report, two main methods were used to calculate the emissions associated with consumption, namely Life Cycle Analysis and Input Output Analysis.

differently through changes in their external situation. Strategies can also be "psychological", however. In this case, attempts are made (by political or other actors) to change people's behaviour by changing their beliefs or attitudes. The most common way to change people's beliefs is probably information. As far as attitudinal change (or value change) is concerned, it is helpful to distinguish between moral and non-moral change. In the moral case, I get to believe that it is morally right to behave sustainably, e.g. that morality requires that I stop flying, even if this does not benefit me. To try to change people's behaviour by changing their non-moral values is not very common in this context, but a possible example would be to get people to believe it is in their own interest to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle.

The obstacles to behavioural change can be classified in the same way: We might continue to eat red meat and fly because (i) the external incentives to change are too weak, i.e. the cost associated with a sustainable lifestyle is too low, (ii) we think our present unsustainable lifestyle is morally permitted, and/or (iii) we believe it is in our own interest to eat red meat and fly, e.g. that a sustainable lifestyle would be less pleasant or less comfortable.

Here, the focus is on (iii), or more specifically, on what role considerations of well-being might have in a sustainability context. The central question is how a more sustainable lifestyle (and a more sustainable society) would affect our well-being, e.g. whether it would change for the worse.

The reason why this question is important is *not* that a sustainable lifestyle is generally regarded as a means to a better life. It is rather that we need to change our behaviour for *other* (moral) reasons, e.g. for the benefit of future generations, but that the necessary changes are made more difficult because people tend to think of them as big sacrifices (Holmberg et al. 2011). It is not just that people's willingness to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle depends on how this would (in their own view) affect their own well-being. These beliefs also affect how willing we are to endorse climate friendly political interventions, something which is highly relevant in liberal democracies. In my view, this is the most important pragmatic reason why we need to find out how our well-being would be affected if we adopted a more sustainable lifestyle.

If the question is formulated like this (in terms of "would"), it is about what effects certain morally desirable changes or policies are *likely* to have on our well-being. We might also ask ourselves what is *possible* (rather than probable), however, e.g. whether it is possible to create a society in which all citizens have lives that are both good and sustainable.

But the first (and central) question is how a sustainable lifestyle *would* (most likely) affect our well-being. For example, how would our well-being be affected if we (people living in wealthy countries) made the behavioural changes that are necessary to keep the increase in global warming below 2 °C? Now, even if per capita emissions have to be reduced to 2 tonnes by 2050 to achieve this goal, this study is not restricted to this particular target. What is most important right now is that we make changes *in this direction*, and it is therefore of interest to investigate what changes in well-being these changes might result in. In short, are those

lifestyle changes that are beneficial from a climate perspective—like less air travel, car driving, and meat consumption—also conducive to well-being, or would these changes rather make us worse off?

The second (and less important) question is whether it is *possible* for us to live lives that are both good and sustainable. On the individual level, the question is whether it is possible for us *as individuals* to maintain our present level of well-being if we would lead more sustainable lives. Here, it may well be the case that it is possible for *some of us* but not for *each of us*. It is rather obvious that sustainable lives can be good, especially in developing countries where many people are not yet used to a high standard of living. Is it also possible to live a sustainable and good life in wealthy countries, e.g. if we set the limit at 2 tonnes of GHG emissions per year? Here, we first have to remind ourselves that our individual CO_2 footprint include emissions from our shared public consumption, which amounts to 1.8 tonnes per person in a country like Sweden. (It can be questioned whether these emissions should be divided equally between all citizens, however.) But if we restrict ourselves to private consumption, my guess is that it is (at present) possible for some, but most probably not for each, even if we disregard how expensive the new sustainable technology is. That it is possible for some has already been shown in connection with the One tonne life project, but there are other successful examples as well (see Beavan 2009). These examples might be inspiring to some, but they do not in any way suggest that it is possible for *each of us* to live a sustainable good life. Given our present needs and desires, it might simply not be possible for most of us.

On the collective level, the question is whether it is possible to create a society where all (or sufficiently many) citizens have lives that are both good and sustainable. It is worth noting that even if it were possible for *each* to adopt a sustainable lifestyle without any loss of well-being, it might not be possible for *all* (or *sufficiently many*) to do this. Perhaps I can only lead a simple life if the economy works, which presupposes that sufficiently many other people maintain their present levels of consumption?[3]

The fact that the problem of climate change is global strongly suggests that the question what is possible for *all* (or sufficiently many) is more important than what is possible for *each*, which is (in turn) more important than what is possible for *some*. This also suggests that "the question of probability" (how a sustainable lifestyle is likely to affect well-being) is more important than the question of what is possible for individuals. But regardless of which question we consider most important, we need (as a matter of "method") to be realistic. We need to start from the present situation—i.e. look at how we actually live our lives, and take the economic and political realities into consideration—and then ask ourselves what changes are feasible, and what consequences they are likely to have. Above all, we

[3] Cf. the case of global poverty, where it might be possible for each country to combat poverty through low production costs, but maybe not for all, because the relevant niche in the global market is too small.

must acknowledge that people's values are what they are, and that they might be difficult to change. Discussions of what is possible in the individual case are often based on unrealistic assumptions, however, e.g. that if sustainable lives can be good in some cases, they can also be good in most cases. It is also highly unrealistic to assume that we can shape our lives "from scratch". It is tempting to believe that once we have knowledge about the determinants of happiness, we simply need to investigate whether these determinants can be realized in a sustainable way. However, this approach is only relevant if it is falsely assumed that we are malleable like infants. In short, the question is not what it would be possible to achieve if we started afresh (from a clean slate), but what is feasible given that we are where we are.[4]

9.4 The Nature of Well-Being

To be able to answer these questions, we need to know what a person's well-being consists in. The question of well-being (or the good life) is one of the classical questions in philosophy. To make this question more precise, philosophers have formally defined "well-being" in terms of what has *final value for a person* (Brülde 2007a). On this view, a person's well-being is constituted by those states of affairs which are desirable for her *as ends* rather than as means, and the question of well-being is really a question of what is good for us *as ends*, i.e. what has final value for us.

Over the years, philosophers have defended a number of *theories of well-being*, i.e. substantive general claims about what has final value for us (and why). Examples of such theories are *hedonism*, which identifies the good life with the pleasant life, *the desire-fulfilment theory*, according to which a person has a good life if she has the kind of life that she herself wants to have, and *objectivist pluralism* which claims that there are several objective values (besides pleasure or happiness) that make a life good for a person, such as friendship, love, freedom, personal development, and meaningful work (ibid.). These general theories should be carefully distinguished from the specific "visions" of well-being that have been endorsed by different thinkers, such as "the simple life". No such vision is sufficiently flexible to be universally valid. As Sumner (1996) puts it, no adequate theory of well-being can simply favour

[4] A third question, which I will *not* address in this chapter, is whether considerations of well-being might influence people in a more sustainable direction, both with regard to individual behavioural change, regardless of what others do, and with regard to our willingness to support policies that "forces" everyone to change our behaviour. In my view, it is of practical importance to find out whether considerations of well-being can make people more willing to accept radical environmental policies (just as we need to find out what moral reasons can increase people's acceptance). It is worth noting that to answer this question, we first have to know what people *believe* makes their lives good: to know what actually makes a life good can only help us influence people's behaviour to the extent that they already endorse some plausible conception of well-being (like the happiness theory), or to the extent that they can be influenced in this direction.

> planning over spontaneity, […] complexity over simplicity, […] excitement over tranquillity, […] perpetual striving over contentment, […] companionship over solitude, […] religious conviction over atheism, […] the intellectual life over the physical, or whatever. (p 18)

This suggests that the different theories of well-being also need to be distinguished from the folk conceptions of well-being that are endorsed in different cultures, e.g. well-being as a high standard of living or as a healthy life. These conceptions are also too specific, and they tend to ignore the distinction between final and instrumental value.

In the following, I will assume that some kind of *happiness theory* is the best theory of well-being. According to the pure happiness theory, a person's well-being depends on one thing only, namely how happy she is. Nothing but happiness has final value for a person. But how should the term "happiness" be understood in this context? In my view, happiness is best regarded as a complex mental state, partly cognitive and partly affective. To be happy is a matter of cognitively evaluating one's life as a whole in a positive manner (to be satisfied with one's life as a whole), *and* to feel good on the whole (cf. Sumner 1996). To be happy is not sufficient for maximal well-being, however: the happy state must also be *authentic*, which means that (a) the person's positive evaluation of her own life is based on a correct perception of this life, and (b) that the evaluative standard on which her evaluation is based is reasonable (Brülde 2007b, 2009). It should be noted that fully inauthentic happiness is probably quite rare. It is also worth noting that environmental awareness cannot be included in "authenticity". In this context, authenticity only presupposes full information about one's own life, not about the world.

9.5 The Main Questions Revisited

This suggests that our main questions can be specified in terms of (authentic) happiness, even though this might not be consistent with the conceptions of well-being that most people endorse.[5]

[5] The practical question referred to in footnote 4 can most probably not be specified in terms of happiness, however, for the simple reason that most people do not seem to endorse the happiness theory of well-being. First, it is far from certain that most people have determinate conceptions of well-being at all. My guess is that most people lack a well-founded conception of well-being, e.g. because they are not familiar with the distinction between final and instrumental values. Second, many people may well care more about e.g. their material welfare than about their happiness (as far as their self-interest is concerned), and it might thus be more effective to appeal to other conceptions of "well-being" or "welfare" than well-being as happiness, e.g. well-being as standard of living. But to the extent that people care about their own happiness, it is of course worth asking whether there is any reason to believe that considerations of happiness can make people think and act in a more environmentally responsible way. Moreover, it may well be possible to convince people that happiness is the most central prudential value, and that a high standard of living is only valuable to the extent that it makes us happier.

If we specify our two main questions in this way, we get: (1') If we decided to live more sustainably, e.g. adopt a "two tonnes lifestyle", how would this (likely) affect our happiness? Are those lifestyle changes that are beneficial from a climate perspective also conducive to happiness, or would these changes rather make us less happy? (2') Is it possible for us to maintain our present level of happiness if we make these changes? Is it possible for some, for many, and for each? And is it possible for all or for sufficiently many, i.e. is it possible to create a society in which most or all citizens have lives that are both happy and sustainable?

The fact that happiness is considered to be a central value is not the only advantage of specifying our questions in this way. It also makes it possible to use the empirical findings from happiness studies to answer these questions, especially (1').

When asking what effects a more sustainable lifestyle would have on happiness, it is important to distinguish between individual lifestyle changes and politically induced changes. In the first case, the question is how the happiness of the individual would be affected if she stopped eating meat or driving to work, *regardless of what others do*. In the political case, the question is rather what effects certain policies would have on society at large, e.g. how people's happiness would be affected if a high meat tax were introduced, or if working hours were cut to 30 hours per week. It is worth noting that many might be willing to change their lifestyle if others do the same (given that the distribution of burdens is reasonably fair), but not by themselves. This is one reason why political solutions are attractive. Another reason is that the relevant "sacrifices" would probably be perceived as smaller if shared by others.

It should be noted that the available empirical data are mostly cross-sectional, and that they can only tell us how people live and feel under the present circumstances. These data might *at best* tell us how individual (voluntary) changes in behaviour might affect happiness. The effects of politically induced lifestyle changes cannot be studied empirically before they have been introduced, and if the available findings allow us to speculate about policy outcomes at all, it is only about the possible *direct* effects of different policies. (Although this approach might not give us exactly what we want, it is sufficiently realistic in that it starts from our actual situation; cf. above).

It is worth noting that the existing knowledge of the determinants of happiness (and their relative importance) has been generated by investigating how different factors is related to happiness in people's actual lives, mainly in wealthy countries. For this reason, we cannot assume that all determinants have the same importance in a sustainable context as in a non-sustainable context, and it might thus be of limited value to ignore the context of the findings and simply investigate whether the different determinants can be realized in a sustainable way.

9.6 In Search of Answers: Seven Relevant Considerations

So, are there any empirically based considerations that suggest that we would be happier if we lived more sustainable lives, or that we (at least) would not feel significantly worse? The perhaps most important purpose is to find factors that are both beneficial from a climate perspective and conducive to happiness, but it is also important to gain knowledge about what determinants of happiness are neutral or harmful from a climate perspective, and how a more sustainable policy would affect these determinants (Holmberg et al. 2011).

The empirical considerations have been generated as follows: It is well known what factors give rise to high GHG emissions, both on the individual and national levels, and we also know what factors are harmless from a climate perspective. Once these factors are identified, we can investigate what (if anything) happiness studies have to say about the relation between these different factors and happiness. However, considerations can also be generated by reflecting on policies that have been proposed in the discussion on climate change, e.g. the idea that we can reduce emissions by shortening our working hours. We can then ask if there are any relevant studies that can help us determine what direct effects these suggested policies would have on happiness, e.g. whether employees would be happier if they worked less.

Here are some findings from happiness research that might be relevant in a sustainability context (for an overview of the field, see e.g. Argyle 2001; Frey 2008; Layard 2005).

9.6.1 The Connection Between Wealth and Happiness on the National Level

We know that GHG emissions are considerably higher in wealthy industrialized nations than in low- and middle-income countries. (The differences within each group are considerable, however.) Average happiness levels are also significantly higher in rich countries than in lower-income countries (even though there are exceptions), and this is to a large extent due to a higher level of consumption (but not just private consumption).[6] However, the dramatic increase in material welfare in the richest countries during the last 50 years has not resulted in any significant

[6] One should not be confused by the Happy Planet Index here, or by the fact that wealthy nations do badly on this index. The index (which is created by New Economics Foundation) does not just include happiness and life expectancy, but also ecological footprint (in the denominator). This explains why the perhaps happiest nation on the planet (Denmark) ranks as number 99, while we find countries like Colombia, Costa Rica and Cuba at the top. In my view, the index is worthless even as a measure of sustainable happiness, since it ignores how animals are treated and how countries affect other countries.

increases in happiness (Easterlin 1974; Hellevik 2003; Layard 2005).[7] This is sometimes taken to suggest that reduced economic growth (or even "degrowth") would not jeopardize our happiness, but this inference is probably invalid. First, it has been argued that economic growth is conducive to happiness even in affluent countries (Stevenson and Wolfers 2008). And second, even if economic growth does not have positive effects on happiness in wealthy countries, it might be necessary in order to maintain present happiness levels, e.g. because it promotes employment and helps finance important welfare services. As far as I know, there are no studies that show how we are affected by a moderate "degrowth" that does not lead to mass unemployment.

So, can the relevant findings on wealth, happiness and ecological footprint tell us anything about what is *possible*, e.g. whether it is possible to create a society that is both reasonably happy and sustainable? Well, it is easy to find examples of relatively poor low emission countries (e.g. in Latin America) that are just as happy as wealthy high emission countries in the global North, but this does not show that it is possible for wealthy countries to decrease GDP with maintained happiness levels: we also need to know if it there is a feasible way for rich nations to reduce overall consumption while maintaining present happiness levels. Maybe we can get clearer about this if we move to the individual level.

9.6.2 The Connection Between Income, Consumption and Happiness on the Individual Level

As a general rule, higher incomes lead to more consumption, which in turn leads to larger ecological footprints. According to Nässén (Determinants of greenhouse gas emissions from Swedish private consumption: Time-series and cross-sectional analyses. Submitted for publication in Energy, "unpublished"), "[s]everal cross-sectional studies have shown that energy demand and GHG emissions calculated from the consumption side are strongly dependent on income levels although the relationship is typically somewhat lower than 1:1." For example, it has been shown that "direct and indirect energy use of households increase sharply with income also in affluent countries, with expenditure elasticities of 0.64 in Japan, 0.78 in Australia, 0.86 in Denmark and India, and 1.00 in Brazil" (ibid.).

As far as happiness research is concerned, there are many more studies on income and happiness than on consumption and happiness. It has been shown repeatedly that income is significantly related to happiness, and that the relation is much stronger for lower than for higher incomes (Argyle 2001; Cummins 2000; Layard 2005). We also know that income has a stronger effect on life satisfaction

[7] The alleged fact that increased income has little or no effect on happiness on the national level is part of "Easterlin's paradox". The other part is that there is a clear connection between income and happiness within nations, on the individual level. The "paradox" is how this can be explained.

than on affective well-being (Kahneman and Deaton 2010). It can be assumed that the effect of income on happiness is partly mediated by private consumption, but that there are also other mediating factors.

The relation between total consumption and happiness has also been studied directly, e.g. by Brülde and Fors (2012). In this study, a significant connection was found between happiness and how much money Swedes spend on goods like food and drink, clothes and shoes, electronics, and furniture. People who consume more are both more satisfied with their lives and affectively happier. The most avid spenders are 2.7 units higher on a 11 unit life satisfaction scale than those who consume the least, whereas the difference in affective well-being is 2.2 units.[8] The connection between material consumption and happiness gets somewhat weaker when income is controlled for, and it can be noted that the effect of income on happiness is only partly mediated by consumption, which suggests that the effect is also mediated by e.g. a sense of security or a sense of being successful. (In short, both income and material consumption have independent effects on happiness.) When determinants like employment, marital status and physical activity were controlled for, the difference between "high" and "low" spenders gets even smaller, namely 1 unit in the case of life satisfaction and 0.8 units in the case of affective well-being.

The fact that the relation between income and happiness is weak for higher incomes is sometimes taken to suggest that the relation between consumption and happiness is weak for these incomes, which in turn is taken to suggest that additional consumption has rather small effects on the happiness of the relatively wealthy, and that their happiness would not decrease with reduced consumption. However, some studies indicate that consumption can have positive happiness effects for higher incomes too. For example, it has been shown that consumption can benefit the relatively wealthy if it satisfies social or psychological needs (Patterson and Biswas-Diener 2012), if money is spent on "experiential purchases" or "purchases that engage the consumer in enjoyable activities" (ibid.), or if one spends one's money on others rather than on oneself (Dunn et al. 2008). In my view, this is bad news from a sustainability perspective, because these studies clearly show that high levels of consumption might be conducive to happiness, and there is no reason to believe that the happiness-inducing forms of consumption (e.g. pro-social spending or "experiential purchases") are more sustainable than other forms of consumption. Moreover, even if a further increase in consumption would not increase our happiness, we know nothing about how a *decrease* in consumption would affect our happiness, especially if involuntary. An involuntary decrease in consumption may well have negative effects on happiness, especially in the short run. (People in general may well overestimate the effect of income and consumption

[8] These differences are higher than the corresponding differences in the case of income: The life satisfaction is 1.8 units higher in the highest income group than in the group with the lowest income, whereas the difference in affective well-being is 1.5 units.

on happiness, however. These two factors only explain 3–4 % of the differences in happiness in Sweden.)

Before we ask ourselves how a decrease in consumption would affect our happiness in the long run, let us first move from the probable to the possible, to question (2'). We can first note that it seems possible to consume very little and still be reasonably happy. If we ask ourselves how much consumption is really necessary for a decent level of happiness, we would probably conclude (on theoretical grounds) that little would suffice. Moreover, it is probably easy to find examples of low consumption individuals (e.g. in monasteries or poor countries) that are just as happy as (or even happier than) high consumption individuals in Europe or North America, but this might not be very relevant. It is far more important to ask whether ordinary people in rich countries could consume very little and still be happy, and even more importantly, whether it is possible for the global rich to *reduce* their high level of consumption radically and still be equally happy. Now, there are examples of voluntary simplicity that suggests that it might be possible for *some* to consume very little and still be reasonably happy, e.g. as in the case of the Manhattan-based Beavan family (Beavan 2009). But even if it is possible for some to reduce their consumption radically without jeopardizing their happiness, we cannot conclude that it is also possible for many, for each, or for all. Recall the family in the 1 tonne life project, who had to make substantial sacrifices to reduce their emissions from 2.8 to 1.5 tonnes per person. If their life satisfaction and affective well-being would have been measured we would probably see a decrease in happiness, which is not to deny that stories about voluntary simplicity can be inspiring.

9.6.2.1 A Note on Hedonic Adaptation

But what if we take a longer view? Suppose that we (the global rich) decided to make a substantial reduction in our consumption. If we ignore the indirect effects (e.g. on employment), how would this affect our happiness in 5 or 10 years? It can be assumed on theoretical grounds that we may well adapt hedonically to this change, i.e. that we might eventually return to our former happiness levels. It has been shown that hedonic adaptation is a rather common phenomenon. When we experience positive or negative events, our happiness can be strongly affected in the short run, but for most events we tend to return to our former levels relatively soon. We also adapt to many positive changes, like moving to a new house, getting a higher salary, or having children (Clark et al. 2008), and to negative changes like being sent to prison or becoming disabled (Frederick and Lowenstein 1999). But we do not adapt fully to all changes, and it sometimes takes a long time before we return to our former happiness levels. For example, it can take many years to adapt hedonically to the loss of a loved one (ibid.) or the loss of one's job (Clark et al. 2008), and getting married can have a permanent positive effect on people's

happiness (Frey 2008). Given these findings, it would be rather surprising if we would not adapt fully to a substantially lower level of consumption after a few years.[9]

9.6.3 Materialism, General Consumption Patterns, and Happiness

It is sometimes pointed out in this context that people with a "materialist" value orientation are less happy than "idealists". Materialists value material possessions, consumption, shopping, status, income, and economic growth. They put themselves before others, are more conformist, and less concerned about the environment (Hellevik 2003). "Idealists" give more importance to spirituality, religion, personal development, creativity, intimate relationships, and health. They live simpler lives, spend more time in nature, are more empathic, contribute more to society, care more about the environment, and are more willing to support policy change (ibid.). Idealists are also more experientially oriented, less self-centred, and more generous (Tatzel 2003).[10]

The finding that materialists are less satisfied with their lives can be related to a certain kind of critique of *consumerism*, a phenomenon that is intimately connected to materialism. The term "consumerism" often refers to a lifestyle or culture that is preoccupied with the acquisition of consumer goods, or to a social and economic system that encourages the purchase of such goods (in amounts far beyond what is necessary to satisfy basic needs). Consumerism is not just criticized from an environmentalist perspective, but also from the perspective of well-being. The latter critique is often theoretical in nature, e.g. it is assumed on theoretical grounds that we would be happier if we were less preoccupied with consumer goods, and if we consumed less. The finding about materialism gives empirical support to the former claim, but this does not imply that we would be happier if we consumed less (cf. above).

The finding that idealists are happier than materialists can only be relevant in a sustainability context if the two value orientations give rise to different consumption patterns *and* if one of these patterns is associated with higher GHG emissions. We can probably assume that materialists consume more material goods than idealists do, while idealists tend to make more "experiential purchases" (like travel and education) and spend more on others. This difference in consumption patterns can probably explain part of the difference in happiness between the two groups. For example, experiential consumption have stronger and more lasting effects on happiness than consumption of most material goods, and the same thing holds for

[9] However, it is not clear to what extent this information might make people more willing to reduce their consumption, or to support policies that purport to reduce our consumption.

[10] Regarding *why* materialists are less happy, see e.g. Hellevik (2003), Patterson and Biswas-Diener (2012).

those material purchases that engage people in enjoyable activities, like bicycles or guitars (van Boven and Gilovich 2003). The relation between happiness and different types of consumption was also studied in Brülde and Fors (2012), who found that the three types of spending most conducive to happiness are travelling abroad (experiential consumption), giving to charity (pro-social spending), and consumption of food (often both experiential and pro-social).

This does not show that idealists leave smaller ecological footprints than materialists, however, in spite of their environmental concern. We have already seen that there is a strong relation between income and ecological footprint, and there is no difference in income between idealists and materialists.[11] Moreover, we cannot assume that "experiential consumption" and "pro-social spending" are more sustainable than material consumption, e.g. it is likely that "experientalists" travel more by air. It is also worth noting that many enjoyable activities require quite a lot of material possessions, as in the case of sailing, golf, trekking, and fishing, but according to Brown and Kasser (2005), happier people attach more value to activities that require less material goods. However, it is still possible that happy idealists fly and drive more to engage in e.g. stimulating outdoor activities.

But even if there is little difference between idealists and materialists at present, we have to consider that idealists are both more environmentally aware and more willing to support policy change, and they tend to enjoy things that are less energy intensive. This suggests that idealists are more disposed to adopt a sustainable lifestyle, and that they would experience e.g. a life without meat as less unpleasant than materialists would. So it might be *possible* to change the behaviour of idealists by e.g. political means, but it is probably quite difficult to turn materialists into idealists. In any case, we need to learn more about why some people become materialists, and whether people's value orientation can be influenced by e.g. political means.

9.6.4 The Relation Between the "Energy Intensity" of Our Specific Activities and Living Conditions, on the One Hand, and Happiness, on the Other

The consumption patterns described above (e.g. experiential consumption) are quite general, and it might be argued that we need to be more specific. One possible approach is to focus on specific activities or living conditions, to see if there is any systematic relation between their "energy intensity" and how they affect our happiness.

The ideal thing would probably be to take a holistic approach and focus on the energy intensity of people's leisure time as a whole, since this would take all the relevant factors (including transport and heating) into account. But in practice, all

[11] According to Ottar Hellevik, in conversation.

we can do is to investigate whether people who bike more or fly more (etc.) are happier than people who bike or fly less, after having controlled for other variables.

It is well documented that a physically and socially active leisure time makes us happier, and there are many happiness-inducing activities that require little or no use of energy (if we ignore the issue of transportation), like spending time with friends, dancing or exercising (Argyle 2001). Brülde and Fors (2013) identified several other activities that seem beneficial both from a climate perspective and from a happiness perspective, like gardening, outdoor activities, and spending time in nature. Regarding commuting and transportation, it was found that people who bike more often and travel more by train are somewhat happier. This is consistent with earlier research, which has shown that the most sustainable forms of "commuting" (walking and biking) are conducive to happiness (Holmberg et al. 2011). This strongly suggests that we should try to make our cities more dense, but also to decentralize the relevant services within cities.

Other "activities" are beneficial from a climate perspective but *not* conducive to happiness, e.g. people who use public transportation more often are somewhat less happy. There are also activities and conditions that are beneficial from a happiness perspective but not from a climate perspective. For example, people who drive, eat meat and fly more often are somewhat happier (Brülde and Fors 2013).[12] Moreover, even if e.g. car driving would have no positive happiness effects, this would not imply that people would be equally happy if they stopped driving, since the loss of something that is taken for granted may have negative effects. But again, this might only be the case in the short term, i.e. it is possible that we would adapt to driving less over time.

Certain living conditions are also conducive to happiness but harmful from a climate perspective. People who live in the countryside feel better than people living in cities, and people who live in houses are somewhat happier than people who live in apartments (Fors and Brülde 2011). But living in the country (etc.) is less sustainable, e.g. because it requires more energy to heat or cool a house, and because it leads to longer commuting times (Holmberg et al. 2011). It is worth noting that more commuting is really detrimental to happiness, but people who live in the country are somewhat happier in spite of this.

A factor that is harmful from a climate perspective but *neutral* from a happiness perspective is having dogs, cats, and other pets (World Database of Happiness 2013a). The same thing holds for having children. Every child that is born can be expected to emit a lot of GHGs, especially in rich countries, but having children has little or no effect on people's happiness (World Database of Happiness 2013b). I doubt that this information would have any effect on people's desire to have children, however.[13]

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[12] A high consumption of red or processed meat can have negative effects on health, however. Cf. below.

[13] At this point, it might be worth returning to the problem of how individual emissions should be calculated (see footnote 2 above), or more specifically, whether causing new emitters to exist should be taken into account. For example, should not the emissions of young children be

To conclude, some activities and conditions that are conducive to happiness require little or no use of energy, whereas others are quite energy-intensive. In fact, some of the least sustainable activities and conditions (e.g. flying, living in a house, and car driving) are all happiness-inducing (at least statistically). But if we move our attention to question (2'), there is some cause for optimism, since the fact that there are many happiness-inducing activities that require little use of energy suggests that it is *possible* to live a life that is both happy and sustainable. However, it might be hard for many to maintain their present level of happiness if they can no longer drive or fly as much.

9.6.5 The Relation Between Working Hours and Happiness

It has been proposed that shorter working hours would be beneficial from a sustainability perspective. The most interesting policy proposal in this context is not that single individuals shorten their working hours voluntarily (even though everyone should have the right to do this all across the world, and not just in the Netherlands), but a *general* shortening of our working hours, a reform that might lead to less consumption and less commuting (Holmberg et al. 2011).

It is well documented that unemployment is detrimental to happiness (Frey 2008), but less clear how many working hours are optimal from a happiness perspective. Some tend to believe we would be happier if we worked somewhat less, e.g. because we would experience less time pressure and have more time to socialize and engage in leisure activities (Kasser and Sheldon 2009). Shorter working hours might not benefit people with attractive jobs and a less attractive leisure, however (Holmberg et al. 2011). In a recent Swedish study, it was shown that people who work somewhat more than 40 h a week are most satisfied with their lives, whereas people who work 35–40 h a week feel best, in terms of affective well-being (Fors and Brülde 2011). However, these numbers might be irrelevant if we want to determine how a general shortening of working hours would affect happiness.

Moreover, when assessing such a proposal from a happiness perspective, there are many things that need to be taken into account besides the direct effects, i.e. how those who work less would be affected (given that everyone works less). We also need to ask what effects such a reform would have on society as a whole, e.g. whether it would lead to less unemployment through job sharing, how it would affect gender relations, and whether it would jeopardize our publically funded welfare services.

(Footnote 13 continued)
attributed to the parents? If we answer this question in the affirmative *and* (moreover) assume that emissions should be distributed equally between individuals, this seems to suggest that the childless should (as a matter of individual climate justice) be allowed to emit more GHGs in other areas. If this kind of scheme were introduced, it would probably have some effect on people's desire to have children.

If we move our attention to question (2'), we can argue that it may well be *possible* for many of us to work somewhat less and yet maintain our present happiness, even if working less means consuming less.

9.6.6 Health, Sustainability, and Happiness

Health has positive effects on happiness (especially over time), and it might be argued that a sustainable lifestyle has positive long-term effects on happiness because it is healthier than an energy-intensive lifestyle. However, some claims about the relation between health and sustainability are highly speculative and of dubious value. For example, it has been suggested that the factors that are detrimental to health (e.g. stress) also have negative environmental effects (e.g. because stress leads to overconsumption).

There are some factors that seem detrimental to our health and the environment alike, however, as in the case of red meat consumption (and production). For example, Pan et al. (2012) have shown that a high consumption of red or processed meat increases the risk of premature death in e.g. cancer or heart disease. It is also worth noting that local policies may have good effects on both health and climate, e.g. decisions to decrease traffic in big cities. And even if the relation between health and sustainability is not very strong, it seems politically desirable to synchronize the project to promote health with the project to reduce emissions.

9.6.7 "Nature Relatedness" and Environmental Awareness

We already know that "green" activities are conducive to happiness (cf. Nisbet et al. 2011). It has also been shown that people who feel more strongly related to nature are both somewhat happier than others (ibid.) and more engaged in environmental issues (Nisbet et al. 2009). This is in line with the finding that people who act more on environmental reasons are somewhat more satisfied with their lives (Brülde and Fors 2013). They do not seem to feel better than others, however.

The fact that people who are high in "nature relatedness" are more environmentally conscious does not entail that their lives are more sustainable, however, e.g. nature lovers might live closer to nature (which means emissions from heating and commuting) and fly long distances to experience awe-inspiring nature on different continents. But as in the case of idealists, it might be easier for these people to live lives that are both sustainable and happy. After all, environmentally aware nature lovers are probably more disposed than others to adopt a sustainable lifestyle, and it might be easier to change their behaviour by e.g. political means. But it is probably quite difficult to make people feel more related to nature by political means (if not in kindergarten or in school). In any case, we need to learn more about why some develop a stronger relation to nature than others.

9.7 Conclusions

The central question of this contribution is how a more sustainable lifestyle would affect our well-being (happiness), and the tentative answer is that most people would most probably be *less* happy than today if their lives were more sustainable, at least in the short run. But if we take a longer view this might not be the case, i.e. it can be assumed (on theoretical grounds) that we would adapt to these changes over time.

Moreover, it seems possible for some of us to live lives that are both sustainable and happy, at least if we can afford the latest technologies and are willing to simplify our lives considerably. After all, there are several factors that are beneficial both from a climate perspective and from a happiness perspective, like spending time with others, exercise, and outdoor activities. It is also worth noting that pleasure is not identical with happiness, and that it might not be detrimental to happiness to refrain from e.g. the pleasures of eating red meat.

However, the fact that it is possible for *some* to live lives that are both happy and sustainable does not imply that it is possible for *many*, and it is even more unlikely that it is possible for each or for sufficiently many. After all, the car gives us great freedom if we avoid traffic jams, air travel is associated with nice holidays and novel experiences, and many forms of consumption are conducive to happiness. However, it is worth emphasizing that we know very little about the relation between sustainability and happiness, even on the individual level. We know even less about how our happiness would be affected if more sustainable policies were introduced, e.g. if we were *all* "forced" to fly or drive less. This suggests that even if a more sustainable lifestyle would have negative short-term effects on happiness, the long-term effects might be less negative than most people think, especially if everyone is forced to make similar changes.

In any case, it seems obvious that we should not appeal to people's self-interest if we want to get them to live more sustainably or to support radical climate policies. Instead, we should use moral arguments, and try to convince people that we should all be prepared to make sacrifices if this can benefit future generations and the world's poor.

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Chapter 10
The Political Pursuit of Happiness: A Popperian Perspective on Layard's Happiness Policy

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10.1 Introduction

What is the political relevance of happiness? Very different positions on this matter have been proposed by renowned scholars. Layard (2005, 115) arrived at the conclusion: "So the greatest happiness is the right guide to public policy". In contrast, several decades earlier, Popper (1974, 237) rejected such a straightforward proposition: "But of all political ideals, that of making the people happy is perhaps the most dangerous one". Karl Popper and Richard Layard are far from alone in this perennial controversy over whether maximizing social happiness is an appropriate public policy objective (an overview of the pros and cons is presented by De Prycker 2010; for other sources, see Frey and Stutzer 2000, 2009; Bok 2010; Sugden 1989; Duncan 2010; Ott 2010. See also Chap. 12 in this volume). Various authors have advocated an affirmative position, e.g. Thomas Paine: "Whatever the form of Constitution of Government may be, it ought to have no other object than the general happiness" (Paine 1790/1996, The Rights of Man, p. 164, quoted in Duncan 2010). Similarly, Jeremy Bentham defined the "happiness of the community" as the appropriate way to judge political measures (cf. Duncan 2010, 2005). More recently, the policy objective of increasing people's happiness is argued for instance, by Cummins et al. (2009, 34) as follows: "[The] role of government should be to shape society and distribute resources in ways that enhance population well-being."

In the meantime, the position advocated by Layard (2005, 2006; for an overview see Ott 2006) of incorporating happiness into public policy has progressed

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and gained momentum in economics and even in real-world politics. In Kahneman et al. 2004, argued for National Well-Being Accounts to complement traditional measures such as GDP, and several books on economic happiness research (Easterlin 2002; Ng and Ho 2006; van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell 2008; Layard 2005; Bruni and Porta 2007) have collected empirical evidence in favour of measures of subjective well-being for public policy. Even with regard to implementation, the notion of using happiness as an indicator seems to be spreading. Bhutan in the Himalayas with its concept of Gross National Happiness, already claims to base its policies on the happiness of its citizens.[1] Moreover, countries like the UK, France and Germany are becoming increasingly interested in happiness-related indicators of national well-being as a rejuvenation cure for public policy.

However, it is not at all clear whether there is a reasonable and convincing justification for such happiness policies. The aim and contribution of this paper is to formulate a plausibility check and apply it to status competition, which, according to Layard (2005), is one of the supposedly crucial elements of unhappiness. In Layard's view, status competition is the race for a position as high as possible in the pyramid of social ranks society has to offer. Since the number of ranks and the number of positions of the respective ranks are fixed, the promotion of one person to a higher rank is accompanied by the relegation of another to a lower rank (see also Congleton 1989, 176). In this paper, in the context of status competition, we consider (a) whether a happiness-related policy could be justified, (b) whether it could achieve its objectives (effectiveness), and (c) whether the obstacles to implementing such a policy could be overcome (feasibility). To this end, we take a Popperian perspective, that is, we use the different levels of argumentation employed by Popper and re-evaluate his view of the dangers of happiness policies in the light of newer research findings. We first present Popper's and Layard's arguments, because of their polarized stances concerning happiness-oriented policies. In a second step, from Popper's social philosophy we derive criteria for evaluating happiness policies. To apply these criteria in practise, we put to test Layard's battle against status competition in a third and final step.

10.2 Popper Versus Layard on Happiness Policy

In order to improve our understanding of Popper's and Layard's positions, we compare their respective approaches.[2] This comparison reveals several crucial points. First, Layard's position explicitly endorses the classical utilitarian doctrine

[1] For an overview of Gross National Happiness in Bhutan, see Burns (2010) and Shrotryia (2006); that not all is well "in the land of the happy" is emphasized by Duncan (2007, 97).

[2] In Bünger and Prinz (2010), Popper's and Layard's position with respect to smoking is investigated. Since, in that context, Karl Popper's and Richard Layard's general approaches to happiness and public policy were described and analyzed comparatively to a certain extent, we restrict ourselves in this paper to remarks on their respective general positions.

of maximizing happiness. In Layard's words: "[T]he greatest happiness is the right guide to public policy" (Layard 2005, 115). Therefore, according to Layard, the role of the state is both to increase the happiness of already happy people and to decrease the unhappiness of those who are unhappy. In contrast to these state responsibilities that refer to all members of the society, Karl Popper claims that public policy should only be concerned with those individuals who are suffering or living in misery. By *suffering,* Popper means starvation, but also pain, humiliation, injustice and exploitation (Popper 2012, 119). That is, Popper's position does not focus on human happiness or even on unhappiness, but on suffering which of course will often be associated with severe forms of unhappiness. Below, we restrict our analysis to aspects of material misery. *Misery* then can be defined as shortfall of consumption goods for any person or household below a minimally required amount, e.g. starving due to lack of food. With regard to this position, the main objective of Popper's public policy is to help those people living below a certain minimum threshold level.[3] In contrast, the situation of persons above and beyond this threshold should be of no concern to the state. Therefore, the social objective function for Popper's approach seems to consist exclusively of the minimization of misery and suffering. As discussed below, there are four criteria which led Popper to advocate this restriction of scope for public policy: arguments at the normative, epistemological, political and instrumental levels.

Second, along with Layard's classical utilitarian position comes the assumption of a continuous happiness—unhappiness scale (or in the dominant hedonistic interpretation, of a continuous pleasure—pain scale). According to this position, when deciding between decreasing misery (understood here as an extreme form of unhappiness) of some individuals or increasing happiness for others, the happiness-increasing actions might be appropriate, even if relieving misery is given extra weight in these considerations (Layard 2005, 231). If the aggregated change in happiness is positive, the classic utilitarian position would even commit to making some people's life a misery in order to increase the happiness of others. In contrast, Popper's aim of eliminating misery does not refer directly to individual happiness. Although the notion of misery could be interpreted in terms of extreme unhappiness, Popper opposes an understanding of suffering as being the opposite of happiness and explicitly rejects the notion of a commensurable happiness-unhappiness-scale (Popper 1966, 284, fn 2). Due to the strict separation between the two phenomena of suffering and happiness, in Popper's political philosophy, minimum

[3] Similar approaches are developed by Kahneman and Krueger (2006) and Lelkes (2013). Kahneman and Krueger (2006) propose a U-index which contains the time spent in unpleasant states. While their primary reason for focusing on negative aspects seems to be some desirable psychological and statistical properties (Kahneman and Krueger 2006, 19 ff.), they also note political acceptability as an advantage of misery or unhappiness indicators (Kahneman and Krueger 2006, 22). Lelkes (2013, 17) shows that misery as measured by ratings from 0 to 3 on a ten-step life satisfaction/happiness scale, can be better predicted by observable personal characteristics than by happiness.

standards have to be determined to mark a "zero-line".[4] This is the situation above and beyond which an individual is well-off enough not to suffer. As this "zero-line" is context-dependent,[5] the job of the government is firstly, to define minimum consumption standards and secondly, to provide the means to enable people to live without undue hardship. That is, in a democratic society, to alleviate misery, due, for example, to poverty caused by unemployment, social welfare benefits are needed, as minimum standards are to be defined by means of an (implicit) consensus among all citizens, or at least a majority of citizens.

Third, while Popper's approach does not require intimate knowledge on individual preferences beyond the notion that individuals suffer in certain circumstances, Layard's approach is much more demanding in terms of information. For an individual (or household), the objective function implied by Layard is to maximize individual utility by correcting distorted 'false' preferences. Since the government supposedly knows the underlying 'true' preferences, presumably through results of happiness research, the aim of public policy is to help individuals to convert their experienced preferences to their true ones. This requires, first of all, knowledge of what exactly constitutes 'true' and 'false' individual preferences. 'False' preferences can arise through various mechanisms, comparison being one of the most important. Layard states that happiness or subjective well-being is based partly on a comparison with others within a peer group and on one's own individual expectations in relation to achievements concerning income or social rank (Layard 1980, 737). In the case of social comparison, people compete with each other for social status. Layard models this status competition as a "rat race", because the objective of those involved is positional (one can only be at the top if at least some others are at the bottom). The status-based comparisons that people make of themselves with others, create externalities, as successful individuals negatively influence the well-being of unsuccessful ones. According to Layard (1980, 738), the crucial element of status competition in a society is that it emerges generally as a zero-sum game; one person's gain is another one's loss.

The impact of this mechanism is extended in Layard's argumentation, as he implicitly assumes a hyperopic labor supply as a general problem. However, the individual's decision to supply a certain number of his working hours on the labor market is ideally based on an unbiased, rational process. This decision, though, may be prone to myopic or hyperopic distortion. In the case of myopia, the individual is too "shortsighted" to recognize the importance of working now to increase one's chances of career advancement in the future. This may result in an undersupply of labor by the individual. In the second and converse case of hyperopia, the individual neglects the "here and now" in favour of the more distant future. This

[4] This corresponds to Sidgwick's "hedonistic zero" (Mayerfeld 1999, 15 and 60), even though we do not wish to restrict Popper to a purely hedonistic interpretation.

[5] The position of the zero-line depends on the situation of the society. This is even the case where physiological basic needs are concerned; the same amount of food may feel like starvation in New Zealand and the USA, while seen as abundance in Post-WWII Austria and India (Popper 2012, 119).

behaviour could cause the phenomenon of "workaholics", who work so much as to jeopardize their health.

Fourth, Popper did not comprehensively discuss instruments for bringing about policies which ensure minimum life standards. Only in passing does he mention three remedies to social evils. He advocates a tax-based minimum income, the introduction of public hospitals and combating illiteracy (Popper 1969, 361). In general, what he underlines in his political philosophy is that it is essential to advance through "*piecemeal social engineering*", that is, by avoiding large scale societal reform, but instead moving forward in small, incremental steps. This piecemeal advancement is necessary, because, firstly, only such small steps are easily reversed if unintended side effects arise. Secondly, small steps can be introduced within a relatively short timeframe, compared to the long implementation span of major reforms. Thus, if these piecemeal social innovations impose burdens on citizens, it is more likely that those individuals who carried the burden will benefit from the improvement. Even more important may be that a reaction, for instance, to external political events like the fall of the Iron Curtain or to 09/11 should be more effective and faster.

Richard Layard is more specific as to the public policy instruments for his happiness policy. In his approach, there is no unique set of instruments that could be used to correct preferences. Essentially, Layard considers three ways of achieving happiness policy objectives: (a) fiscal instruments like taxation and transfers or subsidies, to change the individual budget constraints, (b) altering the legal constraints, that is, institutional regulations, consisting of laws and provisions. Both these indirect routes let individuals adapt their choices (and perhaps their preferences) to new incentives. The third way (c) involves moral methods, that is, trying to change preferences directly by education, persuasion and information.

10.3 The 'Popper Check' for Happiness Policy: Levels and Criteria

Popper's discussion of his social philosophy provides criteria which may be used to evaluate happiness-enhancing policy instruments concerning their justification, feasibility and effectiveness. In the following discussion, a taxonomy of these criteria is presented and justified, along with a short assessment of how Popper's own position relates to them.

According to Karl Popper, it is possible to distinguish between four levels of criteria: (1) The *normative* level at which different and possibly conflicting objectives are analyzed and weighed up against each other. This weighting can only be implemented by referring to evaluations derived from normative considerations. (2) The *epistemological* level at which what we really know about the subject

matter is to be scrutinized, or more precisely, what does the government know about the underlying mechanics of the social phenomena in question and their impact on individual happiness. (3) The *political* level at which to analyze how political decisions are formulated with respect to policy objectives and what motivates them. The processes that underlie political decisions are to be scrutinized at this level. (4) The *instrumental* level at which to investigate what we know about instruments for implementing the respective policies. At this level, questions are asked about which instruments are available, and how their effectiveness and efficiency are to be evaluated. The first two levels may be referred to as the '*policy conception stage area*', and levels three and four as the '*policy implementation area*'. However, criteria for the levels have to be specified in order to evaluate happiness policies. As the specification of the criteria and the determination of the respective specification are explicit from Popper's position and argumentation, we refer to these criteria developed from his argumentation as the *Popper Check*. While the various levels of this check are distilled from Popper's works, the questions that we introduce aim at more recent developments in public policy research. In this context, the policy conception area merits a more comprehensive introduction, as the ideas developed in the former are more characteristic of Popper's own position and less straightforward than in the policy implementation area.

Normative level: At this level, intra-personal as well as inter-personal goal conflicts are to be determined. Intra-personal goal conflicts concern the question of whether the fight against misery is more important for individuals from an ethical point of view than the pursuit of happiness, and how 'happiness' is to be determined, e.g. by material well-being and/or psycho-social well-being. Moreover, the crucial question is whether or not other persons and/or the state are allowed to intervene with respect to intra-personal goal conflicts, without the permission of the person involved. The inter-personal normative conflict revives an old controversy in social ethics as to whether individual well-being for a certain number of people could or should be reduced, if this improves overall societal well-being. The problem here is whether the inevitable intervention and intrusion into people's lives respects their autonomy.[6]

Epistemological level: Status-related happiness-policy interventions require knowledge about the following: (a) How does status competition take place? (b) What are its dynamics? For example, are there self-regulating mechanisms at work that constrain negative effects? (c) What are the consequences of status competition for individuals and society? More precisely, the first issue (a) is about how the reference group for status competition is defined. Are reference groups chosen individually or can they be changed if it turns out that they are inappropriate? There

[6] It seems reasonable to assume that some modes of coercion respect private autonomy, while others do not.

are two extremes of inappropriateness: At one extreme, comparison to a reference group leads to permanent frustration, due to feelings of deficiency. At the other extreme, comparison leads to discontent, because group standards do not constitute a challenge. Are individuals generally members of more than one reference group? Also of the utmost importance is the vehicle of status competition. The dimensions in which individuals compete with each other for status differ. While in some subgroups, individuals may compete, e.g., for political power or educational status, in modern societies, adults mostly compete for material wealth. Is it mainly pure money or is it rather consumption (quantitatively and qualitatively)?[7] The difference between money and consumption as vehicles of status competition is driven by the level of labor supply on the one hand and the level of savings[8] on the other. Regarding the second issue (b), once the reference group is chosen or determined, knowledge must be available about the mechanics of status competition. Status competition is a two-tier process; at the first level, it is a competition for access to a certain peer or reference group. At the second level, competition within a reference group commences.

Political level: (a) How are political decisions determined? Is there 'expressive voting' of uninformed voters or rather 'interested voting' of informed voters?[9] Is democratic voting more like a "beauty contest" or is it concerned with public welfare? (b) What are the respective consequences for a happiness-related public policy? (c) Moreover, given the process of policy objective determination, how are indicators of happiness policy used or misused? (d) What about political rent seeking, that is, who are the beneficiaries of happiness policy?

Instrumental level: (a) What instruments are available for happiness-related public policies? (b) How effective are these instruments in achieving happiness goals? (c) How coercive are these policy tools? (d) How cost-effective are the instruments? The first three questions are derived directly from Popper's political philosophy. The fourth question complements the instrumental level by applying the criteria from cost-benefit-analysis. This reflects the problem of resource constraints when considering the feasibility of public policy interventions. Even if a measure is available, effective and non-coercive, it might still be too expensive to implement, in relation to the likely impact.

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[7] Consumption that is relevant to status can take place in various forms, such as owning real estate, driving luxury cars, and also through possessing the "right" cell phones, watches, TV sets, etc.

[8] Or maybe even negative savings, i.e., personal debt.

[9] Interested voting means that people vote on political proposals according their own preferences. Because people know that it is very unlikely that their own vote will be decisive, there is almost no incentive to vote with respect to outcomes (Shughart 2004); this is called the 'paradox of voting'. However, moral or ideological motivations may nevertheless induce many if not most people to vote, maybe because they know that they are voting behind the 'veil of insignificance' (Kliemt 1986; see also Aidt 2000); this is termed expressive voting (Shughart 2004; Sobel and Wagner 2004).

10.4 Does Layard's Happiness Policy Pass the Popper Check?

The Popper Check described in Sect. 10.3 is now used to test one of Richard Layard's central public policy proposals, the battle against status competition. According to Layard, status races are a zero-sum game, as they consume scarce resources in competition over social ranks, where one person's gain is another's loss. Layard assumes that one of the main factors affecting status competition is working hours. Hyperopic or emmetropic (that is, "normally" sighted) individuals work excessively long hours when status competition prevails. Using governmental interventions to restrict this supply of labor therefore seems an appropriate means of enhancing happiness. The spare time gained could then be used for activities which are happiness-increasing, according to the results of happiness research, e.g. social activities like meeting friends.

Whether or not a certain happiness-related policy passes the Popper Check below depends on the necessary and sufficient conditions for its acceptability.[10] Therefore, for each level of the Popper Check, these conditions are outlined as far as possible at this rather general level.

10.4.1 Normative Level

Intra-personal goal conflicts play a role only insofar as recent research in psychology and economics demonstrates that there can be conflicts between our contemporary self and our future self. If this is the case, a normative problem arises, as it is unclear as to what extent this conflict might be relevant for public policy. At first glance, it seems to be rather an individual problem. The reason is that policy interventions to solve intra-personal conflicts may ignore individual creative potential and hence restrict personal freedom.

Therefore, one of the key questions in this context is the legitimacy of paternalistic policy measures. Paternalism means that a person, like a father, with benevolent intentions decides what is best for someone else (originally the family). The debate on paternalism in public policy is extensive. A classical position against paternalistic attitudes is found, for instance, in John Stuart Mill's essay 'On Liberty'. The discussion on forms of policy intervention that attempt to reconcile a legitimate respect for the individual led—for instance—to a 'soft' kind of paternalism. Thaler and Sunstein (2003) call this position 'libertarian paternalism' and they advocate a public policy that provides information and soft incentives to individuals to make choices that are considered superior in the longer term. These soft incentives—so-called 'nudges'—might consist of default modes. For choosing

[10] We thank an anonymous referee for asking about these conditions.

otherwise, however, an active opting-out is required. Similar positions are dubbed 'light paternalism' (Loewenstein and Haisley 2007), 'asymmetric paternalism' (Camerer et al. 2003) or 'benign paternalism' (Benjamin and Laibson 2003).

As a consequence, at the normative level the *necessary condition* to pass the Popper Check is that personal freedom should not be restricted coercively. The *sufficient condition* is that—as suggested by Rawls (1971, 136 ff.)—all citizens could agree on the respective policy measures behind the 'veil of ignorance' (Rawls 1971; see also Freeman 2012).

The position of Layard is paternalistic even beyond these "soft" paternalistic approaches and, hence, does not meet the necessary condition for passing the Popper Check, because he endorses not only "minimal invasive", but also hard coercive instruments. According to the Popper Check, such instruments are only legitimate if there is a substantial external effect that violates uninvolved persons (see Bünger and Prinz 2010, for a comprehensive discussion of the externalities of smoking with respect to the writings of Popper). By contrast, Layard argues that except for some cases in which the external effects of status competition are welcomed for reasons of equity, counteracting the effects of this race is "a major task of public policy" (Layard 1980, 738). Although there might be an indirect effect of status competition on uninvolved persons through the material well-being of, say, 'workaholics', nobody is harmed by merely observing people 'working too much' to gain material wealth or as Jerome (1994 [1889], Chap. 15, 144) put it: "I love work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours". Personal freedom and personal decision-making are *not inevitably* violated by 'workaholics'.[11] Of course, workplace competition with a workaholic colleague might put pressure on co-workers also to increase their working hours. But there is a simple remedy for this, namely establishing co-operative agreements among colleagues about work-related behaviour. If workaholics dominate, changing jobs may provide a solution. Nonetheless, norm-shifts are possible, either towards more working hours or towards less. However, without a general acceptance of more or less working hours, *all* employers will surely not be able to offer jobs *only* with more (or less) working hours. This means that the freedom to change jobs will prevent most people from having their situation violated by workaholics. Moreover, not only the material wealth of 'workaholics' is observable, but also the negative consequences for socio-psychic well-being. Hence, what remains are mainly inter-personal conflicts, which can, however, be solved in Layard's classical utilitarian concept, simply by summing the consequences on individual happiness. This single indicator of the greatest happiness results in a definitive criterion for solving these conflicts unequivocally.[12] Yet solutions of classical utilitarianism are obviously not compatible with Popper's

[11] There may be exceptions where a workaholic neglects his family, but this would not appear to be relevant for public policy (except, perhaps, for blatant cases of neglecting one's children or physical abuse).

[12] The other side of the coin is that under this interpersonal aggregation rule, it could be a moral obligation to actively sacrifice the lives of some innocent individuals to increase the total happiness in society as a whole.

normative position, according to which an individual is allowed to commit alleged errors[13] (for an analysis of incoherent preferences and consumer sovereignty see Sudgen 2004, 2008). Moreover, Layard does not seem to take account of social institutions which automatically counteract exaggerated forms of status competition like social exclusion, one of the most powerful social sanctions which work without any state intervention.

However, let us for the sake of argument, accept the view that status competition may give rise to a kind of zero-sum game in which one person can only gain what another loses ("positional externality"; Frank 2005, 2008). The necessary condition would be fulfilled here, since uninvolved persons like co-workers might suffer some harm. But what can be said about the sufficient condition? Could all citizens behind the 'veil of ignorance' really agree with a policy intervention to restrict or even eliminate status competition? Agreement to restrictions that reduce personal freedom substantially with respect to the work-leisure decision (beyond certain rules which are already enacted concerning the length of a working day etc.) do not seem very likely, since competition about positions in a society is also a major source of desired social mobility. Without social mobility, each person would have to remain in exactly the same position as her parents; put differently, society would be stagnant. In such a society, nobody has an incentive to engage in activities to promote themselves. Although such a static society may provide happiness—at least for those at the top of the pyramid, it would hardly contribute anything to economic or scientific progress. The main reason is that status competition creates positive externalities for society as a whole (Congleton 1989). This means that status competition is not only a way to achieve individual promotion, but also to foster societal progress; the rewards of status competition are only partially appropriated by the individual who engages in this competition. Hence, there is no convincing evidence that the sufficient condition would be fulfilled nowadays in rich societies. Moreover, the number of hours worked per worker has decreased over decades and even economic models tell us that working times will probably shrink further with higher labor productivity, if "leisure" is a so-called "normal good".

10.4.2 Epistemological Level

In order to counteract possible negative effects of status competition, knowledge must be available about its mechanics. Status competition takes place at (at least) two levels, the first entailing competition over access to a certain peer or reference group (see, for instance, Frank 1985). Access is important, as it is not only one's

[13] "Toleration is the necessary consequence of realizing our human fallibility: to err is human, and we do it all the time. *So let us pardon each other's follies.* This is the first principle of natural right" (Popper, translating an argument of Voltaire in favor of 'toleration' (or tolerance); Popper 1994, p. 190, emphasis in the original text). See also Harsanyi (1997, 134).

perception of achievement compared to others that is relevant, but also the respect or judgment of peer group members of one's achievements. This is especially true where affiliations that function as reference groups can be chosen, such as membership of a golf club or being regarded as an intellectual.[14] At the second level, there is competition within a reference group. In this respect, individuals try to establish a reputation within their reference group by investing in resources (of various kinds, depending on the specific group).

The first necessary condition to pass the epistemological level of the Popper Check is that it should be feasible to determine quantitatively the level of status competition that is harmful for society as a whole. The second necessary condition is the ability to quantify the level of status competition that is minimally required to enable social mobility. It would then be sufficient to pass the test at this level if both necessary conditions are fulfilled.

Because social competition occurs predominantly with respect to money and income (Layard 2005, 44), or occupational status, in order to stay in the race, people work more than they would if there were no such race. The main problem is that status races might be the consequence of a rationality trap (in game-theory terms, they could be characterized as *repeated n-person prisoner dilemmas*). That is, people act individually rationally by intensifying their efforts to achieve or maintain high status. The collective outcome, however, is negative for all participants. Consequently, the resources devoted to status competition are wasted from the perspective of society; individuals voluntarily squander resources in the race for status, thereby forgoing some potential happiness. Their preferences could therefore be regarded as 'false'. This phenomenon is exacerbated by hyperopia, with regard to paid work; individuals who are prone to overestimating the importance of gainful employment and who are caught up in these status races will be twice motivated to increase their workload and work performance. This could result in these individuals risking their health or at least foregoing opportunities to improve their long-term happiness.

For Layard's happiness policy, it is important to determine the individuals' 'true' and 'false' preferences, so as to intervene and help the individuals to change their preferences to the 'true' ones. Otherwise, increasing happiness in the sense of Layard would barely be feasible. It is precisely the difference between the *chosen* amounts of working hours, in contrast to the 'true' optimal amounts, which is decisive for Layard's progress towards happiness.

To evaluate the relevance of Layard's position for public policy, it is necessary to consider how realistic his assumptions are. While the correlation of status races and hyperopia could be a problem at the individual level, it remains an open question whether this problem also occurs at the societal level. The point at issue is

[14] Of course, there might also be reference groups which are not deliberately chosen, but more coincidental (like one's family) or where access to the groups is free.

how many people are really hyperopic with regard to this domain of life[15] (or to put it differently, how many workaholics are there in this society?), and to what extent. Many people will simply have "average" time preferences regarding their work life and there may also be many individuals who are even myopic in their labor-supply decisions. In combination with these time preferences, status competition may have neutral or even welfare (or happiness-) enhancing overall effects.[16] Employing public policy measures unambiguously to reduce the incentives or potential for status competition may therefore harm these groups of individuals. Another problem associated with reducing status competition could be that most individuals crave for status. If one possibility to compete is excluded, competition will be likely to reappear in other dimensions of social life. To justify governmental intervention, it would be necessary to show that the new developing forms are less harmful to individual happiness than the original forms.

While there are also other vehicles of status competition, such as one's standing in the scientific community or political power, by far the most common vehicle for status competition in modern society is surely material wealth, and more specifically, income. There are two kinds of problem associated with using the impact of reference income on individual happiness to measure the benefits of or suffering caused by status competition. The first problem is based on the lack of sufficient and appropriate data for empirical analysis. Even if the assumption is valid that the main vehicle of status competition in modern society is income, the data availability requirements are substantial. If one accepts that individuals live their lives in different reference groups (e.g., if I am the top earner in my neighborhood, but simultaneously only mediocre compared to my work colleagues or vice versa) the empirical setup would make it necessary to allow individuals to define the main reference groups in their lives.[17] An aggregated income indicator for each of these differing individual reference groups would then have to be calculated to include in the estimations. The second kind of problem arises—if reference groups are (for the most part) chosen by the individual—from the endogeneity of this choice.

Status competition could be the result of deeply rooted and "hard-wired" attitudes originating from our human ancestry, as members of social groups (see Frey 2010, 171 f., and the literature quoted there). If one accepts this, but realizes that status competition is harmful in the context of professional life, a major public policy objective could be to divert the inevitable status competition to domains where it is less harmful. An example where similar attempts have been undertaken is professional sport. In this domain, status competition is desirable, but can lead to social dilemma situations promoting the use of doping. Some of the suggestions

[15] Individuals can simultaneously have myopic tendencies in some domains of life and hyperopic characteristics in others. For a more detailed discussion of hyperopia and myopia in the context of public finance, see Fennell (2006).

[16] For instance, Bünger (2010) did not find empirical evidence in Europe of patterns of time use that would harm relationships.

[17] This procedure, of course, requires individuals to be aware of the comparison processes they apply.

aimed at maintaining status competition, while reducing doping focus on altering the mode of competition. However, due to the outcome-orientation of economic processes, it is doubtful that a similar modification in the job market would be feasible. On the other hand, it is possible, for instance, that enterprises could increase their economic performance by redirecting money from performance-related incentives to measures that help employees improve their work-life balance.

Applying the above-defined necessary and sufficient conditions at the epistemological level of the Popper Check, the result is that almost nothing is known quantitatively at the level of status competition, let alone the fact that there is no knowledge about the harmful or the minimal amount needed to maintain social mobility. Layard's position also fails at this level of the check.

10.4.3 Political Level

Political decisions in a modern democratic society are by definition (directly or indirectly) legitimated by the electorate. This legitimization is expressed through elections and ballots. Whether a policy proposal has a chance of being agreed upon in a democracy is therefore dependent on the attitudes of the majority.

A pre-condition for passing the political Popper Check is that the indicator(s) of 'happiness' is/are sound and reliable. Given that this requirement is fulfilled, the first necessary condition of the political Popper Check is that there are politicians who are willing and able to submit policy proposals aimed at happiness-enhancement. The second necessary condition is that a substantial number of voters are inclined to let happiness-considerations influence their voting decisions. The sufficient condition for political successful happiness-enhancing policies concerning status competition is that they have a realistic chance for being selected in the political process of a representative democracy.

With regard to the implementation of his happiness policy, Layard (2009, 100) states that a social philosophy, as a basis for public policy, must take into account the phenomenon of human adaption to new material circumstances, which is a faster and more powerful adaptation than that to changes in immaterial life circumstances. This adaption process makes an improvement in material life standards (above and beyond certain standards) minimally satisfying in the long run. Government should therefore create disincentives for individuals to pursue a material way of life and instead help them to redirect their time, energy and attention to activities which are more promising in terms of enhancing ones' own non-material happiness. There is of course the problem of whether these policy proposals (or their proponents) are likely to be accepted by the majority, if they diametrically oppose their experienced preferences.

Take the example of increasing income taxes as a means of restraining income-driven status competition. Politicians who propose such policies should be voted for. One of the most fundamental questions is therefore how politicians may be elected who, for example, advocate higher marginal wage tax rates to combat social

status competition, when members of the electorate compete for status. Assume that all people would recognize status competition as a zero-sum game for society as a whole. Given the assumptions of Layard regarding 'false' preferences, a considerable proportion of the electorate (the winners of the status game)[18] would vote against higher marginal tax rates, being motivated by self-interest. Layard is optimistic that a majority of citizens would support such a policy, but it is at best unclear as to whether this optimism is justified.

The problem of the political feasibility regarding Layard's proposal for happiness policy hinges on the question of whether most people are interested voters or vote expressively. If voters are interested voters, the 'paradox of voting' applies and there is no guarantee whatsoever that Layard's proposal will be chosen. With expressive voting, the odds in favour of Layard may be better, if there are dominant groups in society that support his proposal.

The probability of implementing Layard's happiness policy against the preferences of the individuals constituting the electorate is low if the population consists exclusively of informed voters. The probability is higher if the whole population consists of expressive voters. Even then, the approval of happiness policies is purely coincidental and dependent on the attractiveness of identifying oneself with the proposal's political background (instead of the attractiveness of the proposal itself).

As far as policy implementation is concerned, it is necessary to make the issues associated with happiness policy transparent by rendering the phenomena related to human happiness measurable. Therefore, a set of outcome indicators must be developed to help control the efforts of public policy interventions. A problem here is that a transition from purely descriptive markers to items of evaluation inevitably takes place, which hampers the usefulness of the indicators. History shows that even apparently precise, objective and impartial indicators tend to lose their predictive power, if individuals are motivated to reach certain objective levels of these indicators (Goodhart's Law; with respect to happiness see Frey 2010, 166 f.). Moreover, there is a risk that even objectively measurable indicators may be manipulated by opportunistic politicians (Frey 2010, 166).

To sum up, also with respect to the political level of the Popper Check, Layard's happiness policy will fail, as at least the pre-condition as well as one the necessary conditions are violated. Perhaps most importantly, indicators of 'happiness' are prone to Goodhart's law and are therefore not sound. Furthermore, even if there are politicians who propose happiness-enhancing policies, it is unlikely that citizens with presumably 'false' preferences would vote against their own preferences.

[18] Depending on how the gains from the status race are distributed among the population, up to half of the electorate would vote against the proposal. If one assumes that those who benefit from status are more likely to vote, their impact in the election could even be higher.

10.4.4 Instrumental Level

At the *instrumental level*, that is, with respect to the availability and choice of instruments for achieving happiness-related public policy objectives, Layard distinguishes between three different kinds of available policy instruments, namely fiscal, legal and moral instruments. How do these instruments relate to combating status competition?

For the instrumental Popper Check, the first necessary condition is that the instruments at least be effective with respect to reducing of status competition. The second necessary condition is that the instruments be efficient, i.e. that they have the least possible side effects and social costs, given their efficacy. With respect to Popper, side effects and social costs consist—mainly of forms of coercion. Instruments fulfil the sufficiency condition at this level if they are both effective and efficient.

Fiscal instruments comprise progressive income taxation[19] and income redistribution. With regard to 'false' preferences induced by social comparison, fiscal instruments directly reduce the incentives to participate in the rat race. The tax-induced disincentive to work has (to a certain extent) the side effect of making it more attractive for individuals to spend spare time on other activities, which may, in the longer-run, be more happiness-enhancing than earning a higher income by working more (Layard 2009, 102).[20]

The second group consists of institutional regulations in a society (Layard 1980, 742). Institutional methods for constraining status races could entail regulations at the work place, such as public holidays, statutory shop opening hours, or a required minimum vacation entitlement. These instruments decrease the potential for employees to compete with each other for promotion by increasing their working hours beyond certain sensible limits. Employees are thus restricted through certain parameters (limits to the working time), even if some of these restrictions are not strictly binding (options are to forfeit one's vacation entitlement, take work home etc.).

As the third group of instruments, moral methods[21] encompass the voluntary self-restraint of individuals and the modification of individual preferences through education, e.g. in primary school (Layard 1980, 744). Layard (2005, 228 f.) suggests educating children in a way that reduces their focus on social status as a life goal and places higher priority on objectives like helping others. Layard argues that

[19] In this respect, he is neither the first nor the only author to suggest such methods. See, for instance, Miller (1975), Konrad (1990), Corneo (2002), Jaeger (2004) and Griffith (2005).

[20] Layard advocates a second welfare economics arguments in favor of these measures. Because of the decreasing marginal utility of income, redistribution from the 'rich' to the 'poor' should lead to an increase in total or average welfare in a society, even if only individual evaluations are taken into account and the welfare losses (caused by the disincentives of progressive taxation) are considered (Layard 2009, 102). This is of course the standard argument of classical utilitarianism in favor of progressive taxation.

[21] It might be more appropriate to call this approach 'pedagogical'.

the importance of status as a generator of wealth and well-being is diminished (at least in Western industrialized countries) by the high material levels already achieved.

These three groups of instruments vary not only in their application, but also in their effectiveness. While fiscal instruments and legal restrictions—when properly enforced—are appropriate for achieving a certain specified lower level of status competition (and even in these cases, the reaction to new constraints could differ from person to person), the precision of governmental moral instruments is far more fragile.

Layard (2009, 102) is careful to point out that social comparison is not a direct reason to press for an increase in marginal (income) tax rates, as the current taxes may already provide an optimal disincentive. That is, it is not only unclear what kind of income tax progression might be required to make people happier, it cannot even be excluded that the prevailing tax rates in some countries are too high to enable a happy society.[22]

While non-coercion is a key point in Popper's evaluation of policy instruments, even Layard (2005, 113) warns of the dangers of paternalism in attempting to increase people's happiness and calls explicitly for a return to true human preferences in implementing public policies. On the other hand, using ordinary taxation as a means of limiting status competition to increase human happiness might be interpreted as old-fashioned paternalism and not as a soft form of 'nudging'. The latter is non-coercive paternalistic influencing of human beings in order to alter their choice behavior and forms part of 'libertarian paternalism' (Thaler and Sunstein 2003, 2008). Employing institutional or moral instruments may be more promising from a Popperian perspective, as the degree of coercion can be smaller. Of course, how these latter measures are applied is important for judging the level of coercion, especially in the case of educational instruments. Between different modes of education, there is a significant difference in the level of coercion involved. On the one side of the spectrum, there are measures like giving information, and on the other side of the spectrum, measures of indoctrination or even "re-education".[23]

A crucial problem with instruments for reducing status competition is that in order to be more effective, they must be more coercive. The main reason is evidently the deep entrenchment of status competition in human nature (for sources of this claim see Frey 2010, 171). Strict restrictions of working hours or very high (almost confiscatory) marginal tax rates might effectively reduce status competition along with labor income, but at a price. Hence such instruments might be only of limited effectiveness.

According to Popper, however, only measures with a low level of coercion seem acceptable as means of increasing happiness. If the race for status, on the other

[22] A similar caveat is given by Layard (2006, C27).

[23] The level of coercion considered acceptable depends on different dimensions like the maturity of the recipients and their autonomy: Some educational measures which are mostly deemed acceptable when considering educating children are assessed as unacceptable when directed towards adults.

hand, is a fundamental human and social trait, these legitimate approaches with low levels of coercion may be futile. Only significantly more intrusive instruments would be appropriate to counteract the desire to compete that is so deeply rooted in human behavior. These instruments could make coercion necessary to an unacceptable degree from Popper's perspective, as the interference in individual freedom would be excessive. This would imply that even if status competition generally decreases happiness (and therefore we should follow Layard in diminishing it), the possible cure might be worse than the disease. Put differently, although some instruments might pass the first necessary condition of the instrumental Popper Check (effectiveness), it is unlikely that they also pass the second necessary condition (efficiency). Most crucially, instruments for 'nudging' people into reducing status competition do not, unfortunately, seem very effective.

10.5 Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to formulate a check for the feasibility and effectiveness of including subjective measures for evaluating the results of public policy interventions. This was done by isolating the four levels of Karl Popper's arguments against using happiness as a public policy objective. Accordingly, there are four levels with regard to the acceptability of policy shifts: the normative level, the epistemological level, the political level and the instrumental level. The plausibility check (with necessary and sufficient conditions) is applied to Richard Layard's happiness policy and especially his position on decreasing status competition so as to increase happiness in society.

Layard's position on the justification of public interventions to reduce status competition is paternalistic. First of all, while most people may be able to acquire the economic means for living a 'good life' without government intervention, Layard seems to doubt that people can avoid participating in harmful status competition and are thus prone to this pitfall on the road to happiness. Since Layard nevertheless insists that people be the ultimate judges of public policies, he could be considered a libertarian paternalist. Because, on the other hand, at least some of the methods he proposes for public policies with respect to status competition are traditional paternalistic measures, this attribution is premature. Layard's position seems to combine features of libertarian (soft) and traditional (hard) paternalism.

Layard's proposals are rejected by the four criteria of the Popper Check. They would either be too coercive or altogether unfit for promoting more happiness. On the one hand, they would be unfit to solve the problem if they either redirect the motivation from one harmful dimension of status competition towards another, or if they are not constructively helpful enough to reduce the number or severity of harmful status races at all. On the other hand, the proposed measures are too coercive when individuals are forcefully constrained from taking part in status competition.

To conclude this contribution with a happiness-enhancing remark, it should be emphasized that there are indeed ways to promote happiness in society without high-level policy interventions. However, this is a different story, to be told elsewhere (Prinz 2013).

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Chapter 11
Measuring Quality of Life—An Idea Whose Time Has Come? Agenda-Setting Dynamics in Britain and the European Union

Ian Bache

11.1 Introduction

Measuring quality of life has recently risen rapidly up the political agenda in a range of political arenas. A shift in this direction in Britain was signalled most clearly by Prime Minister David Cameron's announcement in November 2010 that well-being measures developed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) would be used for public policy purposes.[1] The ONS subsequently conducted a series of hearings and presented its findings in July 2011, with the first set of data made available to government in 2012. In the European Union (EU) context this shift was indicated by a Commission communication to the Council and European Parliament (EP) in 2009, *GDP and Beyond*, which sets out a roadmap with five key actions to improve the indicators for measuring progress. These initiatives, along with other national and international developments, signal discontent with GDP growth as the dominant measure of societal progress and suggest that in some respects at least, concern with measuring quality of life is an idea whose time has come.

This chapter seeks to explain how and why this issue has risen up the political agenda in Britain and the EU, drawing on data from semi-structured interviews with over 30 policy-makers and politicians in Britain, Belgium and Luxembourg

Sections of this chapter draw on Bache (2013) and Bache and Reardon (2013). I am grateful to Louise Reardon for allowing me to draw on some of our joint work here.

[1] Beyond monitoring progress, such indicators might also be used for informing policy design and for policy appraisal (Dolan et al. 2011, p. 4).

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between 2011 and 2013. In comparing agenda-setting dynamics in the two systems, the study draws on Kingdon's (2011)[2] multiple streams approach to agenda-setting. While developed in the context of US politics, this approach has increasingly been applied to other political systems and insights from these applications are drawn on also.

The chapter has six sections. Section 11.2 outlines the approach to comparing agenda-setting, distinguishing between Kingdon's three 'streams' of activity—policies, politics and problems. Section 11.3 discusses the historical background to current political concerns with measuring quality of life, identifying two waves that have distinct characteristics. Section 11.4 turns to the case of Britain and Sect. 11.5 to that of the EU. Section 11.6 provides a comparative analysis of developments in the UK and EU before the paper concludes.

11.2 Comparing Agenda-Setting

The agenda-setting literature asks two main questions: where do issues on the political agenda come from and under what conditions do actors succeed in getting those issues on the agenda? (Princen 2007) While the multiple streams approach has been applied beyond its US origins, comparative studies of agenda-setting remain relatively rare. Yet comparison allows not only for a more systematic exploration of the key variables in policy-making in different contexts (e.g., the relative importance of political parties, political systems or the role of interest groups) but also the potential for understanding the exclusion of ideas from the agenda or 'non-decisions' (Bachrach and Baratz 1963).

The application of agenda-setting models beyond national systems to the EU also offers a new dimension because of the EU's distinct characteristics as a political system, specifically: the limited opportunity for direct public involvement, the absence of a Europe-wide media system and the tendency for interest groups and political parties to be organized more strongly at a national rather than European level (Baumgartner et al. 2006, p. 967). Moreover, the EU is a highly 'compound' polity in contrast to the more 'simple' polities of some of its member states, including the UK. In the former, 'power, influence and voice are diffused through multiple levels and modes of governance', while in the latter, 'power, influence and voice are more concentrated in a single level and mode of governance' (Schmidt 2003, p. 2). While compound polities tend towards consensus-building, decision-making in simple polities is more majoritarian. Thus while the former provides more access points for agenda-setting, the latter provides greater potential for swift decision-making (Table 11.1).

[2] While the most recent (fourth) edition is used here, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* was first published in 1984.

Table 11.1 Key characteristics of EU and UK systems

EU	UK
Power diffused across multiple levels and institutions	Power concentrated within national government
Tends towards consensual decision-making	Tends towards majoritarian decision-making
Weak public sphere	Strong public sphere
Weak interest group activity	Strong interest group activity

Yet while the political systems of the EU and its member states can be characterised very differently and can be studied as distinct entities, the reality is often a close connection in their politics and processes that only a comparative exploration can reveal (Princen 2009, pp. 157–158). This is certainly the case here.

11.2.1 The Multiple Streams Approach

The multiple streams approach requires tracing policies over a substantial time period to reveal the dynamics at play. This allows greater understanding of 'both the level of policy differences among nations and the dynamics over time that may alter these levels in future' (Baumgartner et al. 2006, p. 968) and of the *nature of change*, whether characterised by incrementalism or punctuated equilibrium (Pralle 2006, p. 987). There are various 'agendas' to be aware of. The 'decision' agenda describes issues lined up for a decision, the 'governmental' agenda refers to issues receiving attention within government, and the 'political agenda' refers to issues that receive serious attention by politicians (Baumgartner et al. 2006; Kingdon 2011; Princen 2007).

The approach relates best to conditions of ambiguity, when there is more than one way of thinking about a particular issue (Zahariadis 2003). It identifies three separate processes or 'streams'—of problems, policies and politics—that develop largely in isolation from each other but which must ultimately come together for significant policy change to occur. *Problems* can rise up the political agenda through a high profile event or crisis (e.g., a rail crash) or through a shift in respected indicators (e.g., on climate change). *Policies* generally emerge away from the political spotlight through the exchanges of 'experts', such as academics, civil servants and think tanks. Ideas in this stream may 'float around' for years before finding their moment—often after a 'softening up' of policy-makers has taken place. While *political* processes such as elections, leadership changes and shifts in public opinion also shape the agenda. Thus, change in the policy stream tends to be evolutionary, while there is scope for more sudden changes in problems and politics—the idea of 'punctured equilibrium'.

A key role in coupling these streams is played by *policy entrepreneurs*—individuals who 'are willing to invest their resources in pushing their pet proposals or problems, are responsible not only for prompting important people to pay

attention, but also for coupling solutions to problems and for coupling both problems and solutions to politics' (Kingdon 2011, p. 20). The coupling of streams is most likely when a *policy window* is opened by events in either the politics or problem stream. During these windows, policy entrepreneurs try to 'sell' their view of the policy problem and solution to key decision-makers. Generally, the problem stream is the last to be connected, but this is important in providing legitimacy for action (Ackrill and Kay 2011, p 77). Windows close if the problem is successfully addressed or if there is no suitable policy alternative available. Windows can also close through a change of personnel in key positions or if the events that opened the window become less important over time (Kingdon 2011, pp. 169–70).

11.3 Well-Being and Quality of Life

While in some literatures the terms 'well-being' and 'quality of life' have specific meanings (for an overview, see Phillips 2006), in others they do not. In the EU context quality of life tends to be used more, while in the UK well-being is more common. This may be partly explained by the UK's greater interest in subjective well-being indicators (below), although it may simply be about shifting fashions in discourse: quality of life was more prominent in UK policy documents and discourse in the early 2000s than a decade later. Moreover, politicians and policy-makers in both the EU and UK tend to use the terms interchangeably, so this approach is taken here. Because of its importance to contemporary developments, the eight dimensions identified by the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission (below) are taken to comprise well-being/quality of life; material living standards (income, consumption and wealth); health; education; personal activities including work; political voice and governance; social connections and relationships; environment (present and future conditions); insecurity, of an economic as well as a physical nature' (CMEPSP 2009, pp. 14–55).

While this chapter focuses on contemporary concerns with well-being/quality of life measurement, this is viewed as part of a second historical wave of concern with well-being (Bache and Reardon 2013). The *first wave* emerged in the context of post-war prosperity as the social costs of private affluence became evident. A 'social indicators' movement emerged across a number of affluent states that resonated at the highest political levels in some countries, not least the United States, where President Johnson famously spoke of the good society being 'a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods' (Johnson 1964). However, while new surveys were developed, the movement ran out of steam as economic recession in the 1970s marginalised many of its claims. The *second wave* shares discontent with the limitations of GNP/GDP as a measure of progress and is given impetus by important academic critiques of the assumed relationship between increases in income and life satisfaction, fuelled by the work of Easterlin (1973, 1974). In different contexts it is also driven to different degrees by environmental concerns and a growing respect for indicators of subjective well-being (below).

In this second wave there are numerous initiatives relating to well-being measurement. For example, Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP) brings together indicators from economic, environmental and social domains in seeking a more balanced assessment of national progress (Wall and Salvaris 2011, p. 8). Within the EU, France, Germany, Italy and Spain are among the member states to develop projects on new indicators of progress. Internationally, the OECD has been particularly active on the issue, monitoring and supporting national developments and developing its own Better Life Index (OECD 2011).

The Commission of the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress or 'Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission',[3] as it is better known, has been important in giving impetus to these developments. The Commission was established in February 2008 by French President Sarkozy with the brief to:

> identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, including the problems with its measurement; to consider what additional information might be required for the production of more relevant indicators of social progress; to assess the feasibility of alternative measurement tools, and to discuss how to present the statistical information in an appropriate way (CMEPSP 2009, Executive Summary).

The Commission's final report of September 2009 produced a number of recommendations on how progress should be measured, aimed at stimulating both debate and specific responses in national and international contexts. These recommendations were influential on both UK and EU developments (interviews with the author, 2011) and it is to the first of these cases we now turn.

11.4 The UK

Events in the UK gathered momentum following David Cameron's announcement in November 2010 (above). The ONS subsequently conducted a series of hearings[4] and presented its findings in July 2011. In the meantime it signalled its commitment to measuring individual life satisfaction and happiness as part of national well-being by including four questions on subjective well-being in its largest household survey from April 2011.[5] This activity signalled a significant step forward in government interest in the issue, although interest can be traced back to early days of the previous Labour government.

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[3] The Commission was led Nobel Prize winning economists Joseph Stiglitz (Chair) and Amartya Sen (Advisor) and co-ordinated by French economist Jean Paul Fitoussi.

[4] In total, ONS held 175 events, involving around 7,250 people. In total the debate generated 34,000 responses (ONS 2011, p. 2).

[5] The four questions included in the Integrated Household Survey (IHS) were: Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday? Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile? Each is measured on a scale from 0 to 10. These questions will be asked of around 200,000 adults (aged 16 and over) each year (ONS 2011, p. 17).

11.4.1 The Politics Stream

11.4.1.1 The Labour Government (1997–2010)

The Labour government under Tony Blair (1997–2007) was the first to show a significant interest in quality of life as a policy goal. A key document signalling Labour's interest in the issue was produced by Blair's Strategy Unit, which argued that 'there is a case for state intervention to boost life satisfaction due mainly to evidence of direct impacts on life satisfaction of government activities, together with strong evidence of the dependence of individuals' well-being on the actions of others' (Donovan and Halpern 2002).[6] It prompted a number of government departments to commission reports on related issues, particularly the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), whose interest was in well-being and sustainable development (Marks et al. 2006).

Under Prime Minister Brown (2007–2010), the Strategy Unit (2008, p. 173) report *Realising Britain's Potential Future Strategic Challenges for Britain* recognised public interest in quality of life issues, noting that 'four in five Britons believe that the Government's prime objective should be the greatest happiness rather than the greatest wealth'. It suggested that while politics would continue to focus on 'bread and butter' issues, it would also 'increasingly address issues that are likely to affect citizens' well-being and environmental concerns' more directly than previously (Strategy Unit 2008, p. 184).

While most government activity remained unaffected by these reports and statements, some government departments made explicit commitments to promoting well-being and this was reflected in the appointment of staff dedicated to this purpose. It was also during this period that the ONS began development well-being measures to be used in national surveys (Jeffries 2008). One direct policy response to the well-being agenda—and specifically to the work of prominent 'happiness' scholar Richard Layard—was the expansion of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) provision through the National Health Service. Also in the health field, the system of Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) was established in 1999 to guide decisions on the allocation of funds to particular medical interventions (see Phillips 2009). Beyond health, local authorities were given the power to promote well-being through the Local Government Act 2000, although this power was not used extensively (Department for Communities and Local Government 2008).

Towards the end of Labour's period in office, new initiatives referring to quality of life or well-being were being introduced, including a civic health study that would provide a quality of life 'score card' for every part of England. After leaving office, the 'politics of well-being' has become a feature of Labour's internal policy review (Civil Society 2013).

[6] The Strategy Unit Report was explicitly *not* a statement of government policy.

11.4.1.2 The Coalition Government (2010–Present)

Before the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government came to power in May 2010, both parties separately indicated interest in the idea of well-being as a guide to public policy. In 2006, shortly after becoming leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron spoke of the need for government to recognise that there is 'more to life than money' and that it was 'time we focused not just on GDP, but on GWB—General Well-Being' (Cameron 2006). He subsequently established a Quality of Life Policy Group as part of his party's internal policy review. This group concluded that 'we are now confident enough of the dynamics of life satisfaction to start subjecting many areas of government policy to much more vigorous well-being tests' (Gummer and Goldsmith 2007, p. 57). There was a distinctly environmental tone to the Group's take on the 'Easterlin paradox' (Easterlin 1973, 1974): 'If less materially intensive lifestyles are shown to benefit the individual as well as the planet, the prospect of well-being could come a powerful tool for motivating lighter, less resource-intensive lifestyles [for the present generation]' (Gummer and Goldsmith 2007, p. 44).

When Cameron signalled his intention to take the issue seriously in government, he suggested the programme of work would:

> open up a national debate about what really matters, not just in government but amongst people who influence our lives: in the media; in business; the people who develop the products we use, who build the towns we live in…And second, this information will help government work out, with evidence, the best ways of trying to help improve people's well-being.

Interviewees for this research were absolutely clear that Cameron's intervention was crucial to the profile of the issue and its place on the agenda. Relatively few other Conservatives were seen as interested in the issue although two who were—Oliver Letwin and David Willets—were influential thinkers within the party and took high profile positions within the government. Cameron's position on the issue was seen as influenced by his advisor Steve Hilton, considered by many as a 'blue skies' thinker. David Halpern was also seen as a key contributor in policy circles, having co-authored the influential 2002 report produced as part of Blair's Strategy Unit and acting as a policy advisor to both Labour and Coalition governments on related issues.

Within the Liberal Democrat Party, the MP Jo Swinson led an All Party Group on Well-being Economics from 2009 before taking a role in government as a Junior Equalities Minister in 2012. Swinson was also involved in a Liberal Democrat quality of life working group that produced a policy paper approved by the party's conference in 2011. The paper aimed to put quality of life 'right in the heart of the government machine' (Swinson 2011, p. 18).

At various points there have been signals from the civil service that the agenda is to be taken seriously. In July 2011, Cabinet Secretary Gus O'Donnell stated that:

> I think the future will be that we use well-being ideas, we use all the stuff that is coming out of the behavioural work, to actually modernise our ways of doing policy analysis and

> getting better evidence, and coming up in the end … with better measures leading to better policies, leading to better lives.

In line with this aspiration, the Treasury updated its Green Book guidance to government departments relating to the valuation of non-market goods in public policies. Specifically, it added Subjective Well-being measures to the established market-based approaches of Stated and Revealed Preference. The former approach was explicitly identified as 'under development', but the guidance suggested that it 'may soon be developed to the point where it can provide a reliable and accepted complement to the market-based approaches' and, in the meantime, 'will be important in ensuring that the full range of impacts of proposed policies are considered, and may provide added information about the relative value of non-market goods compared with each other, if not yet with market goods' (HM Treasury 2011, p. 58).

In written evidence submitted to the Environmental Audit Select Committee Hearing on Well-being in 2013, the government continued to describe these indicators as 'experimental statistics' that were still in development, and suggested that it was too early for major decisions to be 'heavily influenced' by well-being research: this would be a long-term process. In the meantime, the government was 'putting in place the foundations and most departments are using wellbeing data where it is relevant and adds value to their work' (Cabinet Office 2013).

11.4.2 The Policy Stream

Developments in the UK policy stream fit well with the emphasis on evolution outlined in the multiple streams approach and the process of 'softening up' that is often necessary for ideas to be heard. The work of individuals such as David Halpern, Richard Layard, Andrew Oswald and Paul Dolan, who operate at the interface of academia and policy-making, has been a constant presence during the period before and after the change of government in 2010. Similarly, the new economics foundation (nef) think tank has long been important in generating and disseminating ideas on well-being. However, while Kingdon's work emphasised national networks as important, this research revealed close connections between officials, academics, think-tanks and other actors that spanned national boundaries.

As with the EU case (below), momentum in the UK was connected to the OECD and, in particular, to its former Chief Statistician, Enrico Giovannini. Giovannini was identified by interviewees as someone with a strong personal commitment to the issue and with a convincing grasp of the details. He played a key role in developing the OECD's agenda, which pre-dated the activities of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission and those of the EU. Indeed, the Paris-based OECD was seen as influential on the French administration on this issue and on President Sarkozy specifically, which ultimately led to the establishment of the Stiglitz-Sen Commission. Giovannini was also involved in key EU conferences on this topic,

chaired one of the three working groups of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, and maintained an ongoing influence within the networks, subsequently as head of Italy's national statistical institute.

Other actors also illustrate the flow of ideas across boundaries. Nef worked with the European Commission's statistical directorate (Eurostat) on developing indicators at EU level, while working simultaneously with the ONS and the OECD. It also had a role in the Conservative Party's Quality of Life review group and provides the Secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Well-being Economics. The ONS provides a further illustration of cross-national network activity. It provides the UK's formal link to the EU's statistical system, which leads to ongoing information flows both ways. The ONS also includes representation from Eurostat on its Well-being Measures Advisory Group and Eurostat interviewees (2011) reported that they were closely monitoring the ONS's experiments with subjective well-being questions in national surveys with a view to drawing lessons for EU surveys (more on this below). More broadly, the ONS also includes members of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission on its Advisory group.

The academic contribution to the well-being agenda has been widely acknowledged. Economists have arguably led the way, but other disciplines have also been well represented in relevant networks. Some indication of the breadth of academic contributions is given by the academic membership of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission and of the ONS advisory group.[7] While economists were prominent on the former, this included specialisms such as feminist economics and welfare economics and economists whose interests span other fields (international affairs, social organization, environment, behavioural science, and philosophy). In addition were non-economists with a background in corporate responsibility, psychology and public policy. The ONS advisory group is also led by economists with a range of specialisms, as well as academics from the fields of epidemiology and health, social policy, clinical psychology and psychology. The extent of the overlapping nature of these networks is well illustrated by the seven academics who served on both the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission and the ONS advisory group.

11.4.3 The Problem Stream

In Kingdon's terms, it is hard to identify a single 'crisis or high profile event' promoting the measurement of well-being in the UK, although both the global economic crisis and the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission are an important part of the context. More telling here though is the 'shift in respected indicators' aspect of Kingdon's argument. A shift has taken place in both the academic and statistical communities in relation to the reliability of subjective well-being data and also in

[7] Notwithstanding the potential for political, locational and other biases of Paris and London.

relation to long-standing assumptions about the relationship between income and life satisfaction. Alongside this is the accumulation of evidence on the nature and cause of environmental problems and their effects on quality of life, present and future. However, while David Cameron embraced the agenda and there was a positive response within parts of the civil service, it is important not to overstate its effects and much scepticism remains.

Much of the press reaction to Cameron's (2010) speech was critical, not least on the right of the spectrum. Moreover, many influential political actors on the right, left and centre of British politics remain wedded to the idea of economic growth as the benchmark of national progress. Indeed, it is the lack of growth that is generally seen as the problem, not the idea of pursuing it. In this context it became more difficult for Cameron and others to take a high profile position on well-being as an overarching policy goal. So developments continued away from the political and media spotlight in the realm of administrators and statisticians.

11.5 The EU

Rhetorically at least, concern with quality of life in the EU is as old as the EU itself: Article 2 of the Treaty of Rome describes one of the tasks of the EU as 'the raising of the standard of living and quality of life'. However, only in the past decade has there been a focus on developing indicators that might be used to guide policy. The EU agency Eurofound took the first steps in this direction in 2003 with a small scale survey on quality of life, which has since been repeated. More significant though was the EU Commission's 2009 communication to the Council and EP called *GDP and Beyond* (*below*), signalling a broader agenda for the issue. This communication provides a 'roadmap' of the actions needed to improve EU indicators to provide a more balanced measure of progress than reliance on GDP, namely: complementing GDP with environmental and social indicators; near real-time information for decision-making; more accurate reporting on distribution and inequalities; developing a European Sustainable Development Scoreboard; and extending national accounts to environmental and social issues.

11.5.1 The Politics Stream

Since the early 1990s the EU Commission has sought to position itself and the EU more generally as leading the global agenda on environmental and related issues. A key moment in the history of the *GDP and Beyond* communication was a conference in 1995 co-organised by the EU institutions and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). While the conference did not significantly advance the quality of life agenda at the time, it provided an important reference point for future developments. Indeed, some of those involved in the 1995 conference were also involved in

relaunching the initiative with the encouragement of the new Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas (2004-10). The platform for this relaunch was the 2007 conference 'Beyond GDP', which was organised jointly by EU institutions, the Club of Rome, the OECD and the WWF. It was attended by over 650 representatives from a range of public, private and voluntary organisations. While DG Environment drove forward this event, the Commissioner for Economic Affairs (Almunia) was engaged early in the process, which secured the active cooperation of Eurostat. The conference sought to identify the relevant measures of progress and to consider how they might be taken up in public debate and inform policy-making. The *GDP and Beyond* Communication of 2009 was a direct outcome of the conference.

The deliberations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission provided an important backdrop to these EU developments. Moreover, while many actors were involved in both initiatives, there was also a degree of institutional competition evident, with the Commission's communication deliberately launched one week before the launch of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report. At the launch of the Commission communication though, a number of speakers referred to the importance of this other initiative. Art de Gues, Deputy Secretary General of the OECD, highlighted the comment by Stiglitz that after the financial crisis 'there is no going back to business as usual'. And, of particular interest for the analytical framework employed here, Enrico Giovannini, then President of the Italian national Statistical Office (ISTAT) spoke of a 'political window of opportunity' in the post-crisis recovery period to construct a new political narrative for politicians concerned to ask themselves 'what can I sell to citizens if I cannot for a while sell high GDP growth rates?'.

Once the issue had been put on the agenda by DG Environment and Eurostat, other Commission directorates began to engage, with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and DG Health and Consumer Affairs being the first to do so. Subsequently the Commission established an Inter-departmental Co-ordination Group involving 14 other directorates and four agencies, co-chaired by Eurostat and DG Environment.

GDP and Beyond has secured high level support within the Commission. President Barroso endorsed the initiative at the 2007 conference and Environment Commissioner Potočnik (2011, pp. 6–7) made the case for 'social and environmental statistics and indicators on the same level with economic statistics, concerning scope, details and timeliness'. Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Olli Rehn also endorsed the initiative. The EP voted in support of the initiative and both the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions endorsed the initiative, with the latter proposing that the structural funds should be allocated according to environmental and social indicators as well as regional GDP (Committee of the Regions 2011).

Within national governments President Sarkozy's took a particularly high profile stance on the issue, particularly in the wake of the financial crisis:

> for years, people said that finance was a formidable creator of wealth, only to discover one day that it accumulated so many risks that the world almost plunged into chaos. The crisis doesn't only make us free to imagine other models, another future, another world. It obliges us to do so (Sarkozy 2009).

In April 2010 President Sarkozy and German Chancellor Merkel presented a joint declaration stating that 'the two countries would push the European Union to adopt proposals for the calculation of economic growth based on work by the Stiglitz Commission' (RFI 2010).

Overall, Eurostat (2009, p. 4) identified 'a clear political will to radically reassess the way progress is measured'. Interviewees for this research suggested one small but significant step that facilitated wider political support was the change of name of the initiative from *Beyond GDP* in 2007 to *GDP and Beyond* by 2009: the latter implying measures to complement rather than replace GDP.

11.5.2 The Policy Stream

The EU policy stream is necessarily transnational with dense interactions between statistical bodies within the EU and beyond. Within the EU, the European Statistical System (ESS) is comprised of Eurostat and national statistical offices. A Sponsorship Group was established by Eurostat for its work on *GDP and Beyond*, which involves representatives of national offices as well as the OECD. In turn, Eurostat officials are also involved in OECD deliberations and those within national statistical systems. Generally, interviewees for this research emphasised the interconnectedness of these processes and the regular exchange of ideas and practice. As noted above, a number of organisations and actors are involved in transnational networks that overlap national and EU initiatives. In short, there is an intense flow of ideas and information across borders within and beyond the EU, involving a range of actors.

11.5.3 The Problem Stream

While the EU has a coalition of actors from across the institutions and other organisations advocating the adoption of wider measures to complement GDP, this does not amount to a successful coupling of the problem stream. For example, different Commission DGs have different conceptualisations of the 'problem'—e.g., environmental, social, health—and different interests to promote. The issue in the EU is closely connected to environmental concerns, which follows on from the leadership given to the issue by DG Environment, and is reflected to a large extent in the five actions proposed by *GDP and Beyond*.

11.6 Comparative Analysis

In the opening sections, a number of systemic variables were identified as potentially relevant to this comparative analysis (Table 11.1). In addition, it was suggested that in practice the systems of the EU and its member states are closely

inter-twined. These themes are examined here within the framework of the multiple streams approach.

In the UK *politics stream*, a period of hesitant governmental interest in the issue took a sudden step forward with the change of government in 2010. Here, the Prime Minister's personal interest in the issue was decisive: while there was little evidence of wide support for this agenda within government, the importance of the Prime Minister within the British system sent a strong signal to civil servants that this agenda demanded a response. Thus, while the issue has subsequently fell from media glare after 2010, developments continued at civil service level. The contrast here with the EU politics stream is stark—no such step forward has taken place and the nature of the EU political system makes such a sudden shift highly unlikely. While some national leaders have a keen interest in the issue, as do some politicians within the EP, the institutional fragmentation of the EU means that no individual actor can move the agenda forward so quickly. Thus, while there are many access points in the EU, there are also many veto points. So, getting something onto the EU's agenda may be relatively easy: getting it high on the agenda is another matter and requires building consensus within and across the key institutions. Of course, the concentration of power in the UK executive and, particularly in this case, the Prime Minister's Office, means that a step forward might be more easily reversed under a successor Prime Minister with different views.

In the *policy stream*, the main observation here is the importance of territorially overlapping policy networks. While some actors and organisations operate exclusively in one political arena or the other, a number of important actors operate in both. Similarly, the flow of ideas is across the two systems, albeit with a slightly different emphasis on the domains of well-being. In the UK, the emphasis on life satisfaction and happiness is stronger and there has already been a direct policy effect of Richard Layard's work in this field. In the EU, this theme is present in debates, but is not part of the *GDP and Beyond* roadmap. Thus, although both UK and EU developments have a strong environmental dimension, it is proportionally stronger in the latter case because of the absence of life satisfaction indicators. However, it should be noted that in 2013 Eurostat included questions on subjective well-being in an EU-SILC[8] ad hoc module, drawing directly on the survey experiences of the UK and other member states. More generally, the overlapping networks have inevitably led to the same shift in respected indicators that has occurred in both arenas and which is crucial to the issue receiving attention in both contexts.

In terms of the *problem stream*, the UK and EU positions are very similar. Each has a coalition of actors promoting the use of measures to complement GDP, but in neither case is there an effective coupling of the problem stream with politics and policy. Though there may be a general sense among publics that 'society is not taking us to a better place' (interviewee 2011), it is not clear that this points to a specific problem either within or across systems. For some the problem may be about subjective well-being, for others it might be environmental or social.

[8] Statistics on Income and Living Conditions.

Moreover, in the context of the economic crisis, the political focus is primarily on addressing the problem of low growth. In this sense, well-being has all the hallmarks of a 'wicked problem' that is hard to define, hard to address by recourse to scientific methods alone and ultimately requires the exercise of political judgement (Bache et al. 2014). As the authors of the seminal work on this topic put it: 'The formulation of a wicked problem *is* the problem! The process of formulating the problem and of conceiving a solution (or re-solution) are identical, since every specification of the problem is a specification of the direction in which a treatment is considered' (Rittel and Webber 1973, p. 161).

In theoretical terms it is the responsibility of policy entrepreneurs to connect the three streams. The discussion above has alluded to a number of actors who have played a pivotal role in advancing the agenda within the overlapping networks. There is also acknowledgement (*pace* Giovannini) that the post-financial crisis period provides a 'window of opportunity' to persuade politicians to embrace well-being indicators as ones they might improve while the prospects for improving key economic indicators remains limited. If the economic crisis has opened a *problem window* across systems, the change of government and the intervention of David Cameron opened a *political window* in the UK, which appears likely to remain open until at least the next UK general election in 2015. To date though, policy entrepreneurs have not been able to effectively couple the streams and this is clearly no small task: while there have been significant advances in the policy stream, there remain significant issues to address that may be essential to an effective coupling. For example, politicians would want simple ways of communicating progress on well-being—perhaps a single indicator—while statisticians generally counsel against this approach, suggesting it would necessarily misrepresent complex data. Further, while there may be confidence in knowledge of how to measure well-being, there is less confidence in the knowledge of how different policy options might improve well-being. Politically, there is cautiousness around these issues that is not helped by these under-developed policy aspects. In short, there remains a role for policy entrepreneurs to play in framing the issue more effectively but there is also need for further development within the individual streams themselves to provide policy entrepreneurs with the tools necessary to do this.

In terms of the *nature of change*, the policy stream has moved incrementally in both the EU and the UK. While Kingdon suggests both the politics and problem streams can suddenly move forward, this has only occurred in the UK politics stream. Moreover, it is not obvious how the EU politics stream might suddenly move forward, nor the problem stream in either case: while the notion of punctuated equilibrium in some respects captures the political effect of Cameron's intervention in the UK, the term 'punctuated evolution' might be a better description, given the incremental change that is ongoing in the policy stream. In the EU context, there is gradual policy evolution within the statistical community that has yet to be punctuated in the same way politically.

If the nature of the institutional arrangements and the decision-making cultures of the two systems have had marked effects on developments to date, the same cannot be said about the contrasting characteristics of the public spheres and interest groups activities. In the absence of a developed European public sphere, there has inevitably been more system-wide public debate on this issue in the UK. However, most of this debate has been very recent and connected to Cameron's 2010 announcement: until then, developments in this field took place largely in the absence of debate, save for the occasional article in one of the more liberal broadsheet newspapers. Moreover, it is hard to see any difference that recent public debate on the issue has made on developments in the UK compared to the EU. Similarly, interest group activity has been limited in both arenas,[9] but where it has occurred, has been at least as visible at EU level as at UK level.[10] Generally, this issue has risen up the agenda through the overlapping policy networks comprised mainly of officials, statisticians and academics, at one remove from public view and from most interest group activity. However, both the media response to Cameron's announcement and the attendance of numerous interest groups at the launch of the subsequent ONS report demonstrated that this situation can change rapidly.

11.7 Conclusions

This paper has revealed institutional and ideational biases that shape both the dynamics of the quality of life issue in different contexts and that produce different emphases in policy content. In the UK context, the intervention of the Prime Minister provided political momentum that has not been evident occurred in the EU to date and it is difficult to see how any single individual might play a similar role given the greater dispersion of power in the EU system. While the issue has fallen from the media spotlight in the UK, policy developments continue at the level of civil servants and statisticians. In the EU, statisticians have pushed forward their work on well-being to include subjective well-being questions in their surveys for the first time in 2013 without the same level of political support as in the UK. Comparatively though, thinking through the policy implications of wellbeing as a government goal is more advanced in the UK as a result of Cameron's support. In Kingdon's terms, well-being is on the *governmental agenda* in the UK, 'receiving attention within government'; while in the EU it is only on the *decision agenda*, defined as 'lined up for a decision'.

[9] With the exception of nef, which, as a self-styled 'think and do tank' can be taken as part interest group.

[10] The obvious examples here are nef and WWF—the latter arguably more visible in EU developments.

In terms of the policy streams there are still important issues to be addressed in the overlapping networks. These relate to the most appropriate indicators to be used —particularly 'headline' indicators that might attract the interest of the public and thus politicians—and also to the need for better understanding of the impact of different policy interventions on well-being. Above all though, defining more persuasively the nature of the problem that well-being measurement and policy might address remains the outstanding challenge.

While to some extent there may be a window of opportunity in both the UK and EU, there is some way to go in both cases before this might lead to significant policy impacts. Scientific advances have brought new confidence to the agenda but, as with all 'wicked problems', this is an issue that will ultimately rely on political judgement and practical action. Only then will we genuinely be able to speak of quality of life as an idea whose time has come.

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Chapter 12
The Political Turn Towards Happiness

Jan-Willem van der Rijt

> *People want to be happy. […] That should be the rule for […] public choice. […] Bully for Bentham I say.*
>
> Richard Layard *Happiness: Lessons from a new science* (2005, p. 125).

> *[The holders of authority] will say to us: what, in the end, is the aim of your efforts, the motive of your labours, the object of all your hopes? Is it not happiness? Well, leave this happiness to us and we shall give it to you. No, Sirs, we must not leave it to them. No matter how touching such a tender commitment may be, let us ask the authorities to keep within their limits. Let them confine themselves to being just. We shall assume the responsibility of being happy for ourselves.*
>
> Benjamin Constant *The liberty of the ancients compared with that of the moderns* (1988; p. 326).

> *A government established on the principle of benevolence to the people […] in which the subjects […] are […] to wait only upon the judgment of the head of the state as to how they* should be *happy […] is the greatest* despotism *thinkable.*
>
> Immanuel Kant *On the common* saying*: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice* (1996, p. 291).

12.1 Introduction

Economic indicators are of great importance to policy makers. Indeed, it sometimes seems that politicians have to care about little else: if economic indicators are up, an incumbent candidate has a more than good chance of being re-elected, whilst if they

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are down, his or her prospects are almost by definition grim.[1] *It's the economy, stupid!* is a slogan that has become conventional wisdom nowadays, at least in politics. At the same time, it is a truism that economics cannot be the be-all-and-end-all of societal life. A flourishing economy is certainly not unimportant, because it provides us with the means that allow us to pursue our personal and societal goals more effectively and lead a materially more comfortable life, but economic welfare can never transcend the status of means to other ends. Regarded from this perspective, an exclusive focus on economic indicators runs the risk of becoming fetishist, and many in present-day society have become more and more dissatisfied with this (perceived) exclusive concern with the economy by policymakers and politicians. Surely, there is more to wellbeing than economic welfare.

In a period in time where the economic performance of many of the most developed countries can appropriately be described as rather dismal, this truism has become a prominent issue in contemporary societal debates. Clearly, so a considerable part of public opinion now has it, what we have been doing is not working; hence, we need to look for something else. An array of scientists and politicians from various backgrounds (including the UN) now propound the view that this something that should replace, or at least complement, the political preoccupation with economic welfare is happiness. Recent successes in the Science of Subjective Well-being (SSWB)—an interdisciplinary field of science that seeks to gain better insights into the various circumstances and processes that bring people to experience happiness and contentment—mean that public officials now find themselves facing the prospect of being able to directly monitor and influence societal happiness and contentment. As happiness is of crucial importance to human existence, so these scientists and politicians assert, governments would do well to make use of the insights and possibilities this new science provides in order to increase the well-being of citizens in contemporary society.[2]

The view that governments should concern themselves with societal happiness is not by any means a new one. Indeed, some of the leading scientists in the SSWB proudly state that one of the great benefits provided by their new science is that it solves one of the classic problems that plagued utilitarians for centuries—that of reliably measuring happiness—thereby allowing governments to finally pursue true

[1] The research on which this paper is based formed part of the *Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research* (*NWO*) project *Measuring Well-Being: Attitudes, Comparability and Justification* carried out at the University of Amsterdam. For helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper I thank Jelle de Boer, an anonymous referee, and participants of *Well-being in Contemporary Society: International Conference on the Philosophy and Science of Wellbeing and their Practical Importance* (Enschede, July 2012) and the *4th Annual Dutch Conference in Practical Philosophy* (Eindhoven, November 2012).

[2] The precise relation between subjective happiness and a person's true wellbeing is much debated within philosophy (see e.g. Cahn and Vitrioli 2008 for an overview). In this paper I will abstract from such questions as much as possible in order to focus on political issues, assuming that though the precise relation between wellbeing and happiness is unclear, there nonetheless is a substantial relation between the two. It would seem, for instance, that subjective happiness forms part of most plausible conceptions of the good life.

Benthamite policies (e.g. Layard 2005).[3] What was not possible in the past, is possible in contemporary society—or will be so in the near future—and we would therefore do well to collectively embrace this development, or so authors like Layard would have us believe.

Utilitarianism faces many problems apart from the difficulties involved in measuring happiness, however, and within the history of political thought there have been many who opposed the idea that societal happiness should be the direct object of government policy. This point is worth stressing, because reading Layard and similar authors could lead us to believe that the main reason why governments have not previously adopted happiness as the object of public policy is the inability brought about by the impossibility of measuring it, or that those who opposed it did so because they failed to appreciate the value of happiness. In fact, this is not so. Many of the classical authors who opposed the idea that governments should concern themselves with the happiness of their citizenry (for two classical expressions of this view, see the epigraphs above) did so in full recognition of how important happiness is in the lives of people. Moreover, their main arguments for rejecting happiness as a legitimate government objective were not instrumental in nature, as is the argument from inability. Instead, opposition to this idea often was principled and well thought-through.

From this perspective, the momentum the contemporary political turn towards happiness has gained is not just remarkable, but also potentially troublesome. At the very least one would have expected a careful and drawn-out debate of the various arguments in favour of and against happiness as a policy objective, but this does not seem to have happened to any significant degree. The scientists who propound their findings as politically relevant often offer only the most cursory mention of opposing views—and judging by, for instance, the speed with which the UN adopted its resolution on happiness (United Nations General Assembly 2011), public and political debate does not seem to have been any more balanced.

In this paper, I wish to explore the possible reasons why we would do well to be more wary of the recent political turn towards happiness. In doing so, I do not seek to endorse any of them here as knock-down arguments against the idea that governments should concern themselves with the happiness of their citizenry. It certainly is not possible to analyse each of these arguments in the depth they merit in a single paper, for one. I do want to argue, however, that these objections often come from plausible and genuine concerns, that they are therefore worthy of consideration, and that they deserve to be taken far more seriously than they presently seem to be by the scientists and politicians who favour the present political turn towards happiness. To this end, I will discuss three different classes of possible objections to the view that the promotion of happiness should be regarded as a policy objective

[3] It should also be noted that other SSWB scientists are more circumspect when it comes to utilitarianism: Diener et al. (2009), for example, distance themselves from utilitarianism, be it less than wholeheartedly (p. 10); Bok (2010) emphasises that there may sometimes be other political values that on occasion outweigh the importance of politically promoting happiness, but nonetheless maintains that happiness is a very important public goal (p. 57); for a view that is very critical of using SSWB findings to implement utilitarian policies, see Frey (2008) (esp. Sect. 13.4).

which governments should pursue: divergent views on the meaning of happiness and/or its importance to the good life (Sect. 12.2), concerns that the nature of the happiness that governments can provide is spurious (Sect. 12.3), and worries about the effects of governmental attempts to raise happiness levels on the political processes in contemporary societies (Sect. 12.4).

12.2 Possible Reasons to Oppose Happiness as a Public Policy Objective I: The Meaning and Importance of Happiness

A first possible reason why different people may disagree about the proper role of happiness in public policy is that they may have different understandings of the meaning of the term. This is especially the case when it comes to the notion of happiness, as exactly what it means to be 'truly' happy has been the subject of vehement debate for centuries, if not millennia (see e.g. Cahn and Vitrano 2008). If different authors mean something different by the term happiness, it stands to reason that they will also disagree about the role it should play in public policy. If you believe that true happiness is found only in a certain kind of spiritual unity with a specific supernatural being, whereas your neighbour believes it is to be equated with the satisfaction of her immediate hedonic desires, whilst your other neighbour believes it is constituted by success in the dogged pursuit of certain heroic life goals (no matter how arduous and joyless they may be), you will probably have very different views on the role happiness should play in public life too; and even if you all happen to believe that happiness as you each understand it should be of central concern to governments, it will lead to very different views on the kind of policies you would support or oppose, and it certainly does not follow that you will believe that happiness as understood by your neighbours should be awarded a central position in the determination of public policy.

Differing views about the meaning of true happiness may explain opposition to a political turn to happiness in some cases, but it certainly does not apply to all. Thus, for instance, it does not apply to happiness as modern-day SWB scientists conceive it and some of their most ardent opponents. An example is Kantians[4]: though there

[4] Kantianism is best known for its stringent deontological approach to ethics, emphasizing the importance of the goodness of the will and the unconditional nature of duties. Kantian political theory at first glance appears to be very different from Kantian ethical theory, however, as it pays little attention to motives and maxims, focusing almost exclusively on rights and what is known as 'external freedom'. Roughly stated, according to Kantian *political* theory (contrary to its *ethical* theory) it does not matter why a person does what he does, as long as he does not violate anyone's rights in doing so. It would be going too far to discuss Kantian political theory and its view on the nature of the state in detail here (for detailed analyses see Williams (1983) and Ripstein (2009)), but it is perhaps useful to mention that Kant limited the state to guaranteeing three basic principles: the freedom of its members as human beings, their equality as subjects of the state, and their

are minor differences in the way Kantians and SWB scientists conceive happiness, these differences are not much larger between Kantians and SWB scientists than they are between SWB scientists amongst themselves.[5] Within the SSWB, two ways of understanding happiness are particularly prominent, hedonic conceptions of happiness and life-satisfaction notions of happiness, and these are not very different from the most prevalent ways Kant used the term: denoting a subjective sense of all-round and lasting contentment with (or even enjoyment of) life and/or the satisfaction of desires and inclinations (including especially hedonic pleasure) (cf. e.g. Hill 2002, p. 168). As their views on the meaning of happiness are so similar, whilst their views on the role happiness should play in public life are so different, the Kantian view is particularly useful to consider when exploring the reasons to be wary of the political turn to happiness as favoured by SWB scientists. For this reason I will be relying on it considerably here.

A second possibility that could explain different views on the role happiness should play in public life (if any), is that different authors may value happiness differently, even if they mean the same thing by it. Suppose, for instance, that we agree that happiness were to be best conceived in terms of hedonic satisfaction. Then it may still be that you believe this kind of satisfaction is all-important, whereas I may regard happiness of trivial concern. In fact, the very reason that makes you believe it is so important, may be the reason I deny its import, if our conceptions of the good life are sufficiently at variance. If we hold different views on how important happiness is in human existence, then it stands to reason we would also disagree about the role it should play in public policy. If you take the view that happiness is crucial, then you have at least a prima facie reason to believe it to be politically relevant, whereas if it is of negligible concern, then it would be surprising if it ought to be accorded a foundational role in public policy. Again, in some cases such differing value judgments may lie at the heart of the divergence on the role happiness should play in public policy, but again this is only to a limited degree the case, and again the Kantian view serves as an example here. Clearly, SSWB scientists tend to regard happiness as very important to human lives and intrinsically valuable. In this, Kant is no different, though. In fact, he even claims it is a natural end (e.g. Kant 1996, p. 519), which means he held it to be something all human beings cannot help but seek by virtue of their nature and as such it is an integral part of the highest good (e.g. Kant 1996, pp. 228–229). The precise way we

(Footnote 4 continued)
independence as citizens (Kant 1996, p. 291). Just how conservative or liberal these principles turn out to be in practice is a matter of debate, but most noteworthy for this paper is the absence of happiness as a fundamental principle. In fact, Kant's practical philosophy has even been described as 'devoted to putting happiness in its place' (Hill 2002, p. 169).

[5] One might even add that it is not larger than it is within Kant's own works, for it is well-documented he did not use the notion wholly consistently. For detailed analyses of Kant's views on happiness see, e.g. Hill (2002), Johnson (2002) and Guyer (2000).

should interpret the notion of a necessary natural end is contested among Kantians,[6] as is the question of how exactly such a notion fits within Kant's general theory, but on the fundamental point that he held that happiness is very important to human beings and that they seek it primarily for its own sake there is little debate. Moreover, there is also little disagreement within Kantianism that the pursuit of happiness is, as long as it does not violate anyone's rights, in principle a legitimate goal for human beings to seek.[7]

So why would authors, if they hold very similar views as to both the nature of happiness and its importance to human existence, still disagree so vehemently that one would claim it to be the ultimate purpose of all legitimate government policy (e.g. Layard as quoted at the beginning of this paper), and the other regard this as the most horrendous idea thinkable (Kant, as cited above)? One possible explanation could be a divergence in the amount of confidence they have in the ability of governments to make people happier. Thus, for instance, one can point out that people are in a much better position to determine what is likely to bring them happiness than any public official will ever be. This point is well known within utilitarianism, and long regarded as a convincing utilitarian argument in favour of personal freedom and government reticence (e.g. Mill 1982, Chap. 4). The force of this argument is quickly eroding, though. Not only will progress in the SSWB make public officials more and more able to accurately predict what will and will not make people happy, it has also shown that people are not at all good at determining what will bring them happiness (see e.g. Gilbert 2006; Thaler and Sunstein 2008; Haybron 2008). In terms of efficiency, we may well reach a point where well-trained public officials are, in various aspects of a person's life, abler providers of personal happiness than the average person is herself.

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[6] Also, even on a purely empirical level, one may doubt that Kant's claim that human beings cannot but seek happiness is valid. People suffering from self-hatred, for instance, often seem to seek misery, believing they do not deserve any better. Undoubtedly, Kant would morally disapprove of such behaviour (see, e.g. Kant 1998, p. 49), but empirically, it seems to be possible for human beings to deliberately seek misery rather than happiness.

[7] Next to the fact that happiness tends to be valued for its own sake, the SSWB has also shown that happiness can be sought for instrumental reasons (i.e. happiness brings other good things such as higher productivity or health and longevity). I do not focus on possible instrumental public usages of happiness here for several reasons. For one, it does not seem to be the main reason why SWB scientists and politicians who favour the political turn to happiness believe happiness is so important. Furthermore, if happiness were to be regarded as relevant only as means to other ends, the evaluation of such policies would have to be determined fully in the context of the particular ultimate value it is used to bring about; whether it is acceptable to use happiness findings in that way will always have to be analysed in the context of the end in question and whether the means used are appropriate to pursue that end. Some of the points discussed in this paper will also be relevant to such a determination, but others are not. Lastly, it should be noted that instrumental usages of happiness are far less controversial then adopting happiness as a political end in itself (even Kant, for instance, as violently opposed to happiness being adopted by governments as their fundamental goal, seems to have held that instrumental usage of happiness in politics can be quite acceptable (e.g. Kant 1996, p. 298)).

Though Kant sometimes also appears to avail himself of a version of the argument from inability, it is doubtful that such a suspicion of ineffectiveness in governmental attempts to increase happiness has much to do with the more principled Kantian objections to governmental happiness policies. In fact, it would seem to be quite the opposite. *Ineffectiveness* on the part of the government does not make you fear it will become 'the greatest despotism thinkable'; if anything, it is an *effective* government that you need to fear most in that regard. From the perspective of the potential to become despotically oppressive, to the degree they make governments more capable, the new possibilities the SSWB provides to government officials would be a new threat, something that exacerbates the problem, rather than a possible remedy.

12.3 Possible Reasons to Oppose Happiness as a Public Policy Objective II: The Nature of Governmentally Provided Happiness

So far we have explored a number of reasons that may make different authors hold different views on the relevance of happiness to public policies. Different views on what constitutes happiness, on its importance, or on a difference in belief as to how much the government can do in that regard may all explain why people disagree about the political relevance of happiness. Clearly, however, these do not exhaust the field: the example of Kantians shows that you can largely agree on all these issues with the advocates of the political relevance of happiness, and still oppose it vehemently. Yet, we still have not identified what makes Kantians (and others) so hostile to happiness as a policy objective, so let us now turn to what could make them so concerned.

Though the Kantian characterisation of a happiness-oriented government as despotic may seem extreme, it contains an important clue to their concerns. To describe something as a horrible despotism is to claim that something important is being repressed. An obvious candidate for this something is human freedom, but I want to avoid repeating the various conundrums that surround the analysis of the nature of freedom and its importance here. Moreover, as I believe that most concerns of freedom-advocates can be traced back to a concern for human dignity, I will focus directly on that notion here. Though the concept of dignity is notoriously difficult to pin down precisely,[8] its importance is widely acknowledged within normative philosophy, law, as well as politics.[9] It is also an appropriate candidate to explain the Kantian concern emanating from the suggestion that governments that pursue happiness as its primary objective are despotic because, like happiness,

[8] The things that violate it are much less difficult to identify, however (see e.g. Kaufman et al. 2011). Moreover, given the large amount of literature on the nature of wellbeing, it would seem that in this respect dignity is no more or less difficult a concept than wellbeing.

[9] Classic references are the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the German constitution.

dignity is something that is valued for its own sake, and hence can serve as an ultimate value.[10] Moreover, it is clear that happiness and dignity do not always go together – a classic example being the happy slave.[11] If human dignity is indeed the value that concerns those who oppose public policy being guided by happiness considerations, we should look at the ways that such policies may affect human dignity negatively. This worry can come in two versions. The first would argue that happiness-directed policies are inherently inimical to human dignity; the second holds that though there may be legitimate room for happiness-oriented policies in theory, there are strong reasons to doubt such policies can be safely put into practice by contemporary (democratic) governments.

Let us first look at the first objection. People who put forth this objection believe that there is something suspicious, or even wrong, with the happiness people may experience as the result of deliberate government attempts to bring that experience about. They worry that this kind of happiness is somehow spurious. It is not too difficult to think of ways where this would be the case. Just providing every citizen with a happiness-chip that stimulates a specific part of the brain may raise subjective happiness levels (cf. Schermer 2011), but such happiness can be argued to be devoid of any real meaning. Such a chip may *cause* you to be happy, but it does not give you any *reason* to be happy. The problem then is that your judgmental powers are by-passed, impaired or corrupted by the chip, forcing you to have the affective experience of happiness without there being any valid reasons as to why you should be so happy. This holds for affective notions of happiness, but it also holds for more cognitively focused conceptions. If we take a life-satisfaction account of happiness, for instance, such a chip will almost certainly make you rate your life higher (it is well-known that life-satisfaction judgments are very susceptible to influences that ought not affect it (see e.g. Kahneman and Krueger 2006, pp. 6–7); it has been shown, for instance, that finding a dime makes you rate your life as a whole substantially higher—it does not take too much effort to imagine what such a chip might do).[12] But if there is nothing about the status of your life that such a chip positively affects, there is nothing for you

[10] Layard's claim that happiness is the only thing of which it is true that 'If we are asked why [it] matters, we can give no further, external reason. It just obviously does matter.' (p. 113) is therefore belied by the example of dignity, for which this is also true. (Moreover, though we typically do value happiness for its own sake, it is not true that we *cannot* give other reasons to value happiness; as pointed out, SWB-scientists have discovered that there are many good things that happiness is conducive to, so it is quite possible to value happiness instrumentally, as means to other ends).

[11] Those readers who believe that the happy slave is too much a mere theoretical possibility, can replace it by other cases where psychological adaptation makes people content with situations they ought not be content with, or think of the happiness experienced by the winners of certain types of television shows which seem to become more and more prevalent these days.

[12] Such findings are sometimes suggested to be a cause of measurement error. A more plausible interpretation of such findings, however, is that they accurately measure happiness levels (i.e. people actually *are* more satisfied with their lives shortly after experiencing positive trivialities, like finding a dime or the sun shining), but that these life satisfaction judgments are in error (they rate the life in question higher than they ought to). Such findings point to *normative judgmental errors* on the part of the subjects, rather than to measurement errors on the side of researchers.

to be happier about. As it is particularly undignified to be happy about things you should not be happy about (cf. Kolnai 1995), such methods of providing happiness can legitimately be regarded with suspicion by those who value dignity.[13]

Not all the ways by which governments could stimulate societal happiness levels would have to have such drastic features, though. Indeed, SWB scientists are often quick to dismiss Brave New World scenarios as not what they are proposing, and argue that what they envision is something far more moderate (e.g. Bok 2010, pp. 49–52).[14] Certainly, not all proposals that may increase societal happiness are of the kind that they create only meaningless happiness. At least some such policies genuinely improve people's lives and therefore not only increase happiness levels, but also give them reason to be happier (improved health care systems would be an example). Why would such policies have to be opposed? The frank answer is that they probably do not have to be opposed. Those who reject the idea that governments should promote happiness do not have to claim that every government policy that makes people happier needs to be opposed—that would be a rather ludicrous position. What they will point out, however, is that such policies are good because they give people *reason* to be happy, that is, because they make the world a better place, and that *that* is the reason they should be pursued, not that they happen to make people experience happiness.[15]

Another possible reason to suspect that government happiness policies might be inherently pernicious to human dignity lies in the fact that they are manipulative. When the government pursues a happiness program, it wants you, as a citizen, to experience a particular feeling (and possibly to make a particular value judgment), and there is something suspicious about being happy about being manipulated; or, if it is not being manipulated itself that is the problem, then it may be argued that there is something worrisome about authorising others—in this case governmental officials—to manipulate us and our psychological make-up, as we would do if we award democratic governments a blank authorisation to promote our happiness. I am unsure how strong this argument is—I suspect its force may turn out to depend at least in part on how much trust or distrust you happen to have in democratic

[13] Some might argue that such a judgment about the indignity of being made happy about something one should not be happy about is something that governments should not be allowed to make, as it is a value judgment that is incompatible with the idea of a neutral liberal state. I will address this type of objection in the next section. As an aside, however, it is worth noting that the ideal of the neutral state is highly contested (see e.g. Wall and Klosko 2003), and that even though an excessive governmental urge to micromanage even the smallest violations of dignity is undoubtedly problematic, many liberals do regard the protection of human dignity to be a legitimate task of democratic governments (especially when it comes to the more outrageous infractions).

[14] Though for Layard the reason to oppose Brave New World scenarios lies in their ineffectiveness, not in their incompatibility with human dignity (2005, p. 114).

[15] Other happiness findings suggest more politically questionable opportunities for governments to increase happiness, even though such policies would not only provide happiness but also valid grounds for a person to be happy. Marriage, for instance, has been found to have a substantial and lasting positive impact on happiness (e.g. Argyle 1999) (and it is at least arguable that a successful marriage is also something that gives one reason to be happy).

government and/or your views on the relationship between individuals and the states they live in/are part of[16]—but if it can be made to stand scrutiny it would have significant implications as it would mean that even more moderate happiness increasing proposals, such as the idea of a nudge as championed by Thaler and Sunstein (2008), have to be rejected.[17]

12.4 Possible Reasons to Oppose Happiness as a Public Policy Objective III: The Corrupting Influence of Happiness

In the previous section, I explored the possibility that there might be something amiss with the happiness that governments may provide. The suspicion is that the happiness governments may provide may be of a kind that is void of any true meaning, thereby becoming spurious. Though we may value happiness for its own sake, it is not always appropriate to do so: there exist forms of happiness that we should not value in that way.[18] In practice, such happiness may of course still be valued by particular persons for its own sake, but when they do so—when they value something that is bereft of value; when they are contented by what should not content them—they are making an erroneous judgment serious enough to tarnish their own dignity. This gives rise to the worry that the kind of happiness that governments are likely to bring about when they make happiness their policy objective will often be of the valueless kind, rather than the worthwhile kind, making such happiness policies at the very least wasteful of societal resources (they

[16] Someone who identifies strongly with the society she lives in (a communitarian or a nationalist, for example) may be expected to be much more likely to positively evaluate the happiness that is the effect of deliberate governmental attempts to raise happiness levels than, for instance, a perfectionist with strong individualist leanings or a libertarian with a characteristic dislike or distrust of government. The latter may feel manipulated, perhaps even pressured, by governmental happiness policies, leading them to regard the happiness they may experience as a result of such policies as alien and spurious, as something disingenuous imposed on them from outside. The former, however, may look much more favourably on the happiness that governments bring about, because to her such happiness is simply the beneficial effect of a collective enterprise she feels herself a part of. Hence, she would see no reason to experience governmentally provided happiness in terms of alienation, but can embrace it as fully genuine, as 'truly her own'.

[17] There is some evidence that liberal paternalists believe that respect for persons and their dignity is sufficiently secured by the opt-out possibilities essential to liberal paternalism, but there are good reasons to doubt this (cf. e.g. Hausman and Welch 2010). Moreover, the fact, emphasised by Thaler and Sunstein, that oftentimes it is impossible not to nudge will probably not affect this line of objection a great deal, because it may well be the *deliberativeness* inherent in a well-thought-through nudge that is deemed problematic.

[18] On the conditional nature of the intrinsic value of happiness and its implications for public policy see Van der Rijt (2013).

would still have to be funded by taxation, for instance) and at worst harmful to the dignity of those people who are thus enticed to value that which is bereft of value.

Some SWB-scientists who propound the political relevance of their findings attempt to side-step this point by claiming that such normative questions are not something that scientists should concern themselves with (cf. e.g. Diener and Seligman 2004, p. 4): science should only look at what does make people happy, not on what ought to make them happy. As far as science is concerned, there is some validity in this comment. However, when such scientists claim that their findings are politically relevant, or that policy makers should make use of them when designing public policy, they step outside of the realm of pure science and are making a substantial normative claim (even if they remain studiously vague on exactly what the role of happiness in public policy should be). To put the same point differently: the fact that certain forms of happiness are bereft of value is not a critique of the SSWB as a science, but it does affect the claim to political relevance, which as a normative claim is open to normative critique. Hence, SWB scientists who make such political claims cannot hide behind the purported a-normativity of science to avoid having to address them.

A somewhat similar possible response to the troublesome possibility of worthless happiness is to claim that just as such value judgments fall outside of the scope of science, so they fall outside the purview of politicians and other policymakers too. What should or should not make you happy is something people should decide for themselves, and if governments start making such decisions this would amount to a problematic form of elitist censure. This may be a valid enough point, but it should be noted that it does not really affect the point of critique at issue: even if such kind of censure would be dubious from a democratic perspective (and whether it is will very much depend on what model of democracy you happen to favour), that does not invalidate the point that governments should not promote worthless happiness. It may be problematic to promote only the kind of happiness that is deemed worthwhile for citizens to have by an elite,[19] but from this one need not conclude that happiness should be governmentally promoted without any censure; one may just as well draw the conclusion that it is better to abstain from happiness promoting policies altogether.[20] Perfectionism by itself certainly is not incompatible with liberal democracy, but it may combine uneasily with the idea of a democratic government dedicated to the promotion of happiness.[21]

[19] Such a system of perfectionist censure imposing its view of what is 'proper' happiness may indeed show tendencies that come close to Kant's description of happiness-seeking governments as despotic.

[20] Diener et al. reject this view: 'some might argue that it is not the role of the government to make people happy, the actions of most governments (and the rhetoric that politicians rely on) belie this critique' (2009, p. 60). This is not a very convincing argument, however, as you cannot deduce what governments ought to do from what they actually do.

[21] Perfectionist political theories are political theories that are based on specific views about what is (objectively) good for human beings.

If we want to insist on the promotion of happiness, and perfectionist censure is deemed too problematic, we could choose to promote it across the board nonetheless, whilst acknowledging that some of the happiness we thus create will be of the valueless kind. Even though we thus create some worthless happiness, we would likely also increase the worthwhile kind, and that would still remain good. No public policy is ever perfectly efficient, and if the waste (the money spent on valueless happiness) can be kept in check, we would still be OK. After all, people want to be happy, and they want it very much, so some waste may be an acceptable price to pay.[22] From this perspective, it comes down to social willingness-to-pay. If there is going to be too much of the meaningless kind of happiness and too little of the meaningful kind created by happiness programmes, we should perhaps decide not to pursue such policies as being too expensive, bringing too little real gain. If it is the other way around, however, happiness policies might still seem a good idea, despite some waste. Whether the former or the latter is more likely to be the case is hard to determine offhand and will depend greatly on how much faith one has in the average person's ability for sound (normative) judgment and strength of will, but there is some reason for pessimism in this regard: the SSWB has successfully shown that people are in various ways quite bad at making prudential judgments because of various psychological characteristics of the human person (one of the crucial findings on which it bases its claim to political relevance), it stands to reason that they will be no less immune to such psychological processes when it comes to normative judgments (the fact that life-satisfaction judgments are so easily influenced by trivialities (e.g. the dime example mentioned before) can be taken as a case in point).

There is, however, a further potential problem with uncensored happiness-promoting programmes. According to an important republican tradition in political philosophy it is vitally important that people remain committed to the ideal of freedom (both individual freedom and collective freedom) and watchful for the things that undermine it.[23] According to authors working in this tradition, human psychology is such that people are by nature inclined to become more and more lax in this regard, especially when societies become more affluent and people get more and more used to a comfortable way of life. In their view, it is vital to maintain a certain level of civic virtue, which motivates people to stay interested in the goings and doings of those

[22] As unattractive as perfectionist-censured happiness policies may seem, it should also be kept in mind that it is possible for people to derive happiness from distinctly immoral sources, such as the suffering and humiliation of others, or a sense of superiority over others (especially members of other social groups). To my knowledge, very little scientific research has been conducted at present on potential sources of happiness deriving from the nastier sides of human nature. Moreover, such research may also prove more difficult to conduct, as people are less than likely to reply honestly on questionnaires that query such darker tendencies.

[23] Within political theory this tradition is known as '(neo)-Roman republicanism' (to be distinguished from other republican traditions, such as the (neo)-Athenian). When I use the term 'republican' in the remainder of this paper, it is exclusively the neo-Roman tradition I refer to. For a paper that exemplifies the type of outlook central to the concern I outline in this section, see Skinner (1983); for a collection of papers dealing with issues in contemporary republican thought, see Laborde and Maynor (2008).

who wield political power, and willing to stand up for their rights and freedoms when these are threatened. When people lose this civic virtue, when they place their own private interests and comforts above the desire to maintain or fight for their political rights and freedoms, society is said to be corrupted, and this will quickly lead it to slide into a despotism of one kind or other. This despotism need not necessarily be the oppressive rule of one person or a few, but it can also be the oppressive rule of the masses. This latter possibility is especially relevant for contemporary society, where, at least in several Western democracies, populism is on the rise. From the republican perspective, the central question when it comes to happiness as a government objective is whether it is likely to corrupt the public in this way.

Some SSWB findings suggest this is not likely to be the case: happier people are more likely to carry out their democratic duty and vote, for instance. Other findings suggest the opposite: happier people are less likely to cause trouble and rise up (Inglehart and Klingemann 2000; Inglehart 2009; Pacek 2009; Weitz-Shapiro and Winters 2011), for example (a fact already well known by the ancient Romans and institutionalised by them in state policies designed to provide regular hand-outs of grain and spectacular entertainment). Other findings are ambivalent: when people feel the state is poorly run, they tend to be less happy (Helliwell and Huang 2006; Bok 2010, Chap. 10). However, such findings can be interpreted in two ways: it may be that being happy makes one less critical of the government, but also that being critical of the government makes one less happy (probably both can be the case). In my view, present scientific findings do not provide a clear answer on the potential for corruption in the republican sense, also because corruption is, to republicans, an (often slow) process and the SSWB is a relatively young science whose political aspirations have not yet materialised in a large number of public policies. Hence, I want to explore a possible philosophical argument about how happiness as a government objective might have a corrupting influence on contemporary societies—societies where, one might add, it can be argued that civic virtue in the republican sense is at fairly low levels anyway.[24]

According to present-day populist parties, the fundamental political premise is that when the majority (or for states where coalition governments are the norm at least a large group) of the people want something, that means it is the government's job to provide it. The similarity with the SSWB-argument is striking (and a bit disturbing): people want to be happy, we can enable governments to make them happy, governments should do so. From the republican point of view (and, one should add, in this they tend to be supported by many forms of liberalism) this view is overly simplistic and deeply mistaken. A modern democracy is (or should be) a carefully balanced system where the rights and freedoms of individuals are guaranteed so as to ensure their dignity, and the power of government officials is strictly

[24] Compare, for instance, the disturbing ease with which large parts of the population, allowing themselves to be spooked by the threat of terrorism, have recently supported vast curtailments of their civic rights in order to increase their sense of security.

restricted to guarantee this stays that way.[25] The question then becomes whether authorising governments to promote happiness is likely to disturb this balance.

The following line of reasoning suggests this may well be the case. At present, most contemporary societies recognise a host of negative and positive rights, but a right to happiness does not tend to be among them.[26] To claim that happiness is a responsibility of the government is to suggest that when people are unhappy, the government is not doing its job. From this, it is but a small step to think of happiness as something people are entitled to, or even have a right to.[27] It does not take too much imagination to believe that a slogan like 'Don't *you* deserve to be happy too?', or some variation on that theme, will go down very well with the discontented and/or more populist-minded part of the electorate. Once people start thinking of their happiness as a right or entitlement, then their willingness to respect the other rights of other people will decrease too. What at present is one person's right trumping what is merely regarded as an interest of another person (happiness), then becomes a matter of weighing respective rights, the outcome of which is contingent on the importance of the rights in question. Especially given the fact that people tend to want to be happy very much, they will likely consider it a right that should carry a lot of weight. Thus, for instance, since people are happier living in homogenous neighbourhoods (Putnam 2007, p. 150), your right to move wherever you wish to move has to be weighed against the loss of happiness this will bring about to the other residents if your ethnic, cultural or otherwise salient background will upset this homogeneity. What before could be dismissed as bigoted disrespect for other people's rights, now has to be taken seriously, as presenting a genuine case deserving to be heard and weighed according to the amount of grief (loss of happiness) it will bring about. This is worrying enough in itself, but it will be all the more disturbing if we take into consideration the fact that in this weighing, numbers count. As this reasoning will apply whenever the happiness of the many happens to conflict with the established rights of the few, awarding happiness the status of a right will make the position of the few very tenuous. In short, if all you have to point to in order to brush individual rights aside is the happiness of a large enough number, populist politicians (not usually known for their restraint anyway) will

[25] It is perhaps worth noting that in this perspective on democracy elections and representation are regarded as essential, but their primary function is to play their part in ensuring the maintenance of this balance, not the expression or imposition of, for instance, some Rousseauian idea of popular will.

[26] Though appeals to a right to *pursue* happiness are not uncommon, a commitment to such a right clearly falls well short of a right to *be* happy.

[27] From a purely philosophical point of view it is possible to maintain that there are subtle yet important distinctions between the government on the one hand having a responsibility and the people having a right or entitlement to the fulfilment of that responsibility on the other. It is unlikely, however, that such subtle philosophical distinctions will survive long in present-day political rhetoric.

have a field-day. Thinking of one's happiness as a right sits uneasily with respect for (other) persons and their dignity.[28]

12.5 Conclusion

This paper explored various reasons why one could object to the present political turn towards happiness as something that governments should promote. These reasons can roughly be grouped in three categories: different appreciations of the meaning and importance of happiness in human existence; the worry that the kind of happiness governments can, or are likely to, provide if they decide to promote happiness is spurious; and the concern that happiness as a governmental objective will have perverse consequences in the political practice of contemporary societies. I presented none of these lines of objection as conclusive arguments against the view that findings from the SSWB could in some way be relevant to public policy. There are many conceivable ways in which such findings could be used, and not all of them are necessarily equally susceptible to the objections discussed here. Instrumental usages of happiness findings in particular are likely to avoid many of the concerns listed, though probably not all. The primary drive behind the present-day political turn towards happiness is not instrumental, however, but relies largely on the fact that human beings want to be happy for the sake of being happy (see e.g. the UN resolution on happiness). Though many seem to find this reasoning plausible and inherently democratic—a view that is reinforced, according to some, by the subjective nature of the notion of happiness as it is researched by the SSWB—there are good reasons to consider it overly simplistic and politically problematic, relying on a troublesome, largely populist vision of democracy and an unreflective understanding of the role happiness plays in the good life.

How much weight should be attached to the various objections to authorising governments to promote happiness discussed here will depend to a large degree on your vision of, and belief in, the average human being. If you believe that human beings are no more than fancy, one-dimensional, contentment-seeking animals, Layard's advice that we should 'fearlessly' (2005, p. 112) embrace the political turn

[28] This point is similar to the well-known critique of utilitarianism that it fails to respect persons. Though arguably there is a notion of fairness discernible in utilitarianism in that it demands that everyone's happiness be counted, and counted equally (see e.g. Layard 2005, p. 112), that does not suffice to counter this critique. To use Frey's phrase, it reduces persons to 'metric stations' (2008, p. 166) and gets things backwards: human happiness may be important, but it matters only because human beings matter in the first place (our happiness matters because we matter). It is not the case that we matter only because we happen to be able to experience happiness. Another possible utilitarian reply is that the loss of happiness on the part of the maltreated few will usually be so intense that it will outweigh the gain made by the many who profit, or that such practices will create so much fear in society as a whole that overall happiness will drop. Neither of these points is very convincing from the perspective of respect for persons, as they offer only contingent protection.

to happiness will likely appeal to you. If on the other hand you believe that there is more to human beings than merely their animalistic side, that there are other important aspects to human existence too, and/or that they are—if you will—in some way special creatures, then the case for governments seeking to promote subjective happiness becomes much more complicated. Happiness is, well-understood and under the right conditions, certainly of great importance in human life; but lest we fail to take the relevant caveats and considerations into account, we would do well to keep in mind that just because people want something does not mean governments are to give it to them.

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