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Alex C. Michalos

Ancient Views on the Quality of Life

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To Deborah, with love

Preface

This little monograph is the result of some years of reading about the lives and views of ancient philosophers largely for pleasure and generally rounding out my early education in the field of philosophy. Like all students specializing or majoring in philosophy, I had to study the classics to build at least a modest foundation for understanding and creating more contemporary works. Specializing in logic and the philosophy of science as I did, I was never very enthusiastic about texts written over 2000 years ago. They had their place in history, but my place was far removed in time and topics, and it did not seem likely that I would find much of interest or use in them.

As my interests moved from theoretical or speculative philosophy to measuring the quality of life in sufficiently rigorous ways to produce information useful for guiding my own and others' personal decision-making as well as public policy making, I took to reading and re-reading ancient texts as a kind of diversion from my routine empirical investigations. To my surprise and delight, I discovered that the people writing many of those texts were dealing with questions fundamental to my own research, e.g. questions like "What is a good life?" and "What is the best sort of person to be?" "How can one tell if one's society is making progress to some sort of desirable state or falling backward?" These are all fundamental issues of quality of life and well-being measurement.

I found or thought I found several ancient writers who had suggested problems and solutions directly connected to those that contemporary quality of life researchers were dealing with. With ancient texts, it is often difficult to know what one has discovered in the text versus what one has built into it, what was meant by the author versus what the reader and/or interpreter thought was meant or hoped was meant as a result of the reader's and/or interpreter's preferences or prejudices. Granting the difficulties of understanding exactly what this or that ancient writer intended to say, it seemed to me that some important, more or less primitive, wheels were invented long ago and entirely neglected by some more recent "inventors". As well, I increasingly came to admire the creativity of some ancient writers as they struggled to find explanations for how things work in nature or naturally work or ought to work, including how human beings naturally act and at their best ought to act.

The result of these experiences led to the present investigation. Quite simply, I wanted to find the earliest ideas in recorded Western philosophical and/or scientific history that were significantly related to current research and understanding of the quality of life or well-being for individuals and communities. If this little monograph sheds some light on how the very early reflections of ancient writers are directly connected to current views, it will have done its job. If contemporary readers come to appreciate their common humanity and the somewhat common human conditions with the ancients, that will be an added bonus for me. Across time and across many cultures, the human species bears some remarkable similarities. This treatise considers a few of these, and its author is deeply appreciative of all those who contributed to our current understanding.

Contents

Ancient Views on the Quality of Life	1
Introduction	1
<i>Homer</i> (Eighth Century BCE)	4
<i>Hesiod of Ascrea</i> (Late Eighth/Early Seventh Century BCE)	5
<i>Pythagoras of Samos</i> (c. 570–c. 490 BCE)	7
<i>Theognis</i> (Late Sixth and Early Fifth Century BCE)	10
<i>Heraclitus of Ephesus</i> (c. 540–c. 480 BCE)	11
<i>Anaxagoras of Clazomenae</i> (c. 500–c. 428 BCE)	14
<i>Empedocles of Acragas</i> (c. 492–c. 432 BCE)	15
<i>Protagoras of Abdera</i> (c. 490–c. 420 BCE)	18
<i>Antiphon of Rhamnous</i> (c. 480–411 BCE)	19
<i>Democritus of Abdera</i> (c. 460–c. 370 BCE)	21
<i>Hippocrates of Cos</i> (c. 450–c. 380 BCE)	26
<i>Antisthenes of Athens</i> (c. 446–c. 366 BCE)	33
<i>Aristippus of Cyrene</i> (“the Elder”, c. 436–356 BCE)	35
<i>Plato of Athens</i> (427–347 BCE)	39
<i>Anonymous Iamblichii</i> (c. 400 BCE)	55
<i>Diogenes of Sinope</i> (c. 400–c. 323 BCE)	57
<i>Aristotle of Stageira</i> (384–322 BCE)	61
<i>Epicurus of Samos</i> (c. 341–271 BCE)	70
<i>Zeno of Citium</i> (c. 333–261 BCE)	78
Summary	84
References	87
Life Timelines for Ancient Scholars, BCE	91

Abstract

The aim of this monograph is to provide a brief introduction to some ancient views on the quality of life in the period from about the eighth to the third century BCE, highlighting features of those views that have some relevance to contemporary social scientific research. Social scientists will be pleasantly surprised as I was to discover the ancient roots of some contemporary ideas about defining and measuring a good life and a good society. Progress in science can only be assured if scholars are familiar with what has been done before them. Indeed, progress for all societies can only be obtained if ordinary citizens and public officials are also aware of what wheels have already been invented and are determined to press on beyond them. If this little book helps anyone avoid reinventing wheels, its purpose will have been served and the quality of its author's life will have been improved.

Ancient Views on the Quality of Life

Introduction

While the quantity of our lives is notoriously limited to one per person, its quality is as varied as the perspectives or domains from which it is viewed. Viewed from one perspective, a person may be well off, but from another not at all well off. This fact of life is familiar to everyone. So, the whole research field of ‘quality of life’ studies might be more accurately called ‘qualities of life’ studies. In any case, the general sense of the phrase ‘quality of life’ is here understood as a good life all things considered. However, one of the first questions ancient philosophers addressed as early as the fifth century BCE is ‘What is a good life?’ As demonstrated in many essays in the *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research* (Michalos 2014), the question and its proposed answers continue to intrigue us.

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

Taking the two main variables together (conditions of life and what people make of them), one can construct four scenarios which, with some exaggeration, may be described as different kinds of paradise and hell.

1. If people’s living conditions are good, and people accurately perceive and think about them, feel good and act appropriately, we may describe that as Real Paradise.
2. If people’s living conditions are bad, and people accurately perceive and think about them, feel bad and act appropriately, we may describe that as Real Hell.

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

Although some complicated epistemological and evaluative material was smuggled into the four scenarios, it may be neglected for present purposes. Given the fragmented remains of many writers considered here, it is impossible to apply this 4-fold set of distinctions rigorously to everyone's views. The approach simply highlights certain features of some views. The most important point to be made here is that the classical notion of a Fool's Paradise, which survives today, requires at least the sort of two-variable model mentioned in the second paragraph. This notion is based on the common sense view that there is a real world, however roughly apprehended, and that there are good reasons for believing that some perceptions, thoughts, feelings and actions are more appropriate than others in that sort of world.

As the remnants of the works of ancient authors reveal and as one would easily discover by examining the works of contemporary authors, the common sense view of the human condition is not universally appreciated and accepted. While anyone with any democratic sensitivity would grant that each person's assessment of his or her own life should be accorded some privileged status, it is far from obvious that such privilege should over-ride all other considerations. Nevertheless, for some of the ancients and their modern followers, it is apparently supposed that people's personal assessments of the quality of their lives are not only privileged, but ultimately definitive. For example, Diener et al. (2009, p. 10) wrote, "Subjective definitions of well-being are aligned with the interests of the individuals whose well-being is being assessed. A life is going well only if the individual who lives this life endorses it as good and evaluates it positively. [That is, an individual's endorsement of his or her life as good is a *necessary condition* of justifying the claim that the individual's life is going well.] In this book, we adopt a subjective definition of well-being."

It seems to be supposed, wittingly or not, that however constrained the perceptions, beliefs and so on of an individual happen to be, that individual's assent is required to judge that the life in question is good. For people holding such a populist and somewhat post modern view, there can be no Fool's Paradise, because there can be no fools foolish enough to misjudge their own satisfaction with their life circumstances. For people holding such views, the quality of life, the good life, is completely internalized and determined by each person's own experiences. Then, since each person has privileged access to his or her own experiences, personal reports of those experiences must be equally privileged.

On the contrary, the good life that we must want and achieve for all people is not just a life in which people feel good, no matter how terrible their real life conditions are, but one in which they feel good with the best of all reasons, because

the objectively measurable conditions of their lives merit a positive assessment by any reasonable person. It is unreasonable to imagine that everyone's judgment about their own condition must always be more accurate and helpful than that of a trained specialist, and that there is no need or place for schools and universities, teachers and professors, or experts of any sort. Limited as their science was, we will see that most of the ancients considered here recognized the contributions that sound reasoning about the real world could make to the quality of their lives.

The best way to address the problem of what to say when relatively objective conditions are not consistent with subjective assessments is to say that *normally* or in the standard case, objective conditions and assessments are each necessary and jointly provide a clear *sufficient condition* of a life being bad or good, and being regarded as such with good reasons. Then, if someone's perceptions, assessments and actions are inconsistent with relatively objective conditions as a result of his or her ignorance, disability, disease, substance abuse or some sort of duress, we are reasonably warranted in over-riding their judgments. As well, if what we regard as relatively objective conditions are not as we think they are (which often happens, including disagreements among well-informed people), it would be unreasonable to insist that our claims about them are true and that we must act accordingly. In both kinds of cases, the normal or standard conditions for assuming the necessity of objective conditions *and* personal assessments are not met. When the normal or standard conditions are not met, we have the possibility of a Fool's Paradise or Fool's Hell. So we must adjust our judgments to fit the cases before us.

For the purposes of this treatise, it does not matter if one accepts the one or two-variable view of the basic elements required for a proper assessment of the quality of life. In keeping with an old sociological tradition of revealing one's most important assumptions rather than trying to eliminate them, it is worthwhile to present the options and the author's biases up front.

This overview of ideas about the good life from the eighth to the third century BCE is based primarily on the writings of a few outstanding philosophers selected from a remarkably long list of candidates. The overview here will provide interested readers with sufficient background information to undertake further explorations on their own and give others enough information to appreciate the main similarities and differences between ideas of the good life then and now.

A good overview of some of the ideas of philosophers neglected here may be found in Parry (2004). Dover (1974) published a fine study of "popular morality" in the fourth century BCE based primarily on the writings of forensic and political orators, dramatists and poets, and explicitly omitting the views of most philosophers (Dover 1974, p. xii). As Dover understood it, "popular morality" frequently involved assumptions and pronouncements about the good life and the best way to live. Most Greeks were not familiar with the writings of most philosophers and the writings of the relatively better known orators, dramatists and poets did not display the highest regard for them. So, Dover thought that it was best to leave the views of the philosophers aside in his attempt to give an accurate account of the views of average folks. Here we will examine the views of some outstanding philosophers of the period, including their views of what average folks thought.

While all the philosophers mentioned here were extraordinary people with relatively extraordinary views compared to their contemporaries, some common and fairly conventional themes appear in all the works cited. The persistence and relevance of these same themes today is perhaps the most interesting product of our investigation.

All of the philosophers discussed in this overview lived on the lands near the eastern Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Seas, including what we now call the Middle East. Readers should be aware that “not a single work of any of the ‘Presocratic’ philosophers has been preserved from antiquity to the present” (McKirahan 1994, p. ix). Thus, for all of the philosophers before and even many of those after Socrates (469–399 BCE), the literature review that follows is a review of bits and pieces of their thoughts, sayings and/or writings. Often we only have fragments purported to be actual quotations, which are liable to be paraphrases, anecdotes, apothegms, rough approximations of the philosophers’ actual views or views that seem to be consistent with some writer’s understanding of what someone else thought or said. If a writer liked or disliked a philosopher, sayings that the writer liked or disliked would sometimes be attributed accordingly, regardless of evidence. Often enough there is no way to confirm or disconfirm authenticity, and even when authenticity is relatively well established, there is often considerable controversy concerning the most appropriate interpretation of a fragment in its original language and the most appropriate translation of the original text. Add to these problems the number of centuries of reproductions, errors of omission and commission, and commentaries by more or less well-informed, well-intentioned (the main reports we have of the views of some philosophers come from hostile critics) and well-resourced researchers, and the difficulty of producing an accurate overview of the work of our ancestors becomes clear. Were it not for the excellent analyses of scholars like McKirahan (1994), Annas (1993, 1999) and others cited here, this overview would have been greatly impoverished. As the text will reveal, my debt to other authors is substantial and it is matched by much admiration for and appreciation of their work. [Some sections of this treatise have been adapted from Michalos and Robinson (2012)].

Homer (Eighth Century BCE)

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

In their view, the best kind of people were aristocrats and the best kind of life was aristocratic. Enjoying all the advantages of nobility, such people would have a clear sense of *noblesse oblige* and act accordingly.

According to McKirahan, changes in Greek society from the beginning to the end of the Archaic Age brought changes in people's vision of a good life from that of competitive to cooperative success.

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

A notable conflict may be found in Homer's two classics. There is a major contrast to be found there between the characters of Odysseus and Achilles (the main figures of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* respectively). Homer seemingly puts them both forward as role models, but they clash. Achilles is straight and true, noble and honest, but he is weak-willed and ruled by his passions, giving rise to tragic action that destroys his friends, and eventually himself. Hence he is a tragic figure. Odysseus is wily and clever, but morally unprincipled; he thinks nothing of lying, cheating and manipulating others for his ends. He is always working on schemes to trick people. Nonetheless, he succeeds in all things, including his arrival home and re-unification with his long-suffering wife and child. So he is a comic figure. In contrast to Achilles, he has a happy ending. Homer portrays them both in entirely positive terms, leaving us to puzzle-out who we think is best, if either, and why. Definitely, Odysseus would seem to be 'happiest'. The pathetic scene between Achilles and Priam, the father of dead Hector, over Hector's corpse in Bk XXIV of *Iliad* has been called the pattern for subsequent tragic visions in Greek poetry. Plato calls Homer the father of tragedy. It is important to note that while the characters and the general background story that Homer is working with was inherited from centuries before (composed in a much more straightforwardly aristocratic time) Homer himself is writing from within the flux that McKirahan describes as the slide to more democratic values.

Granting that there was a variety of conflicting claims from a variety of "literary sources", the evidence to be presented here will show that there was also a relatively common central core of ideas about a good life and a good person that persisted from the eighth century BCE to the third century BCE, a core that may be discerned even today.

Hesiod of Ascra (Late Eighth/Early Seventh Century BCE)

The poems of Hesiod provide some insight into the lives of people of his generation and their assessments of what is good or bad. They lived in a world that was regarded as intelligibly ordered and fundamentally understandable,

although filled with divine influences ranging from the purely mysterious to the fairly anthropomorphic Olympian gods. The connotative range of the concept of divinity for ancient Greeks was significantly different from its range today. Anything imagined as immortal, ageless and capable of independent motion or power was regarded as divine. Hence, for example, when the sixth century BCE Milesian philosophers Thales posited water or Anaximander posited some indefinite but spatially and temporally unlimited stuff as the ultimate building material of the world, that material would have been regarded as divine. Anaximenes (c. 546 BCE) is reported to have believed that the ultimate building material was air or “dark mist”, and “gods and divine things” originated from that material (McKirahan 1994, pp. 31–48). In the *Apology*, an irate Socrates rhetorically challenged his accusers with the question “Do I not even believe that the sun or yet the moon are gods, as the rest of mankind do?” (Plato 1914, p. 99).

The following passages from Hesiod’s *Works and Days* indicate his views of some key features of a good life for individuals and communities.

Those who give straight judgments to foreigners
and citizens and do not step at all aside from justice
have a flourishing city and the people prosper in it.
There is Peace, the nurse of children, throughout the land,
and wide-seeing Zeus never ordains harsh war for them.
Famine and Disaster never attend men of straight judgment,
but with good cheer they feed on the fruits of their labors.
For these the Earth bears the means of life in abundance...
But for those who have thoughts of evil violence and
cruel deeds, wide-seeing Zeus son of Kronos has ordained justice.
Often indeed the entire city of an evil man suffers,...
Famine and Disease together, and the people perish.
Women do not give birth, but houses are diminished... (McKirahan 1994, p. 14)

Although these lines contain names of deities long discarded by people today (e.g., Peace, Famine, Disaster, etc.), they also contain familiar themes of the good life, i.e., flourishing and prosperous communities, populated by honest people, living in peace, enjoying the fruits of their labour, without worries about where the next meal will come from, with an absence of disease and with justice for all. Later in the same poem Hesiod describes the antithesis of a good society through a kind of inversion of these themes. The bad life is characterized as one in which

A father will not be like his children nor will they be at all
like him, nor will a guest be friendly to his host
or comrade with comrade or brother with brother as before.
They will quickly come to dishonor their parents as they grow
old,...
There will be no thanks for one who keeps his oath or is just
or good, but men will rather praise evildoers and violence...
The evil person will harm the better man,
addressing him with crooked words... Bitter greed will be left
for mortal humans, and there will be no defense from evil (McKirahan 1994, p. 17).

In contemporary terms, one might say that Hesiod's bad society is one in which the institution of morality has been totally undermined, including people's sense of justice, resulting in the total destruction of everyone's social capital.

***Pythagoras of Samos* (c. 570–c. 490 BCE)**



Source: Wikimedia

Pythagoras is one of history's most extra-ordinary people, brilliant, charismatic and enigmatic. He was born the son of a gem-engraver on the island of Samos, enjoyed some travel in the near east and at forty moved to the city of Croton in southern Italy. Apparently as a result of some persecution of Pythagoreans, around

510 BCE he moved to Metapontum, remaining there until he died (Laertius 2000b, p. 321; Huffman 2014, pp. 1, 11).

Contrary to Diogenes Laertius's claim, he seems to have written nothing. There are no remaining fragments of his writings, but there are many contradictory views and forgeries attributed to him (Huffman 2014, p. 3). So remarkable were his talents and character that incredible legends were attached to him, e.g., that he could be in two different places at the same time, that a river spoke to him, that he had a golden thigh and had traveled to the underworld (Huffman 2014, pp. 16–17).

He and his friends created associations that engaged in socio-economic, political, religious and academic activities. Economically and politically, Pythagorean societies were relatively successful aristocracies, religiously they were relatively secretive and ascetic, and academically they nourished creative scientists and mathematicians. While the theorem bearing his name was known to earlier Babylonians, neither he nor they had a proof of it (Huffman 2014, p. 23).

He seems to have discovered that musical intervals could be expressed mathematically, i.e., that musical qualities could be expressed quantitatively. Indeed, according to Huffman (2014, p. 26), “Pythagoras is known for the *honor* he gives to number and for removing it from the practical realm of trade and instead pointing to correspondences between the behavior of number and the behavior of things”.

As one might have expected, his initial efforts were not uniformly successful. He is reported to have believed that the ultimate material of the universe was numerical in some sense, but the sense was quite unclear. According to McKirahan (1994, p. 112),

The Pythagoreans believed that number is fundamental to all things, that the basic features of all things are numerical, that numerical considerations are basic in understanding all things, that all things are generated in a similar way to numbers. These statements are all ways of claiming primacy for numbers, but they are different ways... They were not interested in analyzing different ways numbers are primary, only in establishing that numbers are in fact primary. They formulated their thesis vaguely, to accommodate the different relations they found between things and numbers...to judge by Aristotle's criticisms [in his *Metaphysics*], their vague notion of priority does not stand up to analysis...

Notwithstanding these problems, since the essence of social indicators or quality of life research is precisely the measurement (quantification) of qualities, it is fair to regard Pythagoras as the first researcher in our field.

For present purposes, the details of the Pythagorean scheme are not as important as the general idea that the universe is not only intelligibly ordered but constructed out of entities with geometrical shapes that, in principle perhaps, might be measurable. The following fragment by a relatively obscure writer from the first century AD known as Aetius expresses this idea.

There being five solid figures called the mathematical solids, Pythagoras says that earth is made from the cube, fire from the pyramid, air from the octahedron, water from the icosahedron, and from the dodecahedron is made the sphere of the whole (McKirahan 1994, p. 102).

With the “mathematical solids” as basic building blocks, Pythagoras imagined that the universe, which he called the KOSMOS, was an “intelligible, ordered whole” somehow held together or connected by HARMONIA, i.e., by some sort of principle of harmony, which he had shown was intimately related to numerical analysis (McKirahan 1994, p. 115). He apparently believed that all animals have immortal souls which at death transmigrate among diverse species, trading up or down as it were, depending partly on individuals’ behaviour and character. It is unclear if souls were supposed to be discrete, singular entities, aggregations of entities connected by the same principle of harmony holding the universe together, or merely that very same principle under a new name when it is applied to holding the parts of an individual’s body together. The first of these alternatives would probably be the easiest to combine with a theory of transmigration. In any event, the aim of the relatively ascetic Pythagorean “way of life” was to bring increased harmony to an individual’s soul, thereby improving that individual’s chances for trading up rather than down in the next life. It remains unclear if Pythagoras believed that at some point in time souls would be released from the whole process (Huffman 2014, p. 14). This notion of a harmonious soul or a soul at peace with itself found a place in the writings of most philosophers in the period reviewed here. To some extent it is a feature of our contemporary popular psychology revealed in remarks about people having or needing to “get it all together”, “pull themselves together” and “getting your heart and head together”.

The Pythagorean “way of life” was pretty clearly divided into two main paths, the path of scholarship engaged in a variety of intellectual inquiries versus a path of religious asceticism engaged in following an array of more or less arbitrary rules, e.g., eating in moderation and only vegetables, not eating beans, not keeping swallows in the house, not sacrificing a white cock and not urinating facing the sun.

However one assesses the two distinct paths characterizing the Pythagorean “way of life”, the philosopher’s most important contributions to our subject lie elsewhere. These are, first, his discovery of the fact that qualitative features of the world can be quantified, and second, his theory that the observable conditions of an individual’s life and the individual’s observable behaviour have an impact on that individual’s unobservable soul. In Huffman’s (2014, p. 16) view, “Pythagoras’ teachings that the soul was immortal, would have other physical incarnations and might have a good existence after death were striking innovations that must have had considerable appeal in comparison to the Homeric view”. The latter view, which was fairly standard for Pythagoras’ contemporaries, was that souls existed as “insubstantial shades” in the underworld.

Most importantly for our purposes, by positing an unobservable immortal soul as the final recipient of any rewards or punishments justly visited upon an individual for his or her own behaviour, Pythagoras directed our attention away from overt appearances to theoretical covert realities. After all is said and done,

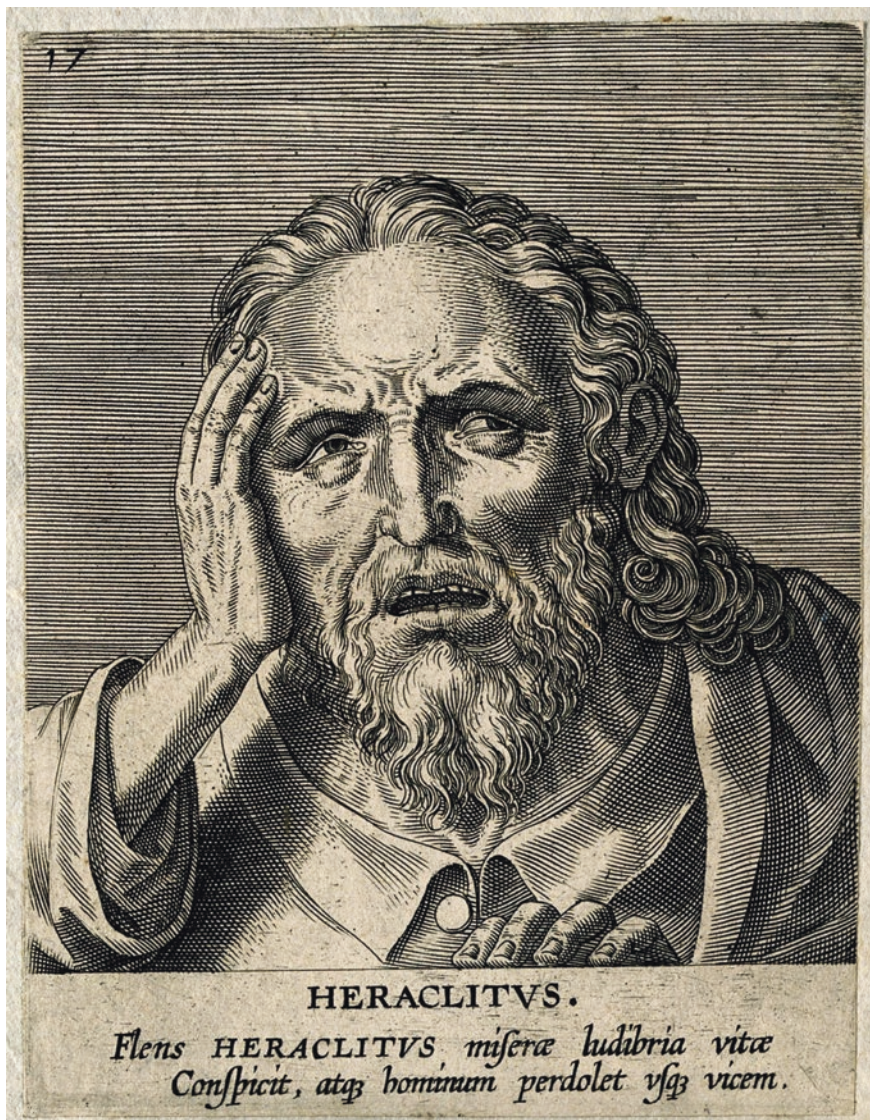
according to Pythagoras, the good life we seek is the unobservable harmony of that unobservable entity, the immortal soul.

Theognis (Late Sixth and Early Fifth Century BCE)

The poetry of Theognis reveals further erosion of the idea of a good life as the product of a fortunately noble birth and/or ancestry, followed by all the privileges such a life would imply. According to McKirahan, democratic reforms of Solon (c. 638–559 BCE) and Peisistrates (c. 605–527 BCE) led to shifts in economic wealth and political power in Athens going into the fifth century BCE. The following passages attributed to Theognis seem to have been written by an observer who was not only distressed by the social and political transformations occurring around him but convinced that the aristocratic virtues being lost by poor breeding could not be compensated by the best education money could buy, i.e., that no amount of good nurture could substitute for good nature. Apparently two of the most evil characteristics of the dreaded Sophists often criticized in the writings of Plato and Aristotle were, first, their claim to do precisely what Theognis believed could not be done and, second, their willingness to accept fees for doing it, i.e., for teaching the nouveau riche and their offspring how to appear to have the virtues of the aristocracy.

...a noble man does not mind marrying
 a lowly (KAKOS) woman of a lowly (KAKOS) father, if her father
 gives him a lot of money.
 Nor does a woman refuse to be the wife of a lowly (KAKOS) man...
 They honor money...
 Wealth has mixed the race...
 It is easier to beget and raise a child than to instill
 good thoughts in it...
 never will he make a bad (KAKOS) man good (AGATHOS) by teaching (McKirahan
 1994, pp. 362–363)

***Heraclitus of Ephesus* (c. 540–c. 480 BCE)**



Source: Wikimedia

Heraclitus was born to an aristocratic family in Ephesus, a city in Ionia near Miletus, home to the pioneering philosophers Thales (c. 624–c. 545 BCE), Anaximander (c. 611–c. 546 BCE) and Anaximenes (c. 546 BCE). He claimed to have been self-taught and there is no evidence that he ever met or learned anything

from the pioneers (Graham 2011, p. 2). Throughout his life he maintained deep doubts about (if not disdain for) the capacities and character of those with less fortunate origins, i.e., those who were not aristocratic [ARISTOS]. He was also critical of some of the most illustrious sages past and contemporary. In the first paragraph of Laertius's (2000b, p. 409) account of Heraclitus, he notes that the philosopher found fault with Homer, Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes (c. 570–c. 480 BCE), Hecataeus (c. 550–c. 490 BCE) and Archilochus (c. 680–c. 645 BCE).

There are roughly a hundred or so remaining fragments of his works and they have generated an immense amount of controversy. According to Graham (2011, pp. 3–4),

He has been variously judged by ancient and modern commentators to be a material monist or a process philosopher; a scientific cosmologist, a metaphysician, or a mainly religious thinker; an empiricist, a rationalist, or a mystic; a conventional thinker or a revolutionary; a developer of logic or one who denied the law of non-contradiction; the first genuine philosopher or an anti-intellectual obscurantist.

All scholars are agreed that Heraclitus posited a world constantly undergoing changes while preserving identities. This comes most directly from the following frequently quoted fragment attributed to him; “Upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow” (McKirahan 1994, p. 122). According to Graham (2011, pp. 16–17), the claim being made in this fragment

is not that all things are changing so that we cannot encounter them twice, but something much more subtle and profound. It is that some things stay the same only by changing. One kind of long-lasting material reality exists by virtue of constant turnover in its constituent matter. Here constancy and change are not opposed but inextricably connected... On this reading, Heraclitus believes in flux, but not as destructive of constancy; rather it is, paradoxically, a necessary condition of constancy.

He believed that the universe was not made but always existed and formed an ordered, coherent unity displaying great diversity. “The KOSMOS”, he said, “the same for all, none of the gods nor of humans has made, but it was always and is and shall be: an ever-living fire being kindled in measures and being extinguished in measures” (McKirahan 1994, p. 124).

The ultimate material building blocks were fire, water and earth, which were distinct but periodically transformed into one another. “In this view of the world,” Graham (2011, p. 17) wrote, “the mutual transformations of matter are not an accidental feature, but the very essence of nature. Without change, there would be no world”. Hence, “Since Hegel, he has been seen as a paradigmatic process philosopher—perhaps with some justification” (Graham 2011, p. 24).

The fundamental principle of order was referred to as the LOGOS, which is a multi-purpose word.

It can mean ‘account’, in the sense either of ‘story’, or of ‘amount’ or ‘value’, as in ‘He is of no account’; it can mean ‘word’ or ‘speech’ or ‘argument’; it can mean ‘proportion’, ‘principle’, or ‘formula’; it can mean ‘reason’, both in the sense of the human rational faculty and in the sense of ‘explanation’. In short, it covers a nest of what we might call logical and rational faculties and activities (Waterfield 2000, p. xi).

As if this variety of usual meanings were not confusing enough, Heraclitus sometimes identified the LOGOS with justice, fire, strife, war, God, soul and law

(McKirahan 2011, p. 141). The sense in which these things could be the same or produce stability in the KOSMOS is unclear.

Perhaps because he was so impressed by the diversity of the world around him, he noticed that much of that diversity was constructed (to use a modern term) by observing the world from different perspectives or using different standards of comparison. For any of his contemporaries interested in defining “the” good life, the descriptive and evaluative relativism of some of his fragments would have been deeply disturbing. For example, consider the following.

“The sea is the purest and most polluted water: to fishes drinkable and bringing safety, to humans undrinkable and destructive.”

“Pigs rejoice in mud more than pure water.”

“We would call oxen happy when they find bitter vetch to eat.”

“Physicians who cut and burn complain that they receive no worthy pay, although they do these things.”

“The road up and the road down are one and the same.”

“To God all things are beautiful and good and just, but humans have supposed some unjust and others just.” (McKirahan 1994, pp. 121–125)

Thus, safe drinking water is important to fishes and humans, but the same water is different for each species. It may be appropriate to think of rejoicing pigs and happy oxen, but different things produce these pleasant states in these different species. Pain and those who inflict it upon others are normally regarded as bad, but physicians inflict it upon their patients, believing it to be good and worthy of some valuable payment for services rendered. The gradient of a road may be advantageous or disadvantageous to a traveler depending on the direction of his or her travel, though the gradient is the same for all travelers. Most devastating of all, what appears just or unjust to humans is really uniformly just, beautiful and good to God. That is to say, everything in the world is really just, beautiful and good in some objective sense known only to God, although to humans (and presumably all other sentient species according to other fragments) some things appear to be unjust, ugly and bad.

Heraclitus’ views on souls and bodies were also extraordinary. He abandoned the traditional view of the soul as “composed of air and having the function of rendering the body it inhabits alive”. In its place, he imaged that “the soul is fire” which ends if and when it “becomes wet”. His view of corpses was boldly expressed in the fragment “Corpses are more fit to be thrown out than dung”. As explained by McKirahan (1994, p. 146), for this philosopher

...the dead body is useless...cast off by its departed soul, decomposing and undergoing elemental change, but no longer the changes accompanying life and caused by the soul. The provocative assertion [just cited]... which flouts Greek piety and respect for the human corpse, shows how far his doctrines departed from ordinary belief. The soul is more than a principle of life; it also (and this is new with Heraclitus) has cognitive functions...the soul understands; it interprets the reports of the senses rightly or wrongly.

In the presence of such complexity (or confusion), one might suppose that Heraclitus would have been unable and unwilling to provide any recommendations for living “the” good life. In fact, since vague and contradictory premises

have unlimited implications, confused philosophical foundations provide fertile soil for practically any desired crop. Thus, besides valuing personal safety, justice, happiness and beauty as suggested above, according to Heraclitus, “Right thinking [SOPHRONEIN] is the greatest excellence, and wisdom is to speak the truth and act in accordance with nature, while paying attention to it” (McKirahan 1994, p. 120). The “right thinking” or “wisdom” referred to is practical as well as theoretical. It is revealed in one’s assertions and actions, which are guided by careful observation of the natural world followed by behaviour that is appropriate to the conditions of that world as well as to one’s particular species. The good life is one lived in communities in which people willingly follow customs and obey conventional laws that are consistent with an ideal law sometimes referred to as “the divine law”. By linking behaviour that is appropriate to the conditions of the world and to one’s own nature with ideal law, Heraclitus was perhaps the first ancient philosopher to articulate the basic premise of ethical naturalism (Michalos 1981).

The good life is a life relatively free of drunkenness, anger and violence. According to Graham (2011, p. 22), “Heraclitus urges moderation and self-control in a somewhat conventional way...recommends the conventional Greek goal of seeking fame...[and thought that] to die in battle is a superior kind of death.” While there is a place for religion and religious rituals, there is no room for bathing oneself in blood or singing hymns “to the shameful parts (PHALLI)”. Finally, Heraclitus believed that “It is not better for humans to get all that they want” (McKirahan 1994, p. 128). At a minimum, this last fragment implies that the mere maximization of desire satisfaction is neither necessary nor sufficient for the good life. So, Heraclitus probably would have been unimpressed with Lewin et al.’s (1944) aspiration theory or Michalos’ (1985) multiple discrepancies theory. However, he clearly had the conceptual resources to distinguish a Fool’s Paradise or Hell from Real Paradise or Hell.

Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (c. 500–c. 428 BCE)

Although Anaxagoras was a teacher, consultant and/or a friend of the great orator and statesman Pericles (495–429 BCE), he seems to have had no interest in worldly affairs or speculations on the good life. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates expressed great disappointment in Anaxagoras’s naturalistic explanations that “made no use of intelligence, and did not assign any real causes for the ordering of things, but mentioned as causes air and ether and water and many other absurdities” (Plato 1914, p. 339). This complaint by Socrates is the first appearance of what we now regard as the debate between those who see education, science and knowledge generally speaking as a means to something else (e.g., a job, power, prestige, living a good life) and those who see education, science and knowledge as ends in themselves. Anaxagoras knew that his astronomical investigations would not allow

him to change the behaviour of heavenly bodies but he continued his research because he wanted to understand how things were made and how they worked. Socrates had no use for investigations and explanations that did not help people to live better lives. In fact, the two men's primary interests represented two fundamental features of human beings and the human condition. What, after all, better connects us to those who lived 2500 years ago than our common interests in understanding our world and improving our lives?

Among the fragments of Anaxagoras' works, the following is particularly revealing. "The Greeks are wrong to accept coming to be and perishing, for nothing comes to be, nor does it perish, but they are mixed together from things that are and they are separated apart" (McKirahan 1994, p. 199). That is, what appears to begin to exist or to pass into nonexistence is really only a reorganization or reconfiguration of some everlasting materials, e.g., he asks "how could hair come to be from not hair or flesh from not flesh?". Presumably, then, the constituent elements of the worst sort of life would be the same as those of the best sort of life, only reconfigured or reorganized somehow.

Another fragment seems to have articulated a common view in the fifth century BCE, i.e., "Appearances are a sight of the unseen" (McKirahan 1994, p. 200). According to Vlastos (1945, p. 590), "This is the general principle of scientific procedure among the historians and the medical men: What can not be known (or seen) directly must be judged from what can."

Empedocles of Acragas (c. 492–c. 432 BCE)

Empedocles was a gifted son of relatively wealthy aristocrats, who displayed enough sympathy for democracy to get himself exiled from his native home in Sicily. In McKirahan's (1994, p. 290) view,

Empedocles sparkles like a diamond among the Presocratics – many-faceted and appearing different from different directions. A poet and a politician, a physician and a philosopher, a scientist and a seer, a showman and a charlatan, he was a fallen divinity who proclaimed himself already a god, and a visionary who claimed to control nature.

With over 150 fragments relatively reliably attributed to him available to researchers, no other Presocratic philosopher provides more information about his work and more opportunities for diverse interpretations. He is supposed to have been the inventor of "the four-element theory of matter (earth, air, fire and water), one of the earliest theories of particle physics" (Campbell 2014, p. 1). As I show below in my discussion of Hippocrates, later medical practitioners imagined some connection between these elements and the 4-fold constituents of a healthy or sick person (hot, cold, wet and dry). While there are no fragments indicating that Empedocles himself made these connections, "Empedocles was famed as the founder of the Sicilian medical tradition, which rivaled Hippocrates' school at Cos, and was

called the empirical school because of its reliance on observation” (McKirahan 1994, p. 281). Coming from a man who claimed to have “all the drugs there are for evils and a safeguard against old age” as well as strategies for altering the winds and seasonal variations, one can only wonder what his empirical methods might have been. According to Campbell (2014, p. 6), the empiricist Empedocles also “seems to have been the first philosopher to give a detailed explanation of the mechanism by which we perceive things”, suggesting that things “give off effluences” which “enter certain sense-organs if they meet pores of the correct size and shape to admit them”. “With earth,” Empedocles wrote, “we perceive earth, with water water, with air divine fire, with fire destructive fire, with love love, and strife with baneful strife” (Campbell 2014, p. 6).

The extant fragments of Empedocles’ work apparently belong to one long poem in which his own DAIMON serves as narrator. Human bodies were supposed to be wrapped around DAIMONES as “an alien garb of flesh”. Such bodies were animated by DAIMONES, which function like souls but have an ontological status which is grander than souls. DAIMONES are not immortal, but they are relatively “long-lasting” compounds subject to the forces of Love and Strife. When Empedocles wrote “I have already once become a boy and a girl and a bush and a bird and a fish”, he was implying that his DAIMON carried the essence of his personal identity and was the ultimate unobservable recipient of any rewards and punishments due to him. Such soul-like essences might be reincarnated as

...prophets and bards and physicians and chiefs among men on earth,
and from there they arise as gods mightiest in honors.
Sharing the same hearth and table with other immortals
relieved of human distress, unwearied (McKirahan 1994, p. 253).

In broad strokes, readers of his poem are given a story of the narrator’s original residence in a kind of Paradise ruled by Aphrodite, the goddess of love [PHILIA], from which he is exiled as a result of breaking an oath, shedding blood and putting his trust in the god of strife [NEIKOS]. Subsequently he wanders across time in many different reincarnations, discovers the truth about the nature of the KOSMOS and its relation to individuals, and “is finally released from exile” and returns to enjoy “a blessed life”. At that point he is able to dine “with other immortals” and bring some kind of closure to the process of reincarnation in which one’s individuality would be blended with that of a supreme being conceived of as “only mind, holy and indescribable”.

As Parry (2012, p. 13) saw it, “Nature... is ruled by the very same principles that are the key to understanding the drama of ethical life, as Empedocles represents that. Understanding how nature works, one will want to side with Love and not Strife”. Similarly, McKirahan (1994, p. 256) asserted that Empedocles’ purpose “is not primarily to give an account of the KOSMOS,...but to exhort us to save our souls and to show us how”.

His poetic fragments described a universe whose basic material building blocks are the four everlasting elements, earth, air, fire and water, which are brought

together by Love to form compounds, and subsequently divided and subdivided by Strife to form other kinds of compounds. Just as a painter crafts a great variety of forms and colours from a relatively small set of coloured paints, he argued analogically, the forces of nature produced the universe, its plant and animal species and even thought, pleasure and pain from a small set of elements (McKirahan 1994, pp. 238–239, 251). Empedocles told an elaborate story of the origins of all species, including such memorable fragments as the following.

By her [Love] many neckless faces sprouted,
and arms were wandering naked, bereft of shoulders,
and eyes were roaming alone, in need of foreheads...
Many came into being with faces and chests on both sides,
man-faced ox-progeny, and some to the contrary rose up
as ox-headed things with the form of men... (McKirahan 1994, p. 246).

Regarding parts of our bodies, Empedocles claimed that

Blood was an almost perfect balance of the four elements, and from blood was formed flesh. Bone and sinews had different proportions, the latter being formed without any air whatsoever. The eye contained all four elements, but vision depended largely on fire and water alone. Digestion was, in part, a mechanical process: food was cut and ground by the teeth before passing to the stomach, where it then underwent a process of putrefaction, probably under the influence of the body's natural heat, before being sent to the liver, where it was turned into blood (Nutton 2013, p. 47).

'Love' and 'Strife' are names used to describe cosmic forces that are not only physical, but psychological and moral as well. Love is sometimes referred to as Friendship, Joy and Harmony. It is Love that makes the basic elements "yearn for one another" and the harmony produced by Love's activity is morally good. On the contrary, it is Strife and "evil Quarrels" that cause compounds to "split apart", producing war and other kinds of wretchedness.

Summarizing Empedocles' role in the history of research on well-being, Nutton (2013, p. 114) wrote,

In the sixth and early fifth centuries healers could act like Empedocles as roving shamans, and the boundaries between magic and medicine were almost non-existent. By 350 BC, however, barriers had arisen. Not that doctors rejected totally some therapies that others might consider magical, for chants, charms and so-called sympathetic or white magic all continued to be used...within medicine...practitioners who relied primarily on such procedures for their cures were now marginalized, or at least excluded from the new idea of medicine and the appellation IATROS [healer].

Important features of Empedocles' vision of a good life are clearly discernible in this sketch of his metaphysics, which is fully informed by his ethics. Love, friendship, harmony, peace, social and self-esteem, and joy are all positively valued, while strife, quarrels, murder, war and "human distress" are all negative. Other fragments add familiar themes. Following the Fall, the "wretched race of mortals" found themselves "quarreling" in a "joyless place, where Murder, Anger...

and squalid Diseases and Rottings...wander in darkness". "False oaths" are condemned, along with eating meat and beans (McKirahan 1994, pp. 252–254). Since humans and animals are supposed to be the reincarnations of DAIMONES, a person would be engaged in some kind of cannibalism by consuming any kind of flesh.

Protagoras of Abdera (c. 490–c. 420 BCE)

Because of his prominence in Plato's dialogue of the same name, Protagoras is perhaps the best known of the so-called Older Sophists. Others included Prodicus (fifth century BCE, also featured in the *Protagoras*), Gorgias (483–375 BCE) and Hippias (fifth century BCE). Like Anaxagoras, Protagoras was on friendly terms with Pericles. Although Protagoras had an aristocratic background, he made a living as an itinerant teacher of relatively advanced studies of rhetoric. Of the few fragments reliably attributed to him, the most famous is "A human being is the measure of all things—of things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not" (McKirahan 1994, p. 379). While we have seen elements of skeptical relativism in fragments attributed to philosophers before Protagoras (e.g., in Heraclitus), this fragment is a particularly bold statement of the relativity of all assertions, including those concerning what is just or unjust, beautiful or ugly, and even true or false. Writing in the third century CE, Diogenes Laertius added that "Protagoras was the first to declare that there are two mutually opposed arguments on any subject" (McKirahan 1994, p. 374). As if all this was not troublesome enough, in another bold fragment Protagoras professed a reasoned agnosticism.

Concerning the gods I am unable to know either that they are or that they are not, or what their appearance is like. For many are the things that hinder knowledge: the obscurity of the matter and the shortness of human life (McKirahan 1994, p. 364).

The clear implications of such principles, then, are that the best life and the best sort of person to be are entirely dependent on individual judgments and preferences, and Protagoras certainly had his own. According to Plato (1924), Protagoras said that he could make people better in the sense of more excellent in managing their personal as well as public affairs. Perhaps more importantly for his commercial interests, Aristotle (1999) reported that Protagoras claimed the ability to make "the worse case the better" and to teach others how to accomplish the same feat. If he could deliver the product as advertised, his teaching would have been worth plenty to anyone with aspirations for a career in commerce, law or politics. Apparently enough people believed that he could deliver the product to make him famous, wealthy and politically influential. It is unlikely that he would have preferred these features of the aristocratic good life without the universally

attractive qualities of good health, loving friends and family. There is no evidence that he had any concerns about his soul or that anything short of Real Paradise would have satisfied him. According to Poster (2006, p. 5)

Protagoras himself was a fairly traditional and upright moralist. He may have viewed his form of relativism as essentially democratic – allowing people to revise unjust or obsolete laws, defend themselves in court, free themselves from false certainties – but he may equally well have considered rhetoric a way in which the elite could counter the tendencies towards mass rule in the assemblies. Our evidence on this matter is unfortunately minimal.

Antiphon of Rhamnous (c. 480–411 BCE)

Although there are several Antiphons cited by various authors in antiquity, Antiphon of Rhamnous seems to have been a relatively wealthy orator, statesman, philosopher, teacher of rhetoric and professional speech-writer. For present purposes, it is important to note that McKirahan (1994, p. 396) described him as “possibly the earliest advocate of hedonism in Greek philosophy”, i.e., the first recorded philosopher to regard the pursuit of pleasure or a pleasurable life as the final end (TELOS) or good life for humans. The remaining fragments of his work show that he carefully distinguished natural (PHYSIS) from conventional (NOMOS) phenomena, regarding the former as necessary and universal, and the latter as unnecessary and variable. Granting that it could be advantageous for people to live in accordance with conventional laws and customs, like Heraclitus, he argued that nature provided a more reliable guide to human well-being. The following passages capture the core of his position.

Living and dying are matters of PHYSIS, and living results for them from what is advantageous, dying from what is not advantageous. But the advantages which are established by the NOMOI are bonds on PHYSIS, and those established by PHYSIS are free.

And so, things that cause distress, at least when thought of correctly, do not help PHYSIS more than things that give joy. Therefore, it will not be painful things rather than pleasant things which are advantageous. For things that are truly advantageous must not cause harm but benefit. Now the things that are advantageous by PHYSIS are among these.

<But according to NOMOS, those are correct> who defend themselves after suffering and are not first to do wrong, and those who do good to parents who are bad to them, and who permit others to accuse them on oath but do not themselves accuse on oath. You will find most of these cases hostile to PHYSIS. They permit people to suffer more pain when less is possible and to have less pleasure when more is possible, and to receive injury when it is not necessary (McKirahan 1994, p. 394).

A clearer foundation for attaining a good life without tears could not be constructed. Provided that things are “thought of correctly”, what is pleasant is naturally, universally life-enhancing and what is painful is life-destroying. More

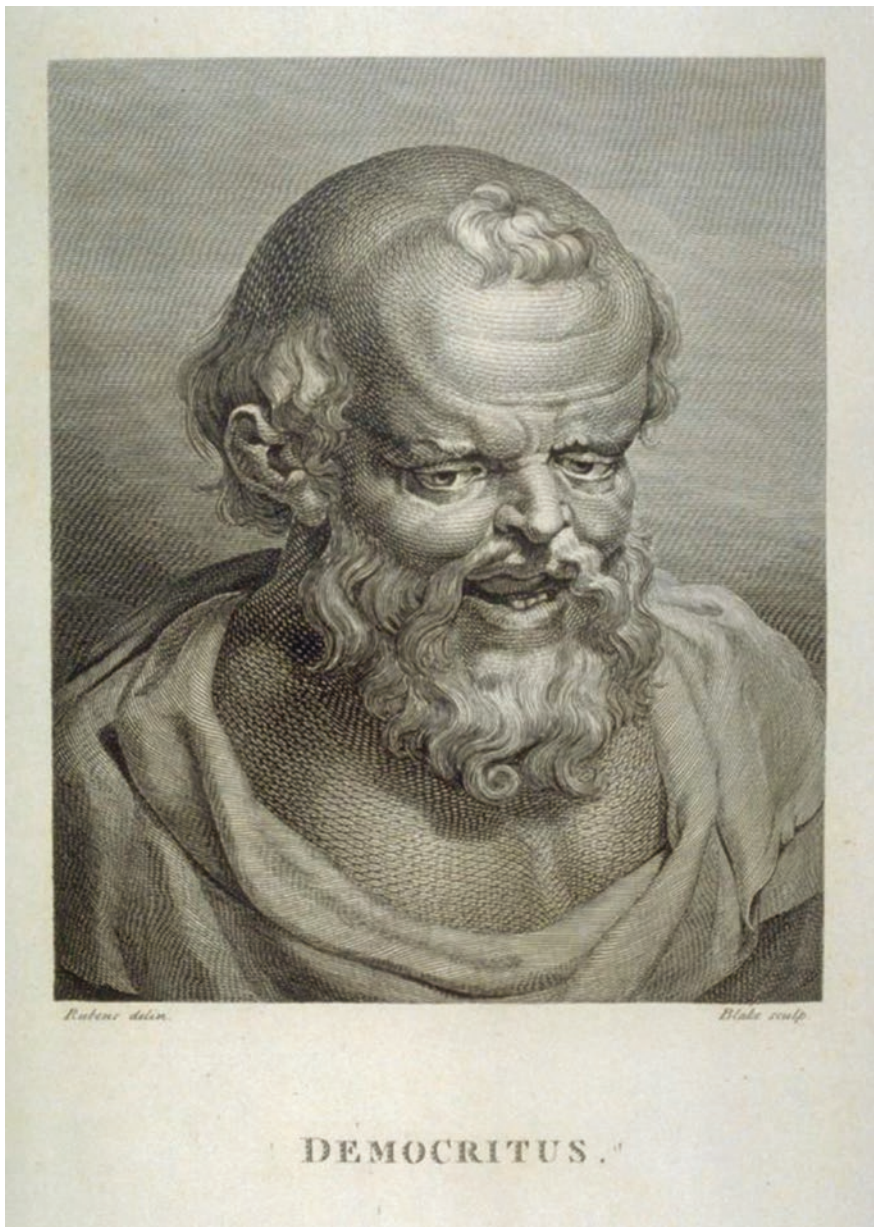
precisely, provided that one thinks “correctly”, one’s experiences of pleasure and pain ought to be regarded as nature’s reliable guides to appropriate human action. So, the best sort of person will make careful and accurate observations of nature, think “correctly” about what causes “distress” and “joy”, successfully apprehend nature’s guides to a long and pleasant life, and scrupulously follow those guides. Consequently, such a person will enjoy the best sort of life. In other words, the best sort of person will be able to distinguish a Fool’s Paradise from Real Paradise, and live happily ever after in the latter.

Unfortunately, the good life achievable by Antiphon’s prescriptions is not necessarily morally good or just. Another part of the same fragment quoted above clarifies his view of justice and its relation to a good life.

...Justice is a matter of not transgressing what the NOMOI prescribe in whatever city you are a citizen of. A person would make most advantage of justice for himself if he treated the NOMOI as important in the presence of witnesses, and treated the decrees of PHYSIS as important when alone and with no witnesses present. For the decrees of NOMOI are extra additions, those of the PHYSIS are necessary; those of the NOMOI are the products of agreement, not of natural growth, whereas those of PHYSIS are the products of natural growth, not of agreement (McKirahan 1994, pp. 393–394).

Since a transgressor of conventional laws may avoid “both disgrace and penalty” if there are no witnesses to the acts, while a transgressor of natural laws (so far as that might be possible) would suffer the consequences even if there are no witnesses, the former is a less serious matter than the latter. Therefore, in the pursuit of the good life, Antiphon advises each person to follow nature’s directives favouring personal pleasure over pain. While this view is a kind of naturalistic ethics, it is also one that regards one’s well-being expressed in one’s own pleasures and pains as of paramount concern. It is an egoistic ethics without any significant concern for others.

***Democritus of Abdera* (c. 460–c. 370 BCE)**



Source: Wikimedia

According to Vlastos (1946, p. 62), “Democritean ethics...[was]...the first rigorously naturalistic ethics in Greek thought”. The truth of the claim crucially depends on one’s understanding of “rigorously naturalistic”. We have seen that others had envisioned kinds of naturalistic ethics. If a system of “naturalistic ethics” is understood as one in which all ethical terms or moral values are definable in non-ethical terms or non-moral values, it is unlikely that any fifth century BCE philosopher would have had the philosophic or scientific conceptual resources required to produce such a system. However, it is fair to say that if anyone could have produced such a system, Democritus would have done it and that the system he did produce was a brilliant attempt to provide a scientific foundation for claims about the best sort of life to live and the best sort of person to be.

The ultimate material building blocks of Democritus’ universe were atoms, which were too small to be observed by human senses but were theoretically imagined to be unlimited in number, shape and size, and to be constantly in motion in an unlimited void. The shapes were imagined to be rough or smooth, concave or convex, hooked or otherwise irregularly constructed. As they moved, they would collide and parts of some would fit nicely together with others, while still others simply became randomly and unstably entangled. Besides this random churning and clustering of the atoms, a primitive gravitational principle was supposed to operate such that atoms were attracted to others that were in some way like themselves. The result of all this unobservable atomic activity in the limitless void was the formation of relatively well-formed, perceptible compounds, i.e., the world as observed by human senses, including all living things.

Human beings were thought to be unique clusters of compounds consisting of body and soul atoms which were equally material, although soul atoms were uniformly spherical, allegedly like those constituting fire. The shape and smoothness of the atoms clustered together to form soul-compounds were supposed to account for the latter’s capacity to initiate change and movement in itself and its body-compound. While the two compounds were supposed to be thoroughly integrated, the body was occasionally described as the “instrument” or “tent” of the soul, and the soul was clearly regarded as “the responsible agent”. Since souls and bodies were essentially thoroughly integrated compounds, the death of a human being implied the dispersion of the atoms constituting those compounds. Therefore, there were no immortal souls in Democritus’ universe. There were, however, “*daemons*” (i.e., DAIMONES), as indicated in the fragment “The soul is the dwelling-place of the *daemon*”, which Vlastos (1945, p. 582) interpreted as “in the soul you will find the only *daemon* there is to find”. Since such beings were not supposed to be immortal, their existence could have been granted by an atomist, provided that the supremacy of natural laws and/or mechanisms were unchallenged.

Human sensation of all kinds was reduced to the sense of touch insofar as seeing, hearing and so on were supposed to be the result of the atoms of observed objects impacting those of sensory organ-compounds, which in turn impacted the atoms of soul-compounds. Important as sense perception was to one’s knowledge of the world, it was notoriously unreliable. A fragment attributed to Democritus by Sextus Empiricus asserted that “We in fact understand nothing exactly [or exact],

but what changes according to the disposition both of the body and of the things that enter it and offer resistance to it” (McKirahan 1994, p. 334). Two fragments provided by McKirahan (1994, p. 335) reveal that our hard-headed empiricist, materialist atomist had a significantly rationalist commitment to his theoretical speculations.

There are two kinds of judgment, one legitimate and the other bastard. All the following belong to the bastard: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. The other is legitimate and is separated from this. When the bastard one is unable to see or hear or smell or taste or grasp by touch any further in the direction of smallness, but <we need to go still further> toward what is fine, <then the legitimate one enables us to carry on> ...By convention [or, custom], sweet; by convention, bitter; by convention, hot; by convention, cold; by convention, color; but in reality, atoms and void.

By implication and direct assertion Democritus’ metaphysics and epistemology provide a plausible foundation for his views of the good life and the best sort of person to be. It was generally assumed by the medical scientists of his time that mental functioning was partly a function of bodily functioning, and that both were influenced by external physical and social conditions as well as by individuals’ internal conditions. For example, it was believed that excessively hot and cold winds, or “violent organic motion is injurious to health in general and mental health in particular” (Vlastos 1945, p. 583). According to Democritus’ theory, good health was a function of a kind of “dynamic equilibrium” or harmonious balance among the internal atoms of an individual and the external atoms of his or her environment. Excessively hot winds disorganized the routine movement of bodily atoms. Cooler winds and physical rest contributed to “a tight, stable condition of the bodily atoms”, while excessively cold winds produced a kind of atomic paralysis. “A soul unbalanced by too much heat or too much cold would go out of its mind” (Vlastos 1945, p. 585). In short, all observable mental and physical disorders could be explained by unobservable disordered and discordant atomic activity, while observable human well-being could be explained by unobservable orderly and harmonious atomic activity. These views were consistent with Anaxagoras’ fragment claiming that appearances provide a clue to the nature of reality and, of course, with the Pythagorean view of the importance of harmony within unobservable souls.

Clearly, a good life implied by these principles would be a life free of excesses, guided by intelligent self-control, which were aspects of a good life later warmly endorsed by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Zeno and Chrysippus. A fragment attributed to Democritus by Diogenes Laertius asserted that “The goal of life is cheerfulness [EUTHYMIAN], which is not the same as pleasure...but the state in which the soul continues calmly and stably, disturbed by no fear or superstition or any other emotion. He also calls it well-being [EUESTO] and many other names” (McKirahan 1994, p. 339). About EUESTO Vlastos (1945, pp. 582–583) wrote, “In literary usage this means broadly ‘prosperity’. But to an atomist ESTO (Doric for ‘being’) can mean only one thing: atoms and the void...He could only adopt [EUESTO] as a general cognate of ‘cheerfulness’ only if it meant the soul’s ‘well-being’ in an ontological, i.e., physical, sense.”

Another fragment asserted that

Cheerfulness arises in people through moderation of enjoyment and due proportion in life. Deficiencies and excesses tend to change suddenly and give rise to large movements in the soul. Souls which undergo motions involving large intervals are neither steady nor cheerful (McKirahan 1994, p. 338).

Some commentators have interpreted Democritus' notion of "cheerfulness" as "tranquility", "unperturbedness", "calm" or "undismay", but Vlastos (1945, p. 583) thought that the state of the soul intended to be captured by "cheerfulness" was not "a passive state but...a dynamic quality, able to withstand external shock without losing its inner balance". He also claimed that fifth century BCE writers commonly assumed that pleasure was necessary for a good life. More precisely, Democritus seems to have provided a relatively more rigorous scientific account of at least some of the common sense of his time. In Vlastos' words, the philosopher found

...a hygienic view of pleasure ready to hand. He does not have to enunciate either the doctrine that pleasure is the normal concomitant of well-being and pain of the reverse [e.g., as Antiphon of Rhamnous]; nor of the corollary that, therefore, the quest for pleasure should be assimilated to the discipline of the 'measure'. This latter was also implicit in the theory and practice of contemporary medicine. 'To live for pleasure' is the medical term for the haphazard, unregulated life, the negation of medical regimen. The doctor would have to advise – in the very words of Democritus... 'accept no pleasure, unless it agrees with you'. The word [SUMPHEREIN] used here is the key concept of Hippocratic regimen: it denotes what is in harmony with nature and is thus essential in preserving and restoring health. It is interesting to see that...nearly all the normative terms of Democritean ethics – METRON [measure, prime of life], METRION [moderate, fair, temperate], HARMONIA [harmonious],...KAIROS [due measure, success], TO KALON [beautiful, virtuous, happy], TO DIKAION [right, proper, fit] – are also used by the medical writers to express the conduciveness of any process or act (whether of the body itself, or of its natural environment, or of the physician) to the state of health (Vlastos 1945, p. 587).

As explained in Michalos (2004), there is significant and sometimes troublesome overlap in the World Health Organization's robust definition of health as "complete physical, mental and social well-being" and the idea of a good quality of life or a good life, all things considered. The confounded notion of health-related quality of life and the research tradition based on that notion suffer severely from the overlaps. If health is understood in a very robust sense, then 'health-related quality of life' means 'quality of life-related quality of life' or 'health-related health'. It is at once extremely interesting and distressing to discover the age of this particular set of problems.

Using the vocabulary introduced at the beginning of this essay, it is particularly interesting to see that Democritus and his contemporaries had the necessary conceptual tools to distinguish Real Paradise from a Fool's Paradise. In the former, cheerfulness included pleasures and these were the products of atomic activity that was sustainably harmonious, while in the latter, experienced pleasures fell short of

cheerfulness and were the products of atomic activity that was not sustainably harmonious. The Real Paradise that one aimed for had equally important observable and unobservable aspects.

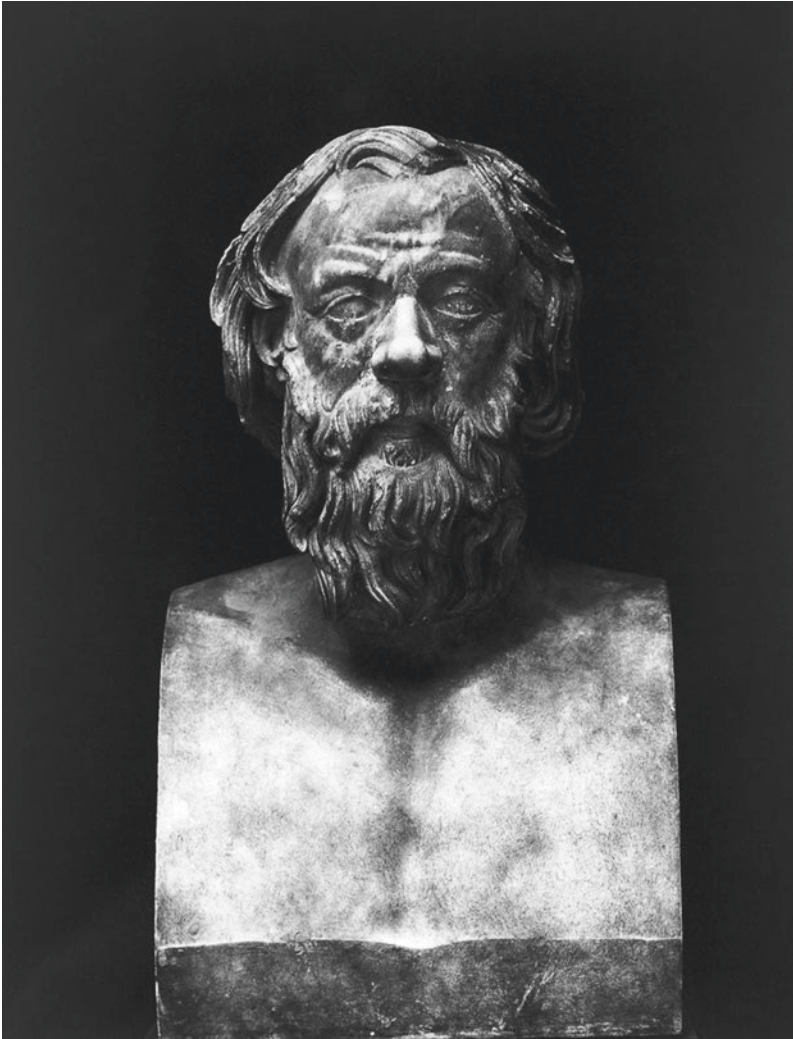
Democritus said that “Teaching re-forms a man, and by re-forming, makes his nature”, and Vlastos (1946, p. 55) commented that “the concept of nature as itself the product of teaching and custom is not unique in Democritus. It is the common property of the age”. Contrary to the view of Theognis, this common notion implied that individuals were partly responsible for their own lives, and that with proper training and individual initiative one could increase one’s self-sufficiency and decrease one’s vulnerability to chance mishaps. Democritus recommended “hard work” partly in the interests of obtaining these latter two goods, but also to obtain the pleasure of achievement. He was opposed to drunkenness, anger and all kinds of self-indulgence. One of his fragments says that “One must not respect others any more than oneself, and [contrary to Antiphon again] not do evil if no one will know about it any more than if all men will. But respect yourself most of all, and let this be established as a law for your soul, so that you will do nothing unseemly” (Kahn 1998, p. 36). Dedicated scientist and philosopher that he was, he also valued wisdom of the most practical sort. “‘Wisdom’ is the understanding of what is possible within the limits of what is necessary. It is, therefore, in the first place a shrewd, sharp-eyed knowledge of affairs which can ‘direct most things in life’” (Vlastos 1946, p. 61).

Finally, it must be recorded that Democritus was the first philosopher to recommend neglecting upward comparisons and focusing on downward comparisons as part of a strategy for attaining happiness. In a fragment quoted by Kahn (1998, pp. 34–35), he said,

...one should keep one’s mind on what is possible and be satisfied with what is present and available, taking little heed of people who are envied and admired and not fixing one’s attention upon them, but observe the lives of those who suffer and notice what they endure, so that what you presently have will appear great and enviable and you will no longer suffer evil in your soul by desiring more than you have...[One should] compare one’s life to those who are less fortunate and count oneself happy by considering what they suffer and how much better your own life is. If you hold fast to this frame of mind, you will live more cheerfully and drive not a few plagues from your life: envy and jealousy and ill-will.

Insofar as he believed that this strategy was based in some aspect of human nature, Democritus’ view should also be regarded as an ancient root of downward comparison theory as elucidated, for example, in Wills (1981). Since this theory is a species of the more generic social comparison theory (Merton and Kitt 1950), Democritus may be considered a pioneer of the latter as well.

Hippocrates of Cos (c. 450–c. 380 BCE)



Source: Wikimedia

Although a great deal has been written about him, very little is known about this most famous physician from the island of Cos in the southern part of Ionia. In the *Protagoras*, Plato referred to him as an Asclepiad, meaning “from the family of Asclepius” (Hippocrates 1923, p. xlv). That would have made him a descendant of Asclepius, the god of healing. His father was Heraclides, also a physician. In the *Politics*, Aristotle referred to Hippocrates indirectly as a great healer

(IATROS) (Aristotle 1998, p. 198). Apparently, then, there is no doubt about the existence of the man Jones regarded as “an outstanding genius” (Hippocrates 1923, p. xxx).

According to Nutton (2013, pp. 145–146), in the Hellenic period from roughly 330 to 30 BCE, “The idealization of Hippocrates as a medical authority...gave rise to, and was in turn influenced by, biographical invention. The letters and speeches within our Hippocratic Corpus, all of them spurious, describing or purporting to derive from incidents in his life, date from this period. They emphasize Hippocrates’ wisdom...schrewdness...and, above all, his patriotism”. As well, he was known as “a wonderfully versatile doctor, capable of treating both a monarch’s lovesickness and the great plague of Athens (which Thucydides had deemed incurable)” (Nutton 2013, p. 54). “To the Greeks of mediaeval Byzantium,” she wrote, “Hippocrates and Galen (130–200 CE) had become almost divine, worthy of being commemorated in fresco alongside patriarchs and prophets as heralds of Christian truth” (Nutton 2013, p. 5).

There are about 60 books in the Hippocratic Corpus, most of which seem to have been written in the period from 420 to 350 BCE, all in the Ionic dialect. At the extremes, there might be from 100 to 300 years separating the earliest and latest work, and the content ranges from “the hopeless obscurity” of the *Humours* to “the physicians’ Bible”, the *Aphorisms* (Hippocrates 1931, pp. xxviii and xxxiii). “Establishing which, if any, of the surviving Greek texts was actually the work of Hippocrates himself is,” according to Nutton (2013, p. 61), “...a difficult, if not an impossible, task, and scholars continue to disagree, as they have done since Antiquity”. She thought that “only a fraction of them” could be the work of Hippocrates.

Jones believed that the Hippocratic Corpus is largely “the remains of...the library of the Hippocratic school at Cos” (Hippocrates 1923, p. xxix), and Nutton (2013, p. 61) claimed that the collection probably was first assembled at the library of the Ptolemies in Alexandria, Egypt. It contains textbooks for physicians and laymen, research materials, lectures and essays for medical students, essays by philosophers, physicians and laymen, and assorted notes and note-books. “It is as though loose sheets had been brought together without any attempt at co-ordination or redaction” (Hippocrates 1923, p. xxii). According to Nutton (2013, p. 62), “No generalization can cover all the texts, and no summary can do more than hint at the multiplicity of (often conflicting) theories they contain”. Regardless of all its difficulties, “the Hippocratic Corpus came to be seen as a standard against which other types of healing might be measured, and then approved or rejected. In that sense, its eponymous hero Hippocrates can indeed be called the Father of Medicine” (Nutton 2013, p. 71).

Granting the textual difficulties, it is still possible to construct some of the central features of views about human health or well-being expressed in the Hippocratic Corpus (hereafter Corpus). There are interesting connections between the views of medically oriented writers of the Corpus and philosophers. While some philosophers and some writers of the Corpus thought that it was the business of physicians to look after the well-being of people’s bodies and of philosophers

to look after the well-being of people's souls, in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE both philosophers and physicians contributed to each others' views and both benefited from the exchange. Indeed, the mutual benefits obtained from the cross-fertilization of concerns and views at that time are as available to contemporary researchers as they were then.

According to the medically-oriented author of *Regimen in Health*, "...health is the greatest of human blessings" (Hippocrates 1931, p. 59). The author of *Regimen I* provided a perfect place to begin exploring the well-being and ill-being of human beings and all other living things from the view of several authors of the Corpus. In his words,

I maintain that he who aspires to treat correctly of human regimen must first acquire knowledge and discernment of the nature [PHYSIS] of man in general – knowledge of its primary constituents and discernment of the components by which it is controlled. For if he be ignorant of the primary constitution, he will be unable to gain knowledge of their effects: if he be ignorant of the controlling thing in the body he will not be capable of administering to a patient suitable treatment. These things therefore the author must know, and further the power possessed severally by all the foods and drinks of our regimen, both the power each of them possessed by nature and the power given them by the constraint of human art (Hippocrates 1931, p. 227).

A paragraph like this one can be found in Michalos et al. (2011b), who wrote the paragraph long before reading any Hippocratic treatise; a fine example of the sort of thing one might have learned from reading the ancients. Measurement of the quality of life or well-being of a person or society must begin with identifying its constituents, relationships and determinants (Michalos 2011). Until these are sorted out, it is impossible to make any reasonable unequal importance-weighting scheme of constituents and impossible to design a comprehensive measure of sustainable development (Hagerty and Land 2007).

The author of another book of the Corpus, *Ancient Medicine*, disagreed with the author of *Regimen I*. In his view,

All who, on attempting to speak or to write on medicine, have assumed for themselves a postulate as a basis for their discussion – heat, cold, moisture, dryness, or anything else that they may fancy – who narrow down the causal principle of diseases and of death among men, and make it the same in all cases, postulating one thing or two, all these obviously blunder in many points even of their statements, but they blunder most open to censure because they blunder in what is an art, and one which all men use on the most important occasions, and give the greatest honours to the good craftsmen and practitioners in it. Some practitioners are poor, others are very excellent; this would not be the case if an art of medicine did not exist at all, and had not been the subject of any research and discovery... (Hippocrates 1923, p. 13)

The sorts of postulates this author had in mind would have been similar to those familiar to us now from Euclidean geometry or more generally, from any axiomatic system. In such systems one begins with a set of rules for forming and transforming well-formed formulae, basic definitions and axioms, and applies these to derive lemmas and theorems. The systems thus created are apriori analytic and in themselves convey no information about the empirically observable world beyond the system. For the author of *Ancient Medicine*, such systems were useless for medical practice.

With some over-simplification, one might say that the first quotation represented the views of philosophers and the second represented the views of physicians. In the fifth and fourth centuries BCE there was no neat distinction between the disciplines of medicine and philosophy. More importantly, all of the authors of the Corpus assumed that all natural phenomena were subject to rational investigation leading to compelling causal explanations and even relatively universal generalizations. There was no sharp rejection of religion, but there was a determination to better understand and control their own lives using naturalistic means.

Some of the philosophic speculations of Anaxagoras, Anaximander, Heraclitus and Empedocles were adopted by authors of the Corpus who agreed with the quotation above from *Regimen I*. For these investigators, it was important to find the basic building blocks of the world and then to construct theoretic accounts of observable phenomena linked to those frequently unobservable foundations. The links were usually imaginary, but for these people, the attempt to obtain a holistic account of the world around them was real.

There was no agreement on how many essential elementary building blocks the world required. Options ran from Thales's single watery substance to Democritus's infinite number of atoms and the void. Several authors of the Corpus drew on the work of Empedocles, especially his idea that the basic building blocks of the world were the four elements, earth, air, fire and water. These "cosmic elements" were supposed to be connected to the four "opposites" of Anaximander, fire to hot, air to cold, water to moist and earth to dry. The "opposites" are not elemental substances, but only revealed "powers" or "properties" of substances (Hippocrates 1923, p. xlvi). As well, and equally unclear how, the four elements were supposed to be connected to four fluids called 'humours', fire to yellow bile, air to blood, water to phlegm and earth to black bile. According to Nutton (2013, p. 348 footnote 85), "At what point the notion of humours became joined to that of elements, and they became seen as the four major constituents of the body, is not clear". The position of the author of *The Nature of Man* is clear. He wrote,

The body of man has in itself blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile; these make up the nature of his body, and through these he feels pain or enjoys health. Now he enjoys the most perfect health when these elements are duly proportioned to one another in respect of compounding, power and bulk, and when they are perfectly mingled. Pain is felt when one of these elements is in defect or excess, or is isolated in the body without being compounded with all the others. For when an element is isolated and stands by itself, not only must the place which it left become diseased, but the place where it stands in a flood must, because of the excess, cause pain and distress (Hippocrates 1931, pp. 11–13).

In short, in contemporary terms, one could say that the body of a human being was imagined to be like a cake whose appearance, texture, taste and nutritional value depended upon each ingredient being of the right amount and proportionate to all other ingredients, blending together into the whole cake in accordance with nature's design. The default position of a human was a disease-free, healthy human being, "the greatest human blessing". Emphasizing again the themes of harmony and balance, departures from health were the result of departures from our natural formation and functions. It is a wonderfully optimistic view of the

natural state of things, a state offering a quality of life that would be absolutely at odds with the “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” one imagined by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679 CE).

Jones claimed that “The four humours are not the four elements of Empedocles, but they are analogous and perform analogous functions. It is their KRASIS [mixing or blending] that produces a healthy body, and...they are elemental and in themselves unchangeable” (Hippocrates 1931, p. xxviii). In the *Timaeus*, Plato claimed that “marrow and bone and flesh and sinew are compacted from the elements, [earth, air, fire and water] and blood also is formed from the same constituents, although in a different way...” (Plato 1929, p. 221).

Having identified the basic elements of human beings (i.e., from earth, air, fire and water to the four humours), some of the Hippocratic writers proceeded to define health and illness, well-being and ill-being from these constituents. Sometimes these constituents were combined with environmental ideas about the impacts of geography, seasons, diets, exercise and the structure of human bodies, and sometimes not. Often, no humours were invoked. According to Nutton (2013, p. 85), although the “theory of four humours...dominated the history of Greek medicine” and “*The Nature of Man* has come to stand not just for Hippocrates and the Hippocratic Corpus in general, but for all Greek medicine at whatever period,...this [theory] was very much a minority view, even within the Corpus”. Medical interventions or treatments for diverse ailments depended partly upon physicians’ theoretical assumptions and their observational acuity combined with anecdotal knowledge of similar cases. Just as there is now no single method or procedure applicable to all scientific investigation (although as late as the twentieth century philosophers talked about “*the scientific method*”) or to all medical practice, there was none in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.

If human beings are naturally healthy, then the job of a physician must be to help patients return to their natural state. The author of *Precepts* reminded his readers that sick people sometimes “give up the struggle” for health and even life itself. In such cases,

...he who has taken the sick man in hand, if he display the discoveries of the art [medical care], preserving nature, not trying to alter it, will sweep away the present depression... For the healthy condition of a human being is a nature that has naturally attained a movement, not alien but perfectly adapted, having produced it by means of breath, warmth and coction of humours, in every way, by complete regimen and by everything combined, unless there be some congenital or early deficiency. Should there be such a thing in a patient who is wasting, try to assimilate to the fundamental nature. For the wasting, even of long standing, is unnatural (Hippocrates 1923, pp. 325–327).

The “fundamental nature” of a patient was assumed to be not some ideal state but the normal or usual state of a patient (Nutton 2013, p. 92). According to the author of *Airs Waters Places*, different individuals have different “constitutions” which present different advantages and disadvantages. Scythian men, for example, who were famously expert horsemen,

...have no great desire for intercourse because of the moistness of their constitution and the softness and chill of their abdomen, which are the greatest checks on venery. Moreover, the constant jolting on their horses unfits them for intercourse (Hippocrates 1923, p. 125).

Similarly, the author of *Ancient Medicine* offered the example that

...cheese does not harm all men alike; some can eat their fill of it without the slightest hurt, nay, those it agrees with are wonderfully strengthened thereby. Others come off badly. So the constitutions of these men differ, and the difference lies in the constituent of the body which is hostile to cheese, and is roused and stirred to action under its influence. Those in whom a humour of such a kind is present in greater quantity, and with greater control over the body, naturally suffer more severely (Hippocrates 1923, p. 55).

Food was very high on ancient physicians' list of things affecting the preservation of good health and well-being. Indeed, Jones claimed that *Regimen, Ancient Medicine, Regimen in Acute Diseases* and *Regimen in Health* were all "...written under the conviction that medicine is merely a branch of dietetics" (Hippocrates 1931, p. xlvi). The author of *Ancient Medicine* imagined that many of "the ancients" must have suffered and died "when they partook of crude foods" and "For this reason the ancients too seem to me to have sought for nourishment that harmonized with their constitution, and to have discovered that which we use now" (Hippocrates 1923, p. 19). Later this same author remarked that because of the "complexity" of diversity of foods, human constitutions and ailments, it was impossible to find successful treatments without "some measure". As some contemporary proponents of subjective well-being indicators might have written today, "...no measure, neither number nor weight, by reference to which knowledge can be made exact, can be found except bodily feeling" (Hippocrates 1923, p. 27). The author of *Nutriments* wrote that "Nourishment is sometimes into growth and being, sometimes into being only, as is the case with old men; sometimes in addition it is into strength. The condition of the athlete is not natural. A healthy state is superior in all" (Hippocrates 1923, p. 355).

The idea that the condition of an athlete is unhealthy, was picked up by several ancient writers. The author of *Aphorisms* claimed that

In athletes a perfect condition that is at its highest pitch is treacherous. Such conditions cannot remain the same or be at rest, and, change for the better being impossible, the only possible change is for the worse. For this reason it is an advantage to reduce the fine condition quickly, in order that the body may make a fresh beginning of growth (Hippocrates 1931, pp. 99–101).

In *Rhetoric* Aristotle asserted that

Bodily excellence is health, and of such a kind that when exercising the body we are free from sickness; for many are healthy in the way Herodicus is said to have been, whom no one would consider happy [EUDAIMONIA] in the matter of health, because they are obliged to abstain from all or nearly all human enjoyments (Aristotle 1926, pp. 53–55).

Herodicus (fifth century BCE), the "father of sports medicine", was a physician who put his patients to such extreme exercises that their well-being was adversely affected. On the whole, ancient physicians regarded appropriate exercise as health-enhancing. For example, the author of *Regimen I* wrote that "...eating alone will not keep a man well; he must also take exercise. For food and exercise, while possessing opposite qualities, yet work together to produce health. For it is the nature of exercise to use up material, but of food and drink to make good deficiencies (Hippocrates 1931, p. 229).

Besides individual constitutions, humour balances, appropriate diets and exercise, authors of the *Corpus* believed that geography, seasonal climates, heavenly bodies and government had an impact on human well-being. The author of *Airs Waters Places* encouraged physicians to become familiar with astronomy “For with the seasons men’s diseases, like their digestive organs, suffer change” (Hippocrates 1923, p. 73). In the last three sentences of this book he wrote that “The things... that grow in the earth all assimilate themselves to the earth. Such are the most sharply contrasted natures and physiqués. Take these observations as a standard when drawing all other conclusions, and you will make no mistake” (Hippocrates 1923, p. 137). His accounts of the relationships between well-being and geography, seasonal climates, heavenly bodies and government are elaborated in that treatise in considerable detail, with considerable imagination, beginning with the growth of seeds. Here is a sample.

I hold that Asia [now Asia Minor] differs very widely from Europe in the nature of its inhabitants and of all its vegetation. For everything in Asia grows to far greater beauty and size; the one region is less wild than the other, the character of the inhabitants is milder and more gentle. The cause of this is the temperate climate...the seed comes from all parts of the body, healthy seed from healthy parts, diseased seed from diseased parts... generation too varies in the coagulation of the seed, and is not the same for the same seed in summer as in winter nor in rain as in drought... For there arise more corruptions in the coagulation of the seed when the changes of the seasons are frequent than when they are similar or alike. The same reasoning applies also to character. In such a climate arise wildness, unsociability and spirit...For this reason...Europeans are also more courageous than Asiatics. For uniformity engenders slackness, while variation fosters endurance in both body and soul...Wherefore Europeans are more warlike, and also because of their institutions, not being under kings as are Asiatics. For...where there are kings, there must be the greatest cowards. For men’s souls are enslaved, and refuse to run risks readily and recklessly to increase the power of somebody else...So institutions contribute a great deal to the formation of courageousness (Hippocrates 1923, pp. 105–133).

The author of *Aphorisms III* believed that “...in the spring and early summer children and young people enjoy the greatest well-being and good health; in summer and part of autumn, the aged; for the remainder of autumn and in winter, the middle-aged” (Hippocrates 1931, p. 129). The author of *Humours* noticed that just as one can “infer diseases from the seasons, so occasionally it is possible from diseases to forecast rains, winds and droughts...pains at the joints are irritating when rain threatens...” (Hippocrates 1931, p. 91). Following this line of thinking, the author of *The Nature of Man* asserted that “The physician...must treat diseases with the conviction that each of them is powerful in the body according to the season which is most conformable to it” (Hippocrates 1931, p. 25). Social indicators researchers may recall here the seasonal and weather effects on life satisfaction and happiness reported in Andrews and Withey (1976).

Finally, some remarks on the relationships of dreams to well-being should be made. According to the author of *Regimen IV*, there is something to be said for dreams in relation to divine messages, but a medical treatise is not the place for saying it. His focus was on the information dreams provide concerning health and disease. His basic theme is that dreams containing things that would be regarded

as normal if they occurred in ordinary life are signs of well-being, while those containing things that would be regarded as aberrations if they occurred in ordinary life are signs of disease. For examples,

To see the sun, moon, heavens and stars clear and bright, each in the proper order, is good, as it indicates physical health...But if there be contrast between the dream and reality, it indicates a physical illness, a violent contrast a violent illness, a slighter contrast a lighter illness...To see and hear clearly the things on the earth...to see...trees that are luxuriant, covered with fruit and cultivated, rivers flowing naturally...All these indicate health for the dreamer, and that the body with all its circuits, diet and secretions are proper and normal. But if anything be seen that is the reverse of these things, it indicates some harm in the body...fruitless trees signify corruption of the human seed...When rivers are abnormal they indicate a circulation of the blood; high water excess of blood, low water defect of blood (Hippocrates 1931, pp. 427–437).

Clearly, the authors of the Hippocratic Corpus believed, as we do, that health is an important constituent and determinant a good life. For some of them and some of us, there is no difference between health, well-being and a good life. In Michalos et al. (2005, 2011a) there is good evidence that most people would not identify good health with a good life.

Antisthenes of Athens (c. 446–c. 366 BCE)

Antisthenes lived most of his life in Athens, although he was not an Athenian citizen. As Laertius (2000b, p. 3) remarked, “he was not of pure Attic blood”. According to Piering (2006, p. 3), he was a NOTHOS, meaning “someone born of an illegitimate union (due to being born from a slave, foreigner, or prostitute, or because one’s parents were citizens but not legally married)”. By all accounts he was a devotee and friend of Socrates and, according to Dobbin (2012, p. xxii), “In the first fifteen years after Socrates’ death (399 BC) he was regarded as the foremost preserver of the master’s moral legacy”. While he is now regarded as a pioneer in the Cynic “way of life” or philosophical tradition, Hard (2012, p. xvi) wrote that “He is recorded as having had followers, furthermore, who were known as Antistheneians (not Cynics!)”. The name comes from the Greek noun KYON, meaning ‘dog’ and the adjective KYNIKOS, ‘dog-like’. The name was applied because the Cynic way of life was supposed to be similar to that of dogs and other animals living according to nature.

As noted below in our discussion of Plato’s ideas about a good life, it is not useful for us to try to distinguish exactly which are his, which are Socrates’ and which are both. However, it does seem fair to say that Socrates espoused a lifestyle that was considerably more ascetic than Plato’s and that it is that ascetic style that is most likely what Dobbin and others might have called “the master’s moral legacy” to the Cynics.

Diogenes Laertius presented several central themes of Antisthenes which were repeated and/or could be found in Cynic sayings or writings of others. For

example, Antisthenes' anti-hedonism was clearly articulated in his remark that "I'd rather be mad than feel pleasure" (2000b, p. 5). He believed

...that virtue [ARETE] can be taught; that nobility belongs to none other than the virtuous. And he held virtue to be sufficient in itself to ensure happiness,... that virtue is an affair of deeds and does not need a store of words or learning; that the wise man is self-sufficing...that ill repute is a good thing and much the same as pain; that the wise man will be guided in his public acts not by the established laws but by the law of virtue; that he will also marry in order to have children from union with the handsomest women;... he will not disdain love...Men of worth are friends... Virtue is the same for women as for men (Laertius 2000b, pp. 11–13).

The ideas that people are not born virtuous but can become virtuous with the right sort of training (ASKESIS) and self-control (KARTERIA); that so far as virtue is concerned, actions are more important than words; that friendship, love and marriage are good, and that virtue is the same for men and women are ideas that still have considerable, though not universal, attraction today. For Antisthenes' contemporaries, the idea of gender equality would have been quite radical. Self-sufficiency (AUTARKEIA) or independence was a common theme of many schools of Greek philosophy, with some affinity to our current notions of individuals who are hardy, resilient, self-assured and relatively self-sustaining. For reasons that will become clear as our discussion proceeds, the idea that virtue is sufficient for happiness is probably as controversial now as it was in Antisthenes' lifetime. The Greek word being translated in this context as 'virtue' is ARETE. While this is the standard translation because ARETE does connote moral virtue for a human being, it also connotes excellence in practically any sense. A knife, horse, lute or human being could display ARETE, each in its own relatively unique way.

The idea that Xenophon (c. 428–354 BCE) put into Antisthenes' quasi fictional speech in the former's *Symposium* that "wealth and poverty relate not so much to a man's possessions as to his soul" (Dobbin 2012, p. 19), has some current resonance insofar as people believe that wealth and poverty are multi-dimensional and partly defined by what people are able to make of the objective circumstances of their lives. Xenophon's Antisthenes reminds his friends that many rich people think of themselves as needy, that two people with equal resources may have very different views about how needy they are, that while the poor may steal and burgle, rich rulers may kill thousands, that the poor are less liable to be captured by frivolous pleasures, that "men of simple tastes are more ethical than men bent on amassing wealth since we are less likely to want what belongs to others when we are happy with what we have" and that "leisure, the most enviable thing of all, is always mine to enjoy" (Dobbin 2012, pp. 19–20). However fictional this line of thought may have been to the real Antisthenes, some of it still sounds reasonable and it is characteristic of the Cynic tradition and, as we will see below, it is fairly descriptive of certain historical Cynics.

***Aristippus of Cyrene* (“the Elder”, c. 436–356 BCE)**

Laertius (2000a, p. 195) tells us that Aristippus was “by birth a citizen of Cyrene” in northern Africa, what is now Libya. There is some evidence that his family was wealthy, but there is no question that Cyrene at the time of Aristippus’s birth “was one of the richest [cities] in the Greek world because of its excellent location and the fertility of its soil” (Zilioli 2012, p. 18). He taught his daughter, Arete, philosophy and she in turn taught her son, Aristippus “the younger”. The younger Aristippus is said to have “systematized into a coherent picture” the views of his grandfather and considerable scholarly ink has been shed trying to correctly identify exactly who wrote what (Zilioli 2012, p. 5). While our main focus is on the doctrines of Aristippus, it is often more convenient to refer to the Cyrenaic school or Cyrenaic doctrines without engaging in deeper historic analysis.

Although he went to Athens to study with Socrates and was a fellow student and contemporary philosopher with Plato, the philosophic doctrines of these two famous students were very different. According to Diogenes Laertius, Aristippus “was the first of the followers of Socrates to charge fees and to send money to his master”. By charging fees, Aristippus was regarded as a sophist. Adding his philosophic, especially his hedonistic views and his lifestyle to his alleged sophistry, he became a target of abuse. He was criticized for enjoying good food, drinks and prostitutes, and responded to his critics by saying that “it is not abstinence from pleasures that is best, but mastery over them without ever being worsted” (Laertius 2000a, pp. 203–205). Like many of his contemporaries, Aristippus placed a high value on self-mastery and self-sufficiency.

While none of the books now exist that Laertius (2000a, pp. 213–215) reported Aristippus to have written, there is evidence from other ancients indicating that he did write some books. In particular there is a fragment from a letter by Epicurus in which he asked to be sent a copy of a collection of Aristippus’s essays (Zilioli 2012, p. 32). According to Annas (1993, p. 236),

The Cyrenaics were a minority school, remembered mainly for views later regarded as absurdities to be avoided. The tradition about their originator, Aristippus, presents him in ludicrous and unedifying ways. When Epicurus was formulating what was to be the only influential hedonist theory in the ancient world, it is clear that he was motivated to avoid ending up in the Cyrenaic position, and that he did so by designing a form of hedonism which would not fall foul of our assumptions about other-concern and our life as a whole.

By the end of our short review, the main differences between these two historically important hedonists will be revealed. It will also be shown that while the traditional view of the Cyrenaics is that the philosophy was fairly salient for only a couple hundred years, there remain significant remnants even today in research on the quality of life.

Compared to their contemporaries, Cyrenaics generally and Aristippus in particular had somewhat unique views about the nature of the world, of knowledge

and the good life. Like Democritus and the great German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804 CE), Cyrenaics distinguished the phenomenal world of perception or experience from the real world. Unlike the atomists who believed that the ultimate building blocks of the world were atoms and the void, the Cyrenaics believed that the ultimate stuff of the world was not any sort of object. According to Zilioli (2012, p. 83), interpreting remarks by Sextus Empiricus (second century CE) on the Cyrenaics, the latter held that people

...are effectively confronted with an undifferentiated lump of matter. Although being existent and independent of us for its own existence, this lump of matter is, however, not made up of objects, since these, as such, do not exist in a proper sense. What this meta-physical view asserts is that the world, despite its being independent of us for its existence, is undifferentiated and indeterminate.

By insisting on some sort of matter existing independently of observers, it is clear that the Cyrenaics were not what today we would call idealists or radical constructivists. Their world is one grounded in processes, certainly more primitive than but a recognizable ancestor of that imagined by Alfred North Whitehead (1929). Zilioli (2012, p. 119) reminded us that more recently “Feyerabend especially has argued for a view of reality as indeterminate and variably determined by incommensurable conceptual schemes, belonging to different cultural outlooks and perspectives (Feyerabend 1975, especially Chap. 17).”

Cyrenaics had a radically subjectivist view of knowledge. They believed that all our knowledge comes from transient experienced affections (PATHĒ) which are unique and infallibly perceived by each individual. Thus, the only sort of well-being or ill-being they could imagine would be subjective well-being or ill-being, and the ideas of a Fool’s Paradise or Fool’s Hell would make no sense to them. According to Zilioli (2012, p. 121),

In Cyrenaic epistemology, the perceiving subject is the fulcrum from which knowledge radiates. The subject is the epistemological authority from which knowledge arises, in so far as the subject is the only element epistemologically allowed to report how she is affected in the very moment when the perceptual process takes place...Differently from all other Greek philosophers, the Cyrenaics...made the truth dependent on the internal mental states of the perceiving subject...

Affections were supposed to be physical movements of some sort that have epistemological or ethical significance. Zilioli (2012, p. 104) refers to affections with only epistemological significance as “representational feelings” (e.g., experiencing the colour yellow) while those with ethical significance he calls “affective feelings” involving bodily or mental pleasure or pain (e.g., experiencing the bodily pleasure coming from eating a sweet apple or the mental pain of losing a friend).

As explained in a fine review by Hirst (1967), the idea that a person can have absolute certainty regarding knowledge claims limited to his or her immediately experienced sense data had a robust resurrection in the early twentieth century with the logical positivists’ “supposedly incorrigible basic or protocol

propositions". As Descartes (1596–1650 CE) before them, the positivists hoped to find some infallible foundation for all scientific knowledge (for them, the only sort knowledge there is) which, supplemented by inductive and deductive logical methods of one sort or another, could be used to build up with complete certainty the whole corpus of knowledge of the world in which we live. After many years of intense scrutiny, most positivists came to the conclusion that many of their critics had come to, namely, that the edifice they hoped to construct was logically and empirically impossible (Michalos 2006).

While the Cyrenaics' epistemological views had serious critics among the ancients (e.g., Aristotle), it was the ethical implications of those views that created the most opposition and has the greatest interest for quality of life researchers today. Most of the Cyrenaics' contemporaries believed that the good life could be achieved by reflecting on one's life as a whole (TON BION HAPANTA), apprehending what is intrinsically most valuable given one's essential nature (i.e., one's proper end or TELOS), and conducting oneself in ways that are most likely to contribute toward realizing that end. Most of their contemporaries identified happiness as the proper end, although there was considerable disagreement about the nature of happiness and about the means to achieving it.

Since the Cyrenaics believed that their knowledge was limited to transitory experiences or affections and that, so far as they knew, there were no essential natures, they saw no point in reflecting on life as a whole and no point in trying to conduct their affairs in the interest of achieving the end supremely identified by those natures. Unlike Plato's Protagoras whose interest was in "pleasure summed over one's whole life" (Irwin 1991, p. 57), so far as Cyrenaics were concerned, the only end that was intrinsically valuable, choice-worthy (HAIRETON) for its own sake and achievable was pleasure, not some sort of abstract, generic pleasure, but concrete, particular pleasures of the sort we all experience. These pleasures, they held, all originated with some sort of alteration in our bodies, and the bodies themselves could only be apprehended as bundles of loosely connected affections. Hence, one might say that the epistemological views of Cyrenaics obliged them to pursue a good time rather than a good life because the latter presumed that there are relatively long-lasting personal selves existing across time, selves of which they had no evidence. Irwin (1991, p. 66) connected these implications to an important claim by Aristotle.

If one conceives happiness as a good *life* for oneself or as the achieving of *one's own good*, one must conceive oneself as having a life – a sequence of actions and experiences that belong to one subject lasting through time. The incapacity of animals and young children to form such a conception of themselves is probably Aristotle's reason for denying that they can be happy....

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

by 50 %. For Cyrenaics, the discount value of birds in the bush, in the past or future, was 100 %. So, there was no value in the exercise of currently looking to the unobservable future or past for things of value. Some recent research has shown that errors in forecasting and retrospective assessments of our own feelings are fairly widespread (Diener and Biswas-Diener 2008).

Laertius (2000a, p. 217) provided an excellent summary of the Cyrenaics' quite distinct views.

Cyrenaics...laid down that there are two states, pleasure and pain, the former a smooth, the latter a rough motion, and that pleasure does not differ from pleasure nor is one pleasure more pleasant than another. The one state is agreeable and the other repellent to all living things. However, the bodily pleasure which is the end is...not the settled pleasure following the removal of pains, or the sort of freedom from discomfort which Epicurus accepts and maintains to be the end. They also hold that there is a difference between 'end' and 'happiness'. Our end is particular pleasure, whereas happiness is the sum total of all particular pleasures...Particular pleasure is desirable for its own sake, whereas happiness is desirable not for its own sake but for the sake of particular pleasures. That pleasure is the end is proved by the fact that from our youth up we are instinctively attracted to it, and, when we obtain it, seek for nothing more, and shun nothing so much as its opposite, pain.

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

For the Cyrenaics, the impossibility of directly apprehending other people's experience made it difficult, in theory at least, to take the well-being of others very seriously. That would have made it difficult for others to take Cyrenaics' ethical views seriously, since some concern with the well-being or ill-being of others is central to most plausible ethical theories (Annas 1993, pp. 233–236). Presumably, although some remnants still exist, the combination of Cyrenaic epistemological, metaphysical and ethical views was responsible for the relatively brief and shallow impact of this philosophy and its attendant way of life.

Plato of Athens (427–347 BCE)

Source: Wikimedia

According to Kahn (1998, p. 43), “Plato and Socrates have been described as a double star [by Shorey 1933] which the most powerful telescope will never succeed in resolving”. According to Laertius (2000a, p. 281), at the age of twenty, Plato attended a lecture by Socrates and thereafter became a student and a scholar in the latter’s Academy in Athens. Assuming there is some truth in this story, Plato might have been exposed to Socrates for seven or eight years, as much as a young student might be exposed to a famous and charismatic old teacher.

Since Socrates did not write anything and Plato did not write anything in his own name but featured Socrates as the primary speaker-protagonist in most of his dialogues, it is impossible to determine exactly who said what, first and when, and what each man believed that the other did or did not believe. Since the nineteenth century, scholars have taken a developmental approach to Plato’s works, separating them into early, middle and late dialogues, with the assumption that the early ones reveal more of the views of the historic Socrates while the middle and late ones reveal the mature views of Plato himself, articulated by a wonderfully fictionalized Socrates. In several papers and a couple of excellent books, Annas (1993, 1999) showed that the developmental approach was quite foreign to ancient scholars and that the latter generally treated the philosophical works of Plato and others as comprehensive wholes rather than discrete components produced at different stages of a person’s career and

subsequently patched together. For our purposes, it is not necessary to decide exactly who said what or when, or to know the biographical history of each man, though it is worthwhile to know that the historical records are far from clear.

Socrates is reported by Laertius (2000a, pp. 149–163) to have been the son of a sculptor and a midwife, a pupil of Anaxagoras and Archelaus (fifth century BCE), a soldier who displayed courage in battle and a man who made a “regular habit” of dancing because he thought “that such exercise helped to keep the body in good condition”. Kahn (1998, p. 48) called him “the founder of classical Greek moral theory” on the grounds that he reconciled “two central themes of the Greek moral tradition”, namely, “virtue” (ARETE) and “happiness” (EUDAIMONIA). As we have seen, ARETE connoted excellence in practically any sense. EUDAIMONIA, which is literally ‘good DAIMONES’ is usually translated as ‘happiness’ but it connotes something closer to what people nowadays would call well-being rather than happiness. Today, in common parlance ‘happiness’ is very close to a perhaps extended feeling of pleasure. Because the English ‘happiness’ is linguistically more versatile than ‘well-being’, translators typically prefer the former, e.g., we can talk about happy people, happy lives and happy gardening, but not well-being people, lives and gardening. Nevertheless, modern readers should remember that our ‘well-being’ is closer to the Greeks’ ‘happiness’ than to our ‘pleasure’. As we have seen already, the Greek words for pleasure and pain were also central to philosophical discourse about a good life. Moral philosophers working in the eudaimonist tradition (e.g., Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) agreed that people should reflect on their lives as a whole, discover what is most important or valuable (i.e., life’s final end or TELOS), and plan and live their lives to achieve that end. According to Kahn (1998, p. 37), the notion of TELOS first appeared in Plato’s dialogues and was more fully developed by Aristotle.

As reported in the *Apology* (Plato 1914), Socrates was, unfortunately, condemned to death by an Athenian court for allegedly corrupting young people by persuading them to reject theological explanations in favour of naturalistic explanations of natural phenomena and by teaching them how “to make the worse case the better” along the lines of Protagoras and other Sophists. He correctly denied the truth of both charges, but that did not change the court’s verdict.

Laertius (2000a, p. 277) claimed that Plato was the son of a mere “citizen of Athens” on his father’s side but was a descendent of Solon (c. 638–59 BCE) and beyond him of the god Poseidon on his mother’s side. In fact, this biographer went so far as to assert on the authority of Plato’s nephew, Speusippus (c. 407–339 BCE), that Plato’s real father was not Ariston, the Athenian citizen, but Apollo himself. Like the father of Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew (which was written about 400 years after Plato’s death), Ariston left his wife “unmolested” until after Plato was born. Such fantastic legends attest to the fact that Plato was recognized as quite extraordinary by his contemporaries and successors.

There are several passages in Plato’s dialogues that reveal the conventional views of his contemporaries about the good life, views which he and Socrates spent their lives analyzing and usually criticizing as shallow at best and counter-productive at worst. For example, in the *Euthydemus* (Plato 1924, pp. 403–409),

Socrates began his exploration by asking the purportedly “stupid” question “Do all we human beings wish to prosper?”, and proceeded to explain the nature of prosperity as commonly conceived. His young listener, Cleinias, readily assents to Socrates’ suggested answers to his questions.

...since we wish to prosper, how can we prosper? Will it be if we have many good things?...of things that are, what sort do we hold to be really good?...Anyone will tell us that to be rich is good, surely?...Then it is the same with being healthy and handsome, and having other bodily endowments in plenty?...it is surely clear that good birth and talents and distinctions in one’s own country are good things... What of being temperate, and just, and brave?...and where in the troupe shall we station wisdom?...[And] Good fortune, Cleinias: a thing which all men, even the worst fools, refer to as the greatest of goods.

In the *Laws* (Plato 1926a, b, p. 117), Plato’s Athenian Stranger says that

Men say that the chief good is health, beauty the second, wealth the third; and they call countless other things ‘goods’ – such as sharpness of sight and hearing, and quickness in perceiving all the objects of sense; being a king, too, and doing exactly as you please; and to possess the whole of these goods and become on the spot an immortal, that, as they say, is the crown and top of all felicity.

Plato’s most detailed description of conventional views of the good life appear in Book 2 of the *Republic* (Plato 1930), where Socrates gave his account of “the origin of the city” based on meeting individual needs in the most efficient way and he was provoked by Glaucon to move beyond that to a description of “the origin of a luxurious city”. The following passages give the essential elements.

The origin of the city...is to be found in the fact that we do not severally suffice for our own needs,...As a result of this...we, being in need of many things, gather many into one place of abode as associates and helpers...the first...of our needs is...food...The second is housing and the third is raiment...[So there must be]...a farmer...builder...weaver...cobbler...[And because]...One man is naturally fitted for one task, and another for another...more things are produced, and better and more easily when one man performs one task according to his nature...[So there must be]...Carpenters...and smiths and many similar craftsmen...shepherds and other herders...[importers and exporters and]...others who are expert in maritime business...A market-place...and money as a token for the purpose of exchange...[and a]...class of shopkeepers...[and]...wage-earners...[The residents of such cities will recline]...on rustic beds...feast with their children, drinking of their wine...garlanded and singing hymns to the gods in pleasant fellowship... (Plato 1930, pp. 149–159)

At that point Glaucon intervened and reminded Socrates that the residents must also have “relishes”, and Socrates added

salt...and olives and cheese; and onions and greens...figs and chickpeas and beans, and they will toast myrtle-berries and acorns...washing them down with moderate potations; and so, living in peace and health, they will probably die in old age and hand on a like life to their offspring (p. 159).

Still dissatisfied, Glaucon insisted that the city and life Socrates described would merely be adequate for “a city of pigs”, and that to live well people must be able to “...recline on couches...and dine from tables and have made dishes and sweet-meats”. Socrates agreed and said that a “luxurious city” might, after all, be a better

place to find “the origin of justice and injustice in states”, although the state he just described was “a healthy state, as it were” (p. 161). To move beyond the “healthy state”, he asserted that

the requirements we first mentioned, houses and garments and shoes, will no longer be confined to necessities, but we must set painting to work and embroidery, and procure gold and ivory and similar adornments...[requiring a further enlargement of the city-state and]...the entire class of huntsmen, and the imitators, many of them occupied with figures and colours and many with music – the poets and their assistants, rhapsodists, actors, chorus-dancers, contractors – and the manufacturers of all kinds of articles, especially those that have to do with women’s adornment...tutors, nurses wet and dry, beauty-shop ladies, barbers...cooks and chefs...Doctors, too,...[and]...our neighbour’s land... [as the neighbours will also want our land]...if they too abandon themselves to the unlimited acquisition of wealth, disregarding the limit set by our necessary wants...We shall go to war as the next step...[implying the need for an army of professional soldiers] (pp. 161–165).

Thus, the “healthy state” would satisfy human needs without leading to war, but for a good life as conventionally conceived, a “luxurious state” would be required, which would lead to war. Clearly, Socrates and Plato must have thought, a good life as conventionally conceived left something to be desired. A good life should not imply endless wars with one’s neighbours. In the *Phaedo* (Plato 1914, p. 231) Socrates explicitly asserted that

The body and its desires are the only cause of wars and factions and battles; for all wars arise for the sake of gaining money, and we are compelled to gain money for the sake of the body. We are slaves to its service.

The common sense of their contemporaries and the insatiable desires of their own bodies had to be resisted, and they made it their life’s work to discover a correct account of not just *a* but *the* good life. Beyond the healthy state and the luxurious state, there must be an ideal state (KALLIPOLIS), whose form and function could serve as a model of an ideal soul and provide a clear path leading to the good life. Indeed, the historical Socrates, if accurately portrayed in the *Apology* (Plato 1914, pp. 107–109) seems to have believed that he was commanded by a god at Delphi to spend his life in philosophy, examining himself and others, and making people “ashamed to care for the acquisition of wealth and for reputation and honour, when [they] neither care nor take thought for wisdom and truth and the perfection of [their souls]”.

As explained above, Antiphon, Democritus and Aristippus believed that there was a natural connection between human well-being and experienced pleasures and pains. Generally speaking, they believed that whatever was experienced as pleasant was life-enhancing and whatever was experienced as painful was life-destroying. Thus, a good life could be obtained by following nature’s guides to human well-being. Every eudaimonist had to address this widely held and not entirely unreasonable position, and Socrates and Plato certainly provided some penetrating analyses. However, neither man was able to produce a single coherent theory of pleasure, i.e., a theoretical explanation of the constituents, determinants and consequences of pleasure. In fact, according to Annas (1999, p. 138), “many scholars hold that...[there are]...five different theories of pleasure” in the

five Platonic dialogues in which pleasure is explicitly investigated. On some view of the nature of theories, this might be true. Nevertheless, most of the evidence from all the dialogues indicates that on any theoretical view of pleasure, neither Plato nor Socrates regarded the pursuit of pleasure or a life of pleasure as a human being's final end, i.e., neither man was a hedonist. Since a life of pleasure was and apparently still is regarded by many people as an attractive aim for life as a whole, it is worthwhile to examine Plato's investigations of this option. Our review will follow the lead of the ancients and Annas in treating the Platonic corpus as a whole rather than as a developed sequence of ideas. In the end, it will be clear why "Plato's thoughts about pleasure have always been recognized as various, and as hard to make consistent" (Annas 1999, p. 5). It will also be clear that Plato was a creative genius of the highest order.

Of all Plato's discussions of the relationship of pleasure to our final end, that in the *Protagoras* comes nearest to endorsing hedonism. The relevant passages are notoriously controversial. Taylor (1998, p. 62) listed studies by 11 experts who regarded those passages as providing good evidence that Plato was at least sympathetic to hedonism at some point in his life and by 12 others who regarded them merely as accurate reports of hedonism as he understood it. I believe the latter, majority view is accurate, and that in those passages Plato was only doing what any good philosopher would do, namely, presenting a theory for consideration as fully and faithfully as possible, regardless of his or her commitment to it. Fortunately, however, we do not have to settle this troublesome issue here.

In this dialogue, Socrates began by getting the Sophist Protagoras to admit "that some pleasant things are not good, and also that some painful things are not bad and some are, while a third class of them are indifferent – neither bad nor good" (Plato 1924, pp. 223–225). This in itself is hardly an auspicious beginning for someone aiming to establish the reasonableness of hedonism as a theory of the good life. The two philosophers then agreed that "most people" think that "while a man often has knowledge in him, he is not governed by it, but by something else – now by passion, now by pleasure, now by pain, at times by love, and often by fear" (p. 227). They decided to show that the commonly held idea of "being overcome by pleasure" (AKRASIA) was "erroneous". This would be a strange undertaking for a hedonist, since such people believe that pleasure is precisely the final end that is supposed to triumph over all others.

Pursuing more deeply the idea of "being overcome by pleasure", Socrates claimed that allegedly pleasant but bad things like certain "food or drink or sexual acts" are not regarded as bad in virtue of the pleasure they produce. Pleasure, delight or enjoyment themselves are uniformly good in themselves. Rather, such things are regarded as bad only if

...later on they cause diseases and poverty, and have many more such ills...[and] in causing diseases they cause pains...And in causing poverty they cause pains...[In short,] the only reason why these things are evil is that they end at last in pains, and deprive us of other pleasures...[Similarly, such painful things as] physical training, military service, and medical treatment conducted by cautery, incision, drugs, or starvation...are good... because later on they result in health and good bodily condition, the deliverance of cities,

dominion over others, and wealth...[things which] end at last in pleasures and relief and riddance of pains (Plato 1924, pp. 229–233).

Notice, first, that the goods and ills listed in the quotation are the classic, common sense bodily and external ones, e.g., health and wealth versus disease and poverty. There is no mention of the cardinal virtues, justice, courage, temperance or wisdom. Second, the common sense goods are supposed to be pursued for the equally common sense purposes of getting pleasure and avoiding pain. Most importantly, Socrates has led his listeners to the conclusion that if the pleasurable is good and the painful is bad or evil, then AKRASIA would imply, for example, that “a man does evil, knowing it to be evil and not having to do it, because he is overcome by the good” (p. 237), or what is equally absurd, a man does what is painful, knowing it to be painful and not having to do it, because he is overcome by what is pleasant, i.e., in the interest of or forced by pleasure he knowingly chooses pain. So, the doctrine of AKRASIA had to be rejected.

Among pleasures and pains, at this point in this dialogue, Socrates thought that variations could only be assessed “when the one is greater and the other smaller, or when there are more on one side and fewer on the other” (Plato 1924, p. 237). So, for example, weighing pleasures and pains, one would naturally prefer greater and/or more pleasures to smaller and/or fewer pleasures and the latter to pains of any size or numbers. He did not suggest that people should calculate what we now call ‘discount rates’ according to which the proverbial bird in hand might be worth more than two or more in the bush, but he did observe that regarding “size”, “thickness and number” and “sounds” things appear “greater when near and smaller when distant” (p. 239). To address this problem, he recommended precise measurement. In language that would have warmed the hearts of hedonists from Bentham (1789) to Kahneman (1999) (not to mention number-crunching social indicators researchers), he wrote,

Now if our welfare consisted in doing and choosing things of large dimensions, and avoiding and not doing those of small, what would be our salvation in life? Would it be the art of measurement [METRITIKI TECHNE], or the power of appearance? Is it not the latter that leads us astray...and many a time causes us to take things topsy-turvy... whereas the art of measurement would have made this appearance ineffective, and by showing us the truth would have brought our soul into the repose of abiding by the truth, and so would have saved our life. Would men acknowledge, in view of all this, that the art which saves our life is measurement,...[indeed, not merely measurement but] knowledge [EPISTEME] of measurement,... the salvation of our life depends on making a right choice of pleasure and pain – of the more and the fewer, the greater and the smaller, and the nearer and the remoter – is it not evident... (Plato 1924, pp. 239–241).

Creating space for faulty appearances versus reality, these remarks clearly reveal an appreciation of the differences between a Fool’s Paradise or Hell and the real things. Of course, there is nothing here about applying measurement to produce the greatest net pleasure, happiness or good for the greatest number as in the utilitarians Bentham (1789) and Mill (1863) but a clearer defence of the role of “knowledge of measurement” in the pursuit of pleasure could not have been made.

Granting all of the above, Socrates was able to show that it is not pleasure that leads people astray, but

...that it is from defect of knowledge that men err, when they do err, in their choice of pleasures and pains – that is, in the choice of good and evil; and from defect not merely of knowledge but of the knowledge...of measurement. And surely...the erring act committed without knowledge is done through ignorance. Accordingly ‘to be overcome by pleasure’ means just this – ignorance in the highest degree...Then surely,... no one willingly goes after evil or what he thinks to be evil; it is not in human nature, apparently, to do so – to wish to go after what one thinks to be evil in preference to the good; and when compelled to choose one of two evils, nobody will choose the greater when he may the lesser (Plato 1924, pp. 243–247).

In Plato’s *Gorgias* (Plato 1925a), there are at least four arguments against the view that the good or happy life (i.e., well-being) for a human being is identical to a pleasurable life, or briefly, that pleasure is the final end (TELOS). First, Socrates suggested an analogy between the satisfaction of human needs producing experienced pleasure and filling an empty jar with water. Insofar as one’s needs are not met, one experiences pain, which is removed as one’s needs are met. I will call this the ‘needs satisfaction theory of pleasure’. It is a primitive ancestor of Maslow’s (1954) well-developed theory. Using this theory of the source if not the nature of pleasure, Socrates claimed that aiming at a life of pleasure would be like aiming at a life forever filling a “leaky jar”. Since one of his acceptability criteria for a good life was self-sufficiency or near-self-sufficiency for individuals and communities, positing a final end that was inherently dependent on continuous replenishment was obviously unacceptable (Plato 1925a, pp. 415–419). As we have seen, self-sufficiency or near-self-sufficiency is a highly regarded trait going all the way back to Homer’s heroes. Clearly, the needs satisfaction theory of pleasure and the self-sufficiency criterion of acceptability for a good life were incompatible. As we will see below, alternative theories of pleasure were introduced in other dialogues.

Second, Socrates asserted that because it is possible to experience pleasure and pain at the same time (e.g., as the pain of being thirsty is removed by the pleasure of drinking) but “it is impossible to be badly off, or to fare ill, at the same time as one is faring well”, it follows that “enjoyment is not faring well, nor is feeling pain faring ill, so that the pleasant is found to be different from the good” (Plato 1925a, pp. 429–431). Third, he claimed that because “the foolish and the wise, and the cowardly and the brave, feel pain and enjoyment about equally” but only “the wise and brave [are] good, and the cowards and fools bad”, there must be a difference between feeling enjoyment and being good as well as feeling pain and being bad, and therefore, a difference between a life of pleasure and a good life (Plato 1925a, pp. 435–439).

A fourth argument in the *Gorgias* began with the assumption that “bodies”, “figures”, “colours”, “music”, “laws and observances” are said to be “fair... either in view of their use for some particular purpose that each may serve, or in respect of some pleasure arising...[from them, i.e., either because they are] beneficial or pleasant or both” (Plato 1925a, pp. 353–355). Next, Socrates asserted

that if something is fair, it is good, “For that is either pleasant or beneficial” (p. 363). Finally, then, observing that it is not pleasant “to be medically treated...But it is beneficial” (p. 369), it follows immediately that things in general and life as a whole in particular may be fair, good and beneficial but not pleasant. So, a good life cannot be identical to a pleasant life.

Plato’s *Philebus* (Plato 1925b) contains a rich array of novel classifications and distinctions among pleasures, old and new arguments against the idea that pleasure could be the final end for human beings, old and new suggestions about the role of measurement in the search for a good life, and two direct rejections of hedonism. Beginning with the last item in this list, Socrates summarized several pages of the dialogue with the remark that

Philebus says that pleasure [IDONI] is the true goal of every living being and that all ought to aim at it, and that therefore this is also the good for all, and the two designations ‘good’ and ‘pleasant’ are properly and essentially one; Socrates, however, says that they are not one, but two in fact as in name, that the good and the pleasant differ from one another in nature, and that wisdom’s share in the good is greater than pleasure’s (Plato 1925b, pp. 373–375).

As we saw above, apparently for the sake of accurately reporting a hedonist’s position, in the *Protagoras* Socrates defended the thesis attributed to Philebus in this passage and rejected the thesis he defended here. So far as anyone knows today, Philebus is an unknown and possibly fictional proponent of hedonism. About twenty pages later, at the very end of the dialogue, Socrates concluded that

Philebus declared that pleasure was entirely and in all respects the good...[But] I, perceiving the truths which I have now been detailing, and annoyed by the theory held not only by Philebus but by many thousands of others, said that mind [NOUS] was a far better and more excellent thing for human life than pleasure (Plato 1925b, p. 397).

Searching for “the nature of any class”, Socrates and the young Protarchus, who was trying to decide whether or not he should be a hedonist, agreed that they should examine “the greatest things” rather than the smallest. Accordingly, they proceeded to investigate those pleasures “which are considered most extreme and intense”. Assuming that the greatest pleasures “gratify the greatest desires” and that such desires are often possessed by

...people who are in a fever, or in similar diseases, feel more intensely thirst and cold and other bodily sufferings which they usually have; and...feel greater want, followed by greater pleasure when their want is satisfied...[it follows that] to discover the greatest pleasures [they] should have to look, not at health, but at disease...[as well] greater pleasures...in intensity and degree [may be found] in riotous living...intense pleasure holds sway over the foolish and dissolute even to the point of madness and makes them notorious...and if that is true, it is clear that the greatest pleasures and the greatest pains originate in some depravity of soul and body, not in virtue (Plato 1925b, pp. 323–325).

The theory implicit in the assumption that the greatest pleasures “gratify the greatest desires” is simply the theory that pleasure is produced by the satisfaction of desires or wants, i.e., pleasurable affect is the effect of people getting what they desire or want. I will call this the ‘desire satisfaction theory of pleasure’. It is an ancestor of Lewin et al.’s (1944) aspiration theory. Since it

is unlikely that anyone would imagine that a life of “riotous living” leading to “madness” and “depravity of soul and body” could be the final end, highest good and best life for a human, it is unlikely that anyone holding this theory would be attracted to hedonism.

Among the assumptions made in the *Philebus* to show that “the good and the pleasant differ”, there is the familiar needs satisfaction theory of pleasure and the self-sufficiency criterion of acceptability for a good life. Applying the self-sufficiency criterion, early in the dialogue Socrates considered the question of whether a “life of pleasure” or a “life of wisdom” could be “the good” or the good life, and rapidly concluded that neither option would be acceptable. After all, a life of enjoyment of which one had no knowledge and a totally joyless life of wisdom would each leave something to be desired and would, therefore, not be self-sufficient [AUTARKĒS] or choice-worthy (Plato 1925b, pp. 233–239).

Besides the needs and desire satisfaction theories of pleasure, in the *Philebus* Socrates apparently accepts a slightly different theory (with roots extending at least to Pythagoras) based on harmony, which I will call the ‘harmony theory of pleasure’. Without attempting to unravel all the metaphysical niceties and definitions suggested in the text, the basic ideas are that

...when, in us living beings, harmony is broken up, a disruption of nature and a generation of pain also take place at the same time...But if harmony is recomposed and returns to its own nature, then I say that pleasure is generated,...[So, for examples, hunger is] a kind of breaking up and a pain...And eating, which is a filling up again, is a pleasure...Then, too, the unnatural dissolution and disintegration we experience through heat are a pain, but the natural restoration and cooling are a pleasure’ (Plato 1925b, pp. 271–273).

There are clear echoes in these passages of the views of Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democritus and Hippocrates regarding ordered, natural harmony and its natural products of experienced pleasure and pains in all “living beings”. Although there is a difference between refilling empty vessels whose natural state is supposed to be full and recomposing decomposed parts of naturally whole entities, the two theories about the natural origins of pleasure and pain seem to have fit fairly comfortably together in Plato’s mind. In describing the pain of hunger and the pleasure of its termination, he moved from the relatively atomistic language of “breaking up” to the replenishment language of “filling up”. Presumably, then, on both of these theories of pleasure, if human beings aimed for and successfully reached their natural state as a final end, they could count on it being pleasurable. However, neither theory would justify the pursuit of pleasure itself as a final end, i.e., neither theory would justify hedonism.

By a somewhat different path, these two theories of pleasure led to another reason for rejecting hedonism. The argument began with Socrates reminding Protarchus that they had “often heard it said of pleasure that it is always a process or generation and that there is no state or existence of pleasure” (Plato 1925b, p. 351). There is no hint of who said it, but it seems to be a consequence of the processes of producing pleasure according to both theories. Socrates then remarked that

one part of existences always exists for the sake of something, and the other part is that for the sake of which the former is always coming into being...One is the generation of all things (the process of coming into being), the other is existence or being (Plato 1925b, p. 353).

Of these two sorts of things, “generation for the sake of being” and “being for the sake of generation”, Socrates believed that the former made more sense as, for example, “shipbuilding is for the sake of ships” while “ships” do not exist “for the sake of shipbuilding”. Quite generally, then, he concluded that

...every instance of generation is for the sake of some being or other, and generation in general is for the sake of being in general...[Furthermore, and crucially] that for the sake of which anything is generated is in the class of the good, and that which is generated for the sake of something else...must be placed in another class...Then if pleasure is a form of generation, we shall be right in placing it in a class other than that of the good (Plato 1925b, p. 355).

Thus, if pleasure is in some “class other than that of the good”, it cannot be a candidate for the “highest end”, and the hedonists are wrong in positing pleasure as our final end and a life of pleasure as the best sort of life.

Along the lines of my distinction between a Fool’s Paradise and Real Paradise, in the *Philebus*, Plato distinguished “real pleasures” from “false pleasures”. Just as some people have opinions “not based upon realities”, although the opinions themselves are real enough, Socrates said that “pleasure and pain stand in the same relation to realities”. More precisely,

...he who feels pleasure at all in any way or manner always really feels pleasure, but it is sometimes not based upon realities, whether present or past, and often, perhaps most frequently, upon things which will never even be realities in the future (Plato 1925b, pp. 305–307).

“True pleasures” later turn out to be identical to “pure”, “unmixed” and “real pleasures”. After asserting that he did “not in the least agree with those who say that all pleasures are merely surcease from pain”, Socrates gave several examples of “true pleasures”, i.e., pleasures which naturally arise although “the want of which is unfelt and painless, whereas the satisfaction furnished by them is felt by the senses, pleasant, and unmixed with pain” (Plato 1925b, p. 343). The examples include pleasures

...arising from what are called beautiful colours, or from forms,...and sounds...[with] beauty of form...[meaning] the straight line and the circle and the plane and solid figures formed from these...For I assert that the beauty of these is not relative...but they are always absolutely beautiful by nature and have peculiar pleasures in no way subject to comparison with the pleasures of scratching;...those sounds which are smooth and clear...are beautiful, not relatively, but absolutely, and that there are pleasures which pertain to these by nature and result from them...pleasures of smell are a less divine class;... And further let us add to these the pleasures of knowledge, if they appear to us not to have hunger for knowledge or pangs of such hunger as their source (Plato 1925b, pp. 343–345).

Clearly, then, we have here a fourth theory of the origin and nature of pleasures, for these “true pleasures” do not involve meeting needs, satisfying desires or reconstituting harmonies. Rather they are, for example, the direct products of

things that are naturally “absolutely” beautiful eliciting natural feelings of pleasure, joy or delight. I will call this the ‘true pleasures theory’ to distinguish it from the other three. If it was not obvious before, Socrates has made it clear in these passages that “true pleasures” are ontologically distinct from others, since they “are in no way subject to comparison with the pleasures of scratching”, i.e., they are not supposed to be comparable to the pleasures arising either from meeting needs, satisfying desires or reconstituting harmonies.

Unfortunately, almost immediately Socrates compared the incomparable “true pleasures” to others and found the former to be superior. Arguing from analogy, he claimed that just as the purest, “unadulterated” whiteness “is both the truest and the most beautiful of all whitenesses”, it must be the case that “any pleasure, however small or infrequent, if uncontaminated with pain, is pleasanter and more beautiful than a great or often repeated pleasure without purity” (Plato 1925b, pp. 349–351). Nevertheless, he never argued that the pursuit of such pleasure could be or should be one’s final end.

Another path leading to the rejection of hedonism proceeds from the observation that there is a neutral state between pleasure and pain. Supposing that pain is generated by some sort of “destruction” of one’s natural state and pleasure is generated by some sort of “restoration”, as Hippocrates might have said, Socrates noticed that there is a third condition between these two in which one would “necessarily be devoid of any feeling of pain or pleasure, great or small” (Plato 1925b, p. 277). He reminded Protarchus that they agreed that anyone “who chose the life of mind and wisdom was to have no feeling of pleasure, great or small”, though he did not add at this point in the dialogue that earlier they also agreed that a life totally devoid of pleasure would never “appear desirable...to anyone” (Plato 1925b, p. 237). At this point Socrates apparently found such a life very “desirable”, for he asserted that someone choosing “the life of mind and wisdom” would be choosing “the most divine of lives” because, as Protarchus said, “it is not likely that gods feel either joy or its opposite” (Plato 1925b, p. 277). Whatever else one makes of this position, it must be granted that it implies that a life in the neutral state between pleasure and pain would be superior to that of a life of pleasure and that, therefore, the hedonists’ view of our final end or best sort of life is mistaken. It also implies that one might live a virtuous life without pleasure, i.e., that pleasure is not a necessary product or supervening property of a virtuous life, contrary to claims made by Socrates elsewhere.

After thoroughly destroying hedonism as a plausible account of our final end or the good life for human beings, and inconsistently making the case for a life of wisdom, Plato tried to construct a positive view that would meet his criterion of self-sufficiency. He avowed, first, that it was absurd “to say that there is nothing good in the body or many other things, but only in the soul, and that in the soul the only good is pleasure, and that courage and self-restraint and understanding and all the other good things of the soul are nothing of the sort” (Plato 1925b, p. 357). That is, he accepted the traditional, common sense view that there are goods of the body (e.g., health), external goods (e.g., wealth) and goods of the soul (e.g., wisdom).

Next, he divided all arts into two kinds, one of which involved relatively exact measurements (e.g., arithmetic, building) and the other not (e.g., music). Within each of these kinds, he made an additional distinction yielding, for example, an arithmetic “of the people” and “of philosophers”. The latter was supposed to possess a “higher degree of clearness and purity”, e.g., the philosopher’s “art of dialectic” was supposed to deal with “the truest kind of knowledge”, which is “knowledge which has to do with being, reality, and eternal immutability”. Those engaged in this art were engaged in the “contemplation of true being” (Plato 1925b, pp. 361–367), and such investigations were regarded as superior to those of the natural philosophers like Anaxagoras before him and Epicurus after him. The latter dealt with things that had “no fixedness whatsoever” and, therefore, yielded no “certainty”.

Finally, then, reminding Protarchus of their agreement that “wisdom’s share in the good is greater than pleasure’s”, that whoever “possesses the good...has no further need of anything, but is perfectly sufficient”, that knowledge of immutable reality is superior to all other kinds of knowledge, and that a “mixed life” with pleasure and wisdom would be superior to an “unmixed life” of either pleasure or wisdom, Socrates concluded that the good life they sought, described now as “the most adorable life” (p. 379), must involve some sort of “mixture” or combination of elements. Into the “mixture” he was forced to include not only theoretical knowledge of immutable reality, but practical knowledge (e.g., about “building houses”), “perfect knowledge of our individual selves”, “truth”, “music” although “it is full of guesswork and imitation and lacked purity”, “true and pure pleasures...and also those which are united with health and self-restraint, and... all those which are handmaids of virtue in general...but as for the pleasures which follow after folly and all baseness, it would be very senseless for anyone who desires to discover the most beautiful and the most restful mixture or compound... to mix these with mind” (Plato 1925b, pp. 379–387). Our two philosophers agreed, then, that this “mixture” or “compound” brought them to “the vestibule of the good and of the dwelling of the good” (p. 289).

From “the vestibule” Socrates perceived that a mixture containing all the right elements but lacking an appropriate “measure and proportion” of each one would be “in truth no compound, but an uncompounded jumble” (p. 389). Accordingly, he asserted that

...the power of the good has taken refuge in the nature of the beautiful; for measure and proportion are everywhere identified with beauty and virtue...Then if we cannot catch the good with the aid of one idea, let us run it down with three – beauty, proportion and truth, and let us say that these, considered as one, may more properly than all other components of the mixture be regarded as the cause, and that through the goodness of these the mixture itself has been made good (Plato 1925b, pp. 389–391).

The sense in which the three elements “beauty, proportion and truth” could properly “be regarded as the cause” of the total set of elements required for a good life (i.e., the total “mixture” or “compound”) is not entirely clear. Plato seems to have assumed that this subset of elements was in some way uniquely constitutive and/or determinant of the whole set. He may also have assumed that the subset was that

for the sake of which the total set of good things existed or would be “choiceworthy”. In any case, it seems fair to say that the total “mixture” or “compound” of elements of “the good” or of a good life, of which the three-element subset could be “regarded as the cause”, is as close to a complete account of “the good” or of a good life as Plato ever produced.

Several themes from the dialogues just reviewed appeared again in Plato’s magnum opus, *Republic*, e.g., the four theories of pleasure (need satisfaction, desire satisfaction, harmony and true pleasures), the insufficiency of pleasure or wisdom alone as the final end, and the idea of a neutral state between pleasure and pain. In Book 9 of the *Republic*, Socrates referred to the neutral state as a state of “calm”, and used it to explain the difference between “real” or “true” and “apparent” pleasures. When someone moves from a “state of calm” to a “state of pain”, he said, they are likely to misperceive and misdescribe the former state as a “state of pleasure”, and similarly, a move from a “state of calm” to a “state of pleasure” would likely produce a judgment that the former state was a “state of pain”. However, “there is nothing sound in these appearances”, and the “true”, “real” or “pure” pleasures are not “preceded by pain” (Plato 1992, pp. 254–255).

The central questions of the *Republic* are concerned with the nature of the best sort of life to live, the good life, “the life that for each of us would make living most worth while” (Plato 1930, p. 71) and more precisely, whether “the life of the just man is more profitable” than that of the unjust man (p. 83) or “whether it is also true that the just have a better life than the unjust and are happier” (p. 101). As the central questions are phrased, it is clear that the aim is to discover the most advantageous sort of life for individuals from the point of view of their own self-interest. Insofar as the specific question became that of the relation between living “the life of the just man” and living the life most advantageous from the point of view of one’s own self-interest, the problem became profoundly moral and difficult. The problem became moral because “the life of the just man” implied some concern for others, a concern that as conventionally understood might be not only beyond but directly opposed to one’s own self-interest. The problem of reconciling such concerns (for others and self) was undoubtedly at least as difficult in the fourth century BCE as it is now.

To address the basic problem and noticing that “there is the justice [DIKAIOSUNE] of a single man and also the justice of a whole city”, Plato’s Socrates adopted the strategy of examining “the larger thing” in the interest of understanding “the smaller” (Plato 1992, p. 43). Earlier we reviewed his story of the “origin of the city” in general, as well as the “healthy” and “luxurious” cities. It was suggested that “luxurious” cities might be better places to find “the origin of justice and injustice in states”. Plato’s ideal cities were populated with relatively unidimensional people, more unidimensional than one might have expected after reading his account of the variety of people populating the cities of the origins stories. Applying the general principle that “one man is naturally fitted for one task”, he imagined finally three broad classes of people in the ideal city, namely, a class of “producers” consisting of “money-lovers”, a class of “guardians” consisting of “honour-lovers” and a class of “rulers” consisting of “wisdom-lovers”

(philosophers), selected from the cream of the “guardians”. Reflecting on the virtues of courage, moderation, wisdom and justice, Socrates concluded that in the ideal city, as they have “heard many people say and have often said” themselves, “justice is doing one’s own work and not meddling with what isn’t one’s own” (Plato 1992, p. 108). Accordingly, if justice in “the larger” city is similar to justice in “the smaller” human soul, one ought to find structures and functions in the latter similar to those in the former, i.e., one ought to find that souls have three parts with three distinct functions, with justice in the soul similar to justice in the city.

Immediately Socrates asserted that “It would be ridiculous for anyone to think that spiritedness”, “love of learning” and “love of money” did not come from “individuals” (Plato 1992, p. 111). The deeper question is whether such things come from one or more parts of individuals. Since “the same thing [cannot] be, do, or undergo opposites, at the same time, in the same respect, and in relation to the same thing”, but people often have appetites for things they choose to resist and passions they would rather not have, Socrates thought that such kinds of opposition could not proceed from a soul without distinct parts. Thus, he concluded (for the first time, according to Frede (2003, p. 11) that human souls have three parts and called

...the part of the soul with which it calculates the rational part and the part with which it lusts, hungers and thirsts, and gets excited by other appetites the irrational appetitive part...[and] the spirited part [that] by which we get angry...[and which is] by nature the helper of the rational part, provided that it hasn’t been corrupted by bad upbringing (Plato 1992, pp. 115–116).

Therefore, on the analogy of the nature of justice in the city given the city’s structure and functions, he concluded that justice in the human soul must occur when “each part is doing its own work” and the rational part is allowed to rule, “since it is really wise and exercises foresight on behalf of the whole soul, and for the spirited part to obey and be its ally” (p. 117). Justice in the city and in the human soul is the great harmonizer, bringing disparate parts together so that they become “entirely one, moderate and harmonious”, and injustice is “a kind of civil war between the three parts” (p. 119).

Insofar as justice in the city and the soul is supposed to function in the same way to produce harmony and reduce discord, justice in each place and the interests of individuals and communities are mutually supportive. A well-ordered city led by wisdom-loving rulers supported by honour-loving and money-loving citizens who know their place and appropriately play out their roles is the perfect sort of city for individuals with similarly well-ordered souls to flourish. Individuals with well-ordered souls whose spirit and appetites are led by reason will be at peace with themselves and will, therefore, be inclined to contribute to the common good, recognizing it as essential for their own well-being. In Book 6 of the *Republic* Socrates lamented the fact that because there were no cities with constitutions “suitable for philosophers”, anyone with a “philosophic nature” had it “perverted and altered”, but if someone with the appropriate nature “were to find

the best constitution, as it is itself the best, it would be clear that it is really divine and that other natures and ways of life are merely human” (Plato 1992, p. 171). Thus, such is the interdependent relationship between an ideal city and an ideal individual that it is impossible for the latter to exist apart from the former. This is about as much of a reconciliation between the interests of any individual and the public interest, self and other, as one could hope to have.

Besides imagining that human souls had three distinct parts with distinct functions, Socrates believed that the successful performance of the distinct functions yielded distinct kinds of pleasures. Citizens who know their place and appropriately play out their fairly rigidly prescribed and circumscribed roles are supposed to get distinct kinds of pleasures. I will call this the ‘class theory of pleasure’. Since there was no clear distinction between human characteristics resulting from inheritance versus good upbringing and education, ‘class’ is used here only to reflect the general sense of Plato’s idea. In his words,

...there are three primary kinds of people: philosophic, victory-loving, and profit-loving... And also three forms of pleasure, one assigned to each of them...if you chose to ask three such people in turn to tell you which of their lives is most pleasant, each would give the highest praise to his own...Then, since there’s a dispute between the different forms of pleasure and between the lives themselves, not about which way of living is finer or more shameful or better or worse, but about which is more pleasant and less painful,... [we should apply criteria of] experience, reason and argument [to settle the dispute] (Plato 1992, pp. 251–252).

Supposing that everyone has some experience of having some kinds of victories and making some profits, but “the pleasure of studying the things that are cannot be tasted by anyone except a philosopher”, Socrates concluded that

The praise of a wisdom-lover and argument-lover is necessarily truest. Then, of the three pleasures, the most pleasant is that of the part of the soul with which we learn, and the one in whom that part rules has the most pleasant life (Plato 1992, pp. 252–253).

Since Plato’s Socrates would have been as aware as everyone else of the fact that any school child experiences the pleasure of learning, the philosopher’s pleasure that he was referring to in these passages was that achievable only by the select few of guardians who had roughly 10 years of training in liberal arts, 5 additional years of training in dialectic, 15 years of public administration and “Then, at the age of fifty, those who’ve survived the tests and been successful both in practical matters and in the sciences...[and have] seen the good itself,...must each in turn put the city, its citizens, and themselves in order, using it as their model” (Plato 1992, pp. 211–212).

As we have seen, the content of this “model”, of “the good” itself, was far from clear. In the middle Books of the *Republic* Plato presented his metaphysical theory of the ideal “forms” which was apparently intended to provide a general context or ontological scheme forming the foundation of his ethical and political theories. Since the general theory and the nature of the “forms”, as well as their precise connection to his other theories and views are all relatively unclear, they have been omitted from this discussion.

Summarizing the general case he tried to make in the *Republic* for pursuing justice in one's own soul and city in terms of traditionally accepted good by-products that would have been attractive to any Greek familiar with his work, Plato wrote,

From every point of view, then, anyone who praises justice speaks truly, and anyone who praises injustice speaks falsely. Whether we look at the matter from the point of view of pleasure, good reputation, or advantage [or profit], a praiser of justice tells the truth, while one who condemns it has nothing sound to say and condemns without knowing what he is condemning...[Furthermore,] this is the original basis for the conventions about what is fine and what is shameful...Fine things are those that subordinate the beastlike parts of our nature to the human—or better, perhaps, to the divine; shameful ones are those that enslave the gentle to the savage (Plato 1992, p. 261).

In brief, in these passages Plato justified the pursuit of justice in terms of self-interest as his contemporaries, and perhaps ours, understood it. If one were unfamiliar with the rest of his work, one might think these passages were written by someone who regarded “pleasure, good reputation, or advantage” as capturing our final end or the best life for a human being, with “justice” as merely a significant means. In the presence of as much of his total corpus as we have seen here, however, one would have to conclude that, like “pleasure”, he regarded “good reputation” and “advantage” as mere “handmaids of virtue in general”, i.e., things that served the interest of virtue, making it more attractive and easier to embrace. For Plato, our final end or best sort of life included a rich mixture of things hierarchically ordered with virtue in its various forms at the top.

No new theories of pleasure are introduced in Plato's last work, the *Laws* (Plato 1926a, b), and the function of pleasure is mainly that of a “handmaid”. Early in Book 1, the Athenian Stranger described “pleasures and pains” as “the two fountains which gush out by nature's impulse” and produce happiness to “whoever draws from them a due supply at the due place and time...but whosoever does so without understanding and out of due season will fare contrariwise” (Plato 1926a, pp. 42–43). Thus, the final end is well-being in the fairly robust sense of EUDAIMONIA and one is enabled to reach that end by following pleasures and pains that are guided by understanding [EPISTEME]. Lest anyone missed his points about the place and role of pleasure in this scenario, the Stranger added the remark that

...each of us...possesses within himself two antagonistic and foolish counsellors, whom we call by the names of pleasure and pain...and opinions about the future...and in addition to all these there is ‘calculation’ [LOGISMOS], pronouncing which of them is good, which bad; and ‘calculation’, when it has become the public decree of the State, is named ‘law’ (p. 67).

Thus, an individual's own power of reason supported by a community's reason articulated in its laws guide the naturally “foolish counsellors” “pleasure and pain” to human well-being.

In Book 5 of the *Laws*, the Stranger summarizes his case for living a virtuous and noble life in terms of a package of by-products similar to that offered by Plato's Socrates in the *Republic*. Personal “advantage”, which usually implied material wealth, is not mentioned explicitly in the package, but “nobility” would have had the same implication.

The temperate, brave, wise, and healthy lives are more pleasant than the cowardly, foolish, licentious and diseased. To sum up, the life of bodily and spiritual virtue, as compared with that of vice, is not only more pleasant, but also exceeds greatly in nobility, rectitude, virtue and good fame, so that it causes the man who lives it to live ever so much more happily [EUDAIMONESTERON] than he who lives the opposite life (Plato 1926a, p. 347).

So, for Plato in the *Laws*, the final end or best life as a whole for humans was a happy life, which in his eudaimonistic terms was virtuous in all its forms, healthy, noble, experienced as pleasant and justifiably famous. Although he occasionally described such a life as “dear to God”, insofar as “like is dear to like” (Plato 1926a, p. 295) and his philosophy certainly had what Annas (1999, p. 163) called “an unworldly streak”, when all the features of the total package of goods constituting the good life are taken into account, it is a life that would still be attractive to people with fairly conventional values.

***Anonymous Iamblich* (c. 400 BCE)**

Some of the most astute observations about the relations of conventional laws and justice (NOMOI) to the laws of nature (PHYSIS) may be found in fragments attributed to a relatively obscure author known as the Anonymous Iamblich. While the Anonymous has been regarded by some as “a shallow and second-rate popularizer of the doctrines of Protagoras” (Cole 1961, p. 127), his contribution to our subject is significant. Like Protagoras, the Anonymous claimed, first, that because human beings are naturally disposed to pursue their own interests and pleasures, and that the strong would naturally serve themselves at the expense of the weak, the latter have a natural interest in forming political communities, and subjecting their activities to a set of laws which, by common consent, were supposed to provide justice for all participants. Secondly, however, he claimed because nobody would be strong enough to guarantee his or her own protection, let alone justice, in the presence of great masses of people, however weak they might be individually, even the very strong have a natural interest in living in communities governed by rules of justice. In short, conventional laws are firmly rooted in human nature, and they are neither unnecessary nor artificial.

Granting that laws are necessary for communities, the Anonymous believed that good rulers should be guided by ARETE and in his view, “Power, prestige, material well-being, and moral excellence are all involved in ARETE” as well as “eloquence, bravery, strength and cleverness” that is, “the excellence of the statesman, not the autonomous individual” (Cole 1961, pp. 135, 143). Thus, the problem the Anonymous tried to solve was “how the man who seeks ARETE may acquire personal power and prestige without losing the good will and respect of the rest of society”, and the solution he offered was the idea that a ruler displaying ARETE would rule according to good laws serving the interests of justice such that “all individuals attain to maximum satisfaction of their wants by helping others attain the same satisfaction” (Cole 1961, p. 137).

The Anonymous believed that the implications of living in communities that have good laws and law-abiding people (i.e., communities characterized by EUNOMIA) are quite different from those characterized by the opposite qualities (i.e., by ANOMIA). The following passages describe the sorts of social capital he envisioned.

In the first place, trust arises from EUNOMIA, and this benefits all people greatly and is one of the great goods. For as a result of it, money becomes available and so, even if there is little it is sufficient since it is in circulation...Fortunes and misfortunes in money and life are managed most suitably for people as a result of EUNOMIA. For those enjoying good fortune can use it in safety and without danger of plots, while those suffering ill fortune are aided by the fortunate...Through EUNOMIA...the time people devote to PRAGMATA [a word which can mean 'government', 'public business', or 'troubles'] is idle, but that devoted to the activities of life is productive. In EUNOMIA people are free from the most unpleasant concern and engage in the most pleasant, since concern about PRAGMATA is most unpleasant and concern about one's activities is most pleasant. Also, when they go to sleep, which is a rest from troubles for people, they go to it without fear and unworried about painful matters, and when they rise from it they have other similar experiences...Nor...do they expect the day to bring poverty, but they look forward to it without fear directing their concern without grief towards the activities of life...And war, which is the source of the greatest evils for people...comes more to those who practice ANOMIA, less to those practicing EUNOMIA (McKirahan 1994, pp. 406–407).

Social indicators researchers will be struck by the fact that the Anonymous cited trust as the very first benefit to members of societies characterized by EUNOMIA, since measures of trust are probably the most frequently used indicators of social capital today (Van de Walle et al. 2005). Following trust, many familiar observable and unobservable features of a good life appear in the quotation, i.e., money and financial security, personal safety, freedom to pursue and enjoy the pleasures of one's special interests and activities, absence of worries and fears, peaceful and restful sleep, hopefulness for the future, and freedom from war.

In passages following the above quotation, the Anonymous described the implications of living in communities characterized by ANOMIA, which are essentially the opposites of those above. Besides being populated by people living with mistrust, fear and insecurity, such communities are the seedbeds for tyranny because those people have desperate needs for relief and turn to apparently strong but often unscrupulous leaders. In the end, as he remarked in the beginning, the Anonymous was sure that nobody would ever be strong enough to prevent the great masses of people from casting out tyrants and bringing justice for all.

The views of the Anonymous contrast sharply with those of Antiphon of Rhamnous that were reviewed earlier. They were on opposite sides of the NOMOS-PHYSIS debate. Waterfield (2000, p. 303) was impressed by the "emotive quality" of their disagreements. As he saw it,

The partisans of NOMOS include all those who see humankind progressing from a bestial and vulnerable state to one where law and society offer protection, but also those like *Anonymous Iamblichus* who, without committing themselves to a theory of progress, simply see in law and order our best hope for survival and life with some kind of dignity, and, at a personal level, for getting on in the world. Ranged against them were the partisans of PHYSIS, who vary from radicals like [Plato's] Callicles and Thrasymachus, who value self-interest above all...to Antiphon, who uses the facts of PHYSIS to argue for a

kind of liberal cosmopolitanism and argues that the natural law of self-preservation shows how defective man-made laws are; and to Hippias, who probably argued that the laws of nature, so far from sanctioning Calliclean self-interest, simply provide us with a more objective moral code.

***Diogenes of Sinope* (c. 400–c. 323 BCE)**



Source: Wikimedia

Diogenes of Sinope was the son of a banker named Hicesius. Located on the southern coast of the Black Sea, Sinope was a fairly prosperous trade centre and, given the status of his father's occupation, Diogenes' family was fairly well off and Diogenes would have been well-educated. Laertius (2000b, p. 23) reported that Hicesius was prosecuted for shaving off bits of Sinopian coins, thus "adulterating the currency". Insofar as Diogenes' ascetic way of life was regarded as altering conventional thinking about a good life, Hicesius' transgression became a metaphor for that alternative way of life. His father's act also led to the family's exile from Sinope and later to Diogenes' settlement in Athens.

Diogenes does not seem to have written anything, although many people wrote about things that he was supposed to have said and done. The most comprehensive report of his life and work appears in Laertius (2000b), and two of our main sources of information about the story told by this author have issued strong warnings about it. According to Hard (2012, pp. xvii–xviii), Diogenes Laertius was "an author whose intellectual resources were plainly limited" who "liked nothing better than a good story or witty saying" and who recounted "one short anecdote after another, page after page, piling them together higgledy-piggledy in no sort of order". Dobbin (2012, p. xxvi) wrote that "Laertius' chapter on the Dog is a hotch-potch of aphorisms and legends, along with a few credible facts. As a biographer he was as disorganized as he was gullible". Nevertheless, Hard and Dobbin assembled enough information from a variety of sources (some of which seemed to rely on Diogenes Laertius) that we are able to craft a reasonably credible account of this philosopher's relatively unique and important contribution.

While Diogenes Laertius reported that Diogenes was a student of Antisthenes, Hard (2012, p. v) expressed doubts that there was any "formal or direct" student/teacher connection between the two men. However, it is clear that some of Diogenes' ideas and practices have their roots in those of Socrates and Antisthenes. The similarities are so strong and in such a distinct direction that Laertius (2000b, p. 55) wrote that "On being asked by somebody, 'What sort of a man do you consider Diogenes to be?', the reply was 'A Socrates gone mad'." Dobbin (2012, p. 34) translated the passage identifying the "someone". Thus, "On being asked what sort of man he took Diogenes to be, Plato said 'Socrates with a screw loose'". One might have said, 'Socrates on steroids', because he pressed Socrates' asceticism far beyond that of Socrates himself.

At the most visible level, Diogenes adopted and became recognized by his single rough cloak folded over or not depending on the weather, his walking staff, bare feet (even with snow on the ground), frazzled hair and beard, knapsack with light food such as lentils and, on occasion, his peculiar place of residence, namely, a large ceramic tub or jar (PITHOS). When the weather was particularly nasty, he would do what homeless people do today, i.e., take refuge in public buildings, doorways or places of worship. There are stories of him walking the streets of Athens carrying a lamp, searching for a man (not necessarily an honest man) and failing in his search. Nobody he met measured up to his high standard for a fully human, virtuous and rational man.

Following in the tradition of Heraclitus, Democritus and Antisthenes, he believed that the best life was that lived according to, recommended by or in harmony with nature. Such a life would be a life lived well, thriving on virtue [ARETE] and enjoying happiness [EUDAIMONIA] (Laertius 2000b, pp. 67, 73). While several sources tell the story of his discovery of a good way to live by observing a mouse (Laertius 2000b, p. 25), his and others' most frequently used model for living according to nature is the familiar behaviour of stray dogs. Such animals could flourish, apparently with the blessing of the gods, by eating, drinking, grooming, urinating, defecating and copulating in public without shame. So he thought human beings should be able to shamelessly engage in the same sort of behaviour, contrary to conventional understanding, and many anecdotes survive attributing such behaviour to him. Laertius (2000b, pp. 33, 34, 49) reported stories of Diogenes spitting in someone's face and urinating on someone's floor. Asked "what was the most beautiful thing in the world, he replied 'Freedom of speech.'", but he often took such freedom as a license to be flippant, vulgar and witty, with or without a discernible serious point. For example, "Seeing some women hanged from an olive-tree, he said, 'Would that every tree bore similar fruit.'" "To the question what wine he found pleasant to drink, he replied, 'That for which other people pay.'" (Laertius 2000b, pp. 53, 57).

Diogenes seems to have been led to the particular way of life described in the preceding two paragraphs by an analogical argument. According to Laertius (2000b, p. 109), Diogenes "used to say that it was the privilege of the gods to need nothing and of god-like men to want but little". Hard (2012, p. 27) translated the text as "it is the privilege of gods to need nothing, and of those who are like the gods to need little", and he compared it to a text from Xenophon's Socrates in *Memorabilia*, "You seem to suppose, Antiphon, that happiness lies in luxury and extravagance, but I hold that to have want of nothing is divine, and to have want of as little as possible comes closest to the divine..." (Hard 2012, p. 191).

From these passages it may be assumed that Diogenes would have argued that if the gods are worthy of admiration and emulation, and they are without needs and wants, then a person desiring to become more god-like ought to (morally and prudentially) try to eliminate his or her needs and wants. The world is full of animals that apparently live comfortable and happy lives by doing what comes naturally to them, without any socially constructed conventions. So this is how people should live.

Diogenes' and other Cynics' commitment to a life of poverty, and the many anecdotes and stories attributed to them in which it is claimed that the rich are much more in need than the poor and relatively more liable to suffer because of their wealth all make sense in the light of this sort of argument. Dobbin (2012, p. 32) presented a passage from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* in which Diogenes is said to "insist on the degree to which he outdid the king of Persia in his fortune and quality of life. He [Diogenes], after all, wanted nothing, while the other could never get enough of anything".

Earlier it was remarked that Democritus was apparently the first scholar to recommend downward comparisons and, by implication, to suggest social comparison theory in general and downward comparison theory in particular. We also saw that Plato's five theories of pleasure included a desire theory of pleasure and a needs theory of pleasure. Here we have seen that Diogenes suggested a wants/desire theory and the need theory of happiness or well-being (Michalos 1985). In his view, the needless and wantless life of gods (i.e., their self-sufficiency, AUTARKEIA) is taken as ideal and human happiness or well-being is measured by comparing the perceived gaps or discrepancies between the ideal and human wants and needs. Remarkably, then, by the fourth century BCE three of the seven significant discrepancies in Multiple Discrepancies Theory (Michalos 1985) had already been discovered.

Like Antisthenes, Diogenes believed that with the proper training [ASKESIS], people could become more virtuous and achieve a good and happy life. The training required, as one might expect, is built on self-control [KARTERIA]. In one of the apocryphal letters attributed to Diogenes and directed to his father, "two paths" are described "that lead to happiness... one of them short, but steep and difficult, the other long, but gentle and easy. 'Those are the two paths', [Socrates] said, 'that lead up to the Acropolis, and the paths that lead to happiness are of the same character...'" Diogenes said that he chose the former because "when it comes to striving for happiness, one must be ready to pass even through fire and swords" (Hard 2012, p. 159). Several sources mention Diogenes' insistence on pursuing the good life through the most arduous means. Hard (2012, p. xiii) summarizes his radical view as follows.

Diogenes thought that one should anticipate the very worst that fate can bring by plunging into a life of complete destitution. He came to believe, furthermore, that a positive value can be put on hardship, because it not only serves as a form of training which enables a person to rise above any suffering, but also makes it possible for him to find a positive pleasure in self-abnegation... He had nothing but contempt for civic society and almost every aspect of Greek culture. To him literature, music, mathematics, science, and philosophical investigation and discussion were a distraction and a waste of time.

It is easy to see why the name 'cynic' could have become attached to the idea of people who are generally contemptuous and suspicious of others, suspecting that they are self-serving, self-deceived and deceitful. However, as we have seen, beyond their harsh critiques of conventional ways and their own peculiar way of living, Cynic philosophers like Antisthenes and Diogenes had a very positive end in view, namely, a good life that is god-like, virtuous and happy.

***Aristotle of Stageira* (384–322 BCE)**



Source: Wikimedia

Judged by the impact of his works on scholars across many centuries and continents, it is arguable that Aristotle was the most influential philosopher who ever lived. He was the son of a Macedonian physician named Nicomachus, who served

king Philip, father of Alexander the Great, a sometime student of Aristotle. Since Aristotle studied and worked with Plato for twenty years (367–347 BCE) at the latter’s Academy in Athens, they shared some views. However, when Plato died in 347 BCE, the leadership of his Academy passed to his nephew, Speusippus, not to Aristotle. The latter moved on and in 334 established his own school in Athens called the Lyceum.

According to Irwin in Aristotle (1999, p. xiv), “the nearly complete modern English translation of Aristotle’s extant works (in [The Revised Oxford Translation]) fills about 2450 pages”, though many works are lost. Discussions of the good life appear prominently in five treatises, namely, *Eudemean Ethics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Magna Moralia*, *Rhetoric* and *Politics*. The *Eudemean Ethics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* are the first couple of relatively long and systematic theoretical treatises ever written on ethics. While they are attributed to Aristotle, in both cases the texts were apparently assembled from students’ notes and present problems of internal coherence. The *Eudemean Ethics* is generally regarded as the earlier of the two volumes and three of its Books, 4–6, are identical to Books 5–7 in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The *Magna Moralia* seems to be genuinely Aristotelian, but of lesser importance and it is not considered here.

Some of the most frequently quoted passages in the history of philosophy come from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and concern our topic directly. For example,

Every craft and every line of inquiry, and likewise every action and decision, seems to seek some good; that is why some people were right to describe the good as what everything seeks. But the ends [that are sought] appear to differ; some are activities, and others are products apart from the activities. Wherever there are ends apart from the actions, the products are by nature better than the activities...

Suppose, then, that the things achievable by action have some end that we wish for because of itself, and because of which we wish for the other things, and that we do not choose everything because of something else – for if we do, it will go on without limit, so that desire will prove to be empty and futile. Clearly, this end will be the good, that is to say, the best good...

What is the highest of all the goods achievable in action? As far as the name goes, most people virtually agree; for both the many and the cultivated call it happiness [EUDAIMONIA], and they suppose that living well and doing well are the same as being happy. But they disagree about what happiness is, and the many do not give the same answer as the wise (Aristotle 1999, p. 3).

As this treatise demonstrates, the situation was even more complicated than Aristotle’s remarks suggest, for “the wise” had significantly different views among themselves. However, it is clear from Aristotle’s phrase “that living well and doing well are the same as being happy” that he is not talking about a mere extended feeling of pleasure. In fact, shortly after the passages quoted above, he wrote,

The many, the most vulgar, would seem to conceive the good and happiness [EUDAIMONIA] as pleasure [IDONIN], and hence they also like the life of gratification. In this they appear completely slavish, since the life they decide on is a life for grazing animals (Aristotle 1999, p. 4).

Translators have given us considerable help interpreting the phrase “living well and doing well”. Regarding “living well” (EU ZÊN) Irwin (Aristotle 1999, p. 175)

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

Regarding “doing well” (EU PRATTEIN), according to Irwin, Aristotle is saying that “EUDAIMONIA...consists in action”. Alternative English expressions are “acting well” or “faring well”. Much like the ordinary English expression, ‘doing well’ can be used in an active sense as in ‘A job worth doing is worth doing well.’ or in a passive sense as in ‘Generally, I am doing well, all things considered’. In the contexts we are looking at, it is the active sense of ‘doing well’ that Aristotle intends. EU PRATTEIN or its cognate EUPRAXIA typically designates an intentional, voluntary action undertaken not in the interest of achieving some end beyond itself (e.g., making a clay pot in the interest of having a pot), but in the interest of or for the sake of the action itself (e.g., performing a morally virtuous action because it is the right thing to do). According to Rackham, “The English phrase [‘doing well’] preserves the ambiguity of the Greek, which in its ordinary acceptation rather means ‘faring well’ than ‘acting well,’ though in the sequel Aristotle diverts it to the active sense”.

Regarding views of “the many”, Aristotle’s best account is given in the *Rhetoric* and runs as follows.

...for the sake of illustration, let us ascertain what happiness, generally speaking, is, and what its parts consist in;...Let us then define happiness [EUDAIMONIA] as well-being [EUPRAXIA] combined with virtue [ARETE], or independence of life, or the life that is most agreeable combined with security, or abundance of possessions and slaves, combined with power to protect and make use of them; for nearly all men admit that one or more of these things constitutes happiness. If, then, such is the nature of happiness, its component parts must necessarily be: noble birth, numerous friends, good friends, wealth, good children, numerous children, a good old age; further bodily excellences, such as health, beauty, strength, stature, fitness for athletic contests, a good reputation, honour, good luck, virtue. For a man would be entirely independent, provided he possessed all internal and external goods; for there are no others. Internal goods are those of mind and body; external goods are noble birth, friends, wealth, honour. To these we think should be added certain capacities and good luck; for on these conditions life will be perfectly secure. Let us now in the same way define each of these in detail. Noble birth... (Aristotle 1926, pp. 47–49).

These passages are merely the beginning of several pages of more detailed definitions of components and/or conditions of a happy life or of a life of someone “living well and doing well”. The Greek word EUPRAXIA translated here as ‘well-being’ generally means good practice, good conduct, successful action or well-being. Logically speaking, Aristotle was not as tidy as one would have preferred in constructing his definitions, and he was no more adept than we are at sorting out components or constituents from conditions or determinants of

happiness. However, he certainly provided an excellent list of candidates for components and conditions of happiness. What's more, as a report of the common views of his contemporaries' (i.e., "the many"), he gave us a gem of sociological and psychological observation. For present purposes, one should notice especially that there are relatively few items in his list that most people today would exclude from our list, e.g., slaves certainly, and possibly noble birth and numerous children. In the latter cases, most people today might list some children and perhaps at least a middle class birth. Presumably only relatively young people would be interested in "fitness for athletic contests". Regarding slaves, although most of us today reject while Aristotle and most of his contemporaries accepted the institution of slavery, "From Homer on, being captured into slavery was a paradigm of human disaster, a brutal form of bad luck" (Williams 1993, pp. 197–198). I suppose this would not be an extraordinary view today and that, therefore, the idea of being a slave has been universally unattractive across all these years.

After the pages of definitions of components and conditions of happiness, Aristotle proceeded to define 'good' and to list things that are good according to his definition. Presumably, in these passages he is still giving us the views of "the many".

"Let us assume", he wrote, "good to be whatever is desirable for its own sake, or for the sake of which we choose something else; that which is the aim of all things, or of all things that possess sensation or reason;...and that whose presence makes a man fit and also independent; and independence in general; and that which produces or preserves such things...The virtues...must be a good thing; for those who possess them are in a sound condition, and they are also productive of good things and practical...Pleasure also must be a good; for all living creatures naturally desire it. Hence it follows that both agreeable and beautiful things must be good;...Happiness [EUDAIMONIA], since it is desirable in itself and self-sufficient...justice, courage, self-control, magnanimity, magnificence, and all other similar states of mind, for they are virtues of the soul. Health, beauty, and the like, for they are virtues of the body and produce many advantages;...Wealth...A friend and friendship...honour and good repute...Eloquence and capacity for action...natural cleverness, good memory, readiness to learn, quick-wittedness, and all similar qualities...the sciences, arts, and even life, for even though no other good should result from it, it is desirable in itself. Lastly, justice, since it is expedient in general for the common weal" (Aristotle 1926, pp. 59–63).

Although the list appears here to end with "justice", Aristotle continues for some pages listing things regarded as good by his contemporaries. It seems to me that our contemporaries would regard all the good things in this list as still good. Apparently, then, if Aristotle and I are accurate in our judgments about the conventional wisdom of our contemporaries, there are some great similarities of views across nearly 2500 years. Of course, there are some fairly well known differences as well, e.g., most of our contemporaries would not endorse or enjoy denying a variety of human rights to females and foreigners, reading the entrails of dead animals and sacrificing bulls to gods. A complete list of such items might reveal more differences than similarities, but there is no need to produce such a list now. For present purposes, it is more important to examine the views of one of the most illustrious "wise" men of Aristotle's time, namely, Aristotle himself.

Aristotle was by all accounts one of the most conventional of all ancient philosophers, always respectful of previous and current thinkers and mindful of the need

to appropriately contextualize his own contributions. For example, in Book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* he tells his readers that “the facts harmonize with a true account” of any particular subject and that “all the features that people look for in happiness appear to be true of the end described in our account” (Aristotle 1999, p. 10). Nevertheless, his own views were not entirely consistent with conventional wisdom. Indeed, as Annas (1993, p. 331) remarked quite generally,

...ancient [ethical] theories are all more or less revisionary, and some of them are highly counter-intuitive. They give an account of happiness which, if baldly presented to a non-philosopher without any supporting arguments, sounds wrong, even absurd. This consequence is frequently evaded because it is assumed that ancient ethical theories are morally conservative, concerned to respect and justify ancient ethical intuitions without criticizing or trying to improve them. But this assumption is false,...all the ancient theories greatly expand and modify the ordinary non-philosophical understanding of happiness, opening themselves to criticism from non-philosophers on this score.

Regarding Aristotle’s revisionism in particular, Annas (1993, p. 431) wrote:

Ancient debates about virtue and happiness are recognizably debates about the place of morality in happiness;...Aristotle revises the commonsense notion of happiness in insisting that virtue is necessary for happiness: health, wealth and the goods of popular esteem cannot make a person’s life satisfactory. Our lives will only achieve a final end which is complete and self-sufficient – the aim that we all inchoately go for, and try to make precise through philosophy – if our aims and actions are subordinated to, and given their roles and priorities by, a life of virtuous activity: a life, that is, lived in a moral way, from a disposition to do the morally right thing for the right reason, and with one’s feelings endorsing this. Nonetheless, happiness requires external goods as well.

Let us, then, briefly review Aristotle’s post-reflective, philosophical views about the good or happy life. Following conventional wisdom, he seems to have accepted the notion that some sort of independence is necessary for a good life. He introduced two technical terms to capture this idea, ‘completeness’ and ‘self-sufficiency’, using the following definitions.

We say that an end pursued in its own right is more complete than an end pursued because of something else, and that an end that is never choiceworthy because of something else is more complete than ends that are choiceworthy both in their own right and because of this end. Hence, an end that is always choiceworthy in its own right, never because of something else, is complete without qualification.

Now happiness [EUDAIMONIA], more than anything else, seems complete without qualification. For we always choose it because of itself, never because of something else. Honor, pleasure, understanding, and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, since we would choose each of them even if it had no further result; but we also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy. Happiness, by contrast, no one ever chooses for their sake, or for the sake of anything else at all.

The same conclusion [that happiness is complete] also appears to follow from self-sufficiency. For the complete good seems to be self-sufficient...we regard something as self-sufficient when all by itself it makes a life choiceworthy and lacking nothing; and that is what we think happiness does (Aristotle 1999, pp. 7–8).

In other words, Aristotle apparently believed that, in the first place, one chooses to live a particular way of life because one regards that way as not requiring anything beyond itself. Today we might say that it is both sustainable and worthy of being sustained, e.g., we choose understanding because it is good in itself but also because it contributes to our general well-being, to “living well and doing well”. If someone

asked, “But why do you choose to live well and do well?” we might wonder if the questioner understood English, because the question seems to presuppose that the alternative of preferring to live poorly and do poorly is reasonable. It is, after all, a logical truism that living well and doing well is better than living poorly and doing poorly, just as breathing well is better than breathing poorly.

Granting this, Aristotle recognized that the formal conditions of completeness and self-sufficiency lacked content, and that “we still need a clearer statement of what the best good is” for a human being. He provided this content, as Plato did before him, essentially by assuming that just as every part of a human being has some characteristic function which may be performed well or poorly, so human beings themselves may be said to have some function and their “best good” would be obtained by performing that function excellently.

What, then, could this [characteristic function] be? For living is apparently shared with plants, but what we are looking for is the special function of a human being; hence we should set aside the life of nutrition and growth. The life next in order is some sort of life of sense perception; but this too is apparently shared with horse, ox, and every animal.

The remaining possibility, then, is some sort of life of action of the [part of the soul] that has reason... We have found, then, that the human function is activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason... Now, each function is completed well by being completed in accord with the virtue proper [to that kind of thing]. And so the human good proves to be activity of the soul in accord with virtue, and indeed with the best and most complete virtue, if there are more virtues than one. Moreover, in a complete life. For one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one day; nor, similarly, does one day or a short time make us blessed and happy. This, then is a sketch of the good; for, presumably, we must draw the outline first, and fill it in later (Aristotle 1999, pp. 8–9).

Unfortunately, both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics* do not provide unambiguous guides to filling in that “sketch”. Readers are sometimes confused by Aristotle’s use of the two terms ‘blessed’ and ‘happy’, but they are practically synonyms in both volumes. However, in both volumes there is a significant discrepancy between the position offered in the last Books and all the others. In the last Book of each of these volumes, the best sort of life is one of contemplation. In Book 8 of the *Eudemian Ethics*, it is contemplation of God, i.e.,

any mode of choice and acquisition that either through deficiency or excess hinders us from serving and from contemplating God – that is a bad one... Let this, then, be our statement of what is the standard of nobility and what is the aim of things absolutely good (Aristotle 1952, p. 477).

In Book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is intellectual contemplation.

If happiness is activity in accord with virtue, it is reasonable too for it to accord with the supreme virtue, which will be the virtue of the best thing. The best is understanding, or whatever else seems to be the natural ruler and leader, and to understand what is fine and divine, by being itself either divine or the most divine element in us. Hence complete happiness will be its activity in accord with its proper virtue; and we have said that this activity is the activity of study...

For this activity is supreme, since understanding is the supreme element in us, and the objects of understanding are the supreme objects of knowledge (Aristotle 1999, p. 163).

Over the next couple pages he reveals several respects in which some sort of intellectual activity, translated as “the activity of study” and identified with “the activity of understanding” here, satisfies Aristotle’s conditions for a good or happy life. Perhaps it would be even more accurate to say that it is excellence (i.e., virtue or ARETE) in study and/or understanding that gives the happiest life according to these passages. Compared to all other kinds of virtuous activity, “study” and/or “understanding” are relatively more complete, self-sufficient, continuously sustainable, engaged in for their own sake across the whole of one’s life and most closely related to the essential feature of human beings.

The idea that a happy or good life would involve “a complete span of life” was central to most ancients’ views. According to Annas, for ancient ethicists,

...the entry point for ethical reflection [was]...the agent’s reflection on her life as a whole, and the relative importance of her various ends. This contrasts strongly with modern theories, for which hard cases and ethical conflicts are often taken to be the spur to ethical thinking...Ancient ethics takes its start from what is taken to be the fact that people have, implicitly, a notion of a final end, an overall goal which enables them to unify and clarify their immediate goals. Ethical theory is designed to enable us to reflect on this implicit overall goal and to make it determinate. For, while there is consensus that our final end is happiness (*eudaimonia*), this is trivial, for substantial disagreement remains as to what happiness consists in (Annas 1993, pp. 11–12)

To a social indicators/quality of life researcher, one of the most striking features of Annas’s excellent review of ancient ethical theories is the relative frequency with which the phrase “life as a whole” occurs. A rough count indicated that it occurred about 90 times in 455 pages, i.e., on average, once every five pages. Since the most frequently studied and measured aspect of people’s lives in the social indicators movement over the past 30 years has been satisfaction or happiness with life as a whole (Michalos 2005), we seem to have been following a very old and distinguished tradition. There is, however, a difference in the connotation of “life as a whole” for the ancients and us. For the ancients, the phrase is used to provoke reflection on the whole of one’s life from birth to death, while for us, it is used primarily to provoke reflection on all the salient domains or features of one’s life as currently lived. For ancients working in the eudaimonic tradition, the quantity of life is an important constituent of the quality of life.

In Michalos (1985) and later publications, the life satisfaction question asked “How do you feel about your life as a whole right now?”, and the assumption of the simple linear, Bottom-Up explanation (Land et al. 2012) of responses to this question was based on the idea that respondents would reflect on the satisfaction currently obtained from the specific domains or features of their lives (e.g., satisfaction obtained from jobs, friends, family relations and so on) and somehow calculate an answer that appropriately takes all the salient domains or features into account. It is possible that some respondents would mix the ancient with the contemporary connotation of “life as a whole” and craft their responses to our question based on a somewhat different array of things from birth to death, but I do not recall seeing any evidence of this.

Contrary to the somewhat academic, contemplative good lives sketched in the final chapters of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*, the preceding

chapters of both treatises sketch good lives requiring considerably more variety. In Book 1 of the former, readers are told that “a human being is a naturally political animal” (Aristotle 1999, p. 8). In Book 6, one finds that “Political science and prudence are the same state, but their being is not the same” (p. 92). A few pages earlier, “It seems proper to a prudent person to be able to deliberate finely about things that are good and beneficial for himself, not about some restricted area... but about what sorts of things promote living well in general” (p. 89).

In Book 1 of the *Politics*, Aristotle provided a naturalistic account of the origin of city-states that runs from the natural union of men and women “for the sake of procreation” and natural rulers and natural slaves “for the sake of survival”, to households “to satisfy everyday needs”, and to villages promising still greater security and finally, to city-states “for the sake of living well”. City-states are characterized as “complete communities” displaying “total self-sufficiency” (Aristotle 1998, pp. 2–3). An ordinary human being cannot flourish outside of a city-state. “Anyone who cannot form a community with others,” he says, “or who does not need to because he is self-sufficient, is no part of a city-state—he is either a beast or a god” (p. 5). Clearly, then, Aristotle’s requirement for self-sufficiency in a good or happy life is not absolute, but relative to a community which would be absolutely self-sufficient. Being able to live in such a community constitutes an important external good. The similarities between his, Plato’s and the Anonymous Iamblichus’s views on community and individual interdependence are striking.

According to Annas (1993, p. 151),

Aristotle is saying here that our lives... will be lacking in something important if we are not functioning parts of a city-state. Only in this context can we ‘live well’ rather than just living; for only this form of community demands of us what we would call *political* abilities. If we do not take part in a political community of equals, and live as active citizens, our lives will not develop as they would naturally have done – that is, they will be in some way stunted.

Several times in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle insisted on the necessity of external goods for a completely happy life. For example, after noting that “happiness is... activity in accord with virtue”, he wrote,

Nonetheless, happiness evidently also needs external goods to be added, as we said, since we cannot, or cannot easily, do fine actions if we lack the resources. For, first of all, in many actions we use friends, wealth, and political power just as we use instruments. Further, deprivation of certain [externals] – for instance, good birth, good children, beauty – mars our blessedness. For we do not altogether have the character of happiness if we look utterly repulsive or are ill-born, solitary, or childless; and we have it even less, presumably, if our children or friends are totally bad, or were good but have died. And so, as we have said, happiness would seem to need this sort of prosperity added also (Aristotle 1999, p. 11).

Notice that ‘prosperity’ here, unlike much common usage today, includes much more than financial success and security. A few pages later, he asked “Why not say that the happy person is one whose activities accord with complete virtue, with an adequate supply of external goods, not for just any time but for a complete life?” (Aristotle 1999, p. 14).

Aristotle recognized that people naturally have some virtue, e.g., from birth people may be more or less brave, temperate and just. But the sort of virtue that concerned him most was that because of which a person’s actions might be

regarded as praiseworthy or blameworthy, i.e., typically actions for which one is personally responsible or actions voluntarily and freely chosen. He thought that if one adds understanding in the form of prudence to natural virtue, one may obtain “full virtue”. For example, one might be naturally bright and admired for that, but if a naturally bright person has sufficient prudence to study hard enough to become wise beyond nature’s gift, such a person would be praiseworthy. It is this sort of excellence or virtue (ARETE) realized in and through an agent’s deliberately chosen activity that Aristotle regarded as necessary for a good life. The development of such virtue was described as similar to the development of a skill or craft (TECHNE) insofar as one becomes a skilled craftsman by deliberately engaging in some activities, with one’s understanding of them increasing as one’s skill improves. Thus, a fully virtuous person would do the right thing fully understanding that and why it is right, all things considered.

He distinguished the “possession” or “state” of virtue from “using” or the “activity” of virtue, and insisted that the former or mere capacities for action could not be sufficient for a good or happy life. After all, he remarked, “someone may be in a state that achieves no good—if, for instance, he is asleep or inactive in some other way” (Aristotle 1999, pp. 10–11). In his view, the good life was a life of “unimpeded” action proceeding from certain appropriate states and appropriately enjoyed.

For actions in accord with the virtues to be done temperately or justly it does not suffice that they themselves have the right qualities. Rather, the agent must also be in the right state when he does them. First, he must know [that he is doing virtuous actions]; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and, third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state (Aristotle 1999, p. 22).

All things considered, Aristotle’s characterization of a good or happy life is the clearest example we have from the ancients of the view that the quality of a person’s or of a community’s life is a function of the actual conditions of that life and what a person or community makes of those conditions. Conceptually, he could clearly distinguish Real Paradise and Hell from a Fool’s Paradise and Hell. Most importantly, he regarded all four cases as essentially and objectively involving human action that would be praiseworthy or blameworthy. A good or happy life is not simply given by nature, God or gods. It requires internal and external gifts and good luck beyond our control, but it also requires individual and communal initiative. For example, individuals naturally have the capacity to reason and to act bravely and justly more or less. With the right education, training and hard work, one may come to exercise these capacities excellently. A good or happy life, according to Aristotle, is achieved exactly insofar as one deliberately engages in the unimpeded excellent exercise of one’s capacities for the sake of doing what is fine, excellent or noble (KALON), provided that the deliberation and activities are undertaken from a developed disposition (i.e., a virtuous character) and accompanied by an appropriate amount of external goods and pleasure. In short, a good or happy life consists of a harmonious mixture of internal and external goods in the first place, and regarding the former, an equally harmonious mixture of reason, appetite and emotion. From his perspective, a discordant or inactive life would not be worth living and the idea of a happy scoundrel would be an oxymoron.

Epicurus of Samos (c. 341–271 BCE)



Source: Wikimedia

According to Laertius (2000b, p. 529), Epicurus was born on the island of Samos, the son of Athenian citizens and moved to Athens around 306 BCE when he was 18. If the dates of his birth and death are accurate, he was born about seven years after Plato's death and 19 years before Aristotle's death. The same source reported that "his bodily health was pitiful" (2000b, p. 525) and provided a quotation from Epicurus' letter to Idomeneus saying that he had "continual sufferings from strangury and dysentery" (Laertius 2000b, p. 549).

Dewitt (1967, p. 3) described him as

...the most revered and the most reviled of all founders of thought in the Graeco-Roman world...The man himself was revered as an ethical father, a savior, and a god. Men wore his image on finger-rings; they displayed painted portraits of him in their living rooms; the more affluent honored him with likenesses in marble. His handbooks of doctrine were carried about like breviaries; his sayings were esteemed as if oracles and committed to memory as if Articles of Faith. His published letters were cherished as if epistles of an apostle...On the twentieth day of every month his followers assembled to perform solemn rites in honor of his memory, a sort of sacrament.

He and his ideas were "the special targets of abuse" by Platonists, Stoics, Christians and Jews (DeWitt 1967, p. 3). Critics claimed that Epicurus was a sophist since he aided his itinerant school teacher father for a fee, that he plagiarized his atomic theory from Democritus, that he was an adulterer who also had frequent relations "with many courtesans", "vomited twice a day from over-indulgence", was "a preacher of effeminacy", a sycophant, atheist, name-caller, drug dealer and critic of other people's work without having any original ideas of his own (Laertius 2000b, pp. 531–537). Still, at the end of his summary of the views of Epicurus's critics, Diogenes Laertius said that all "these people are stark mad" (p. 537).

As evidence against Epicurus' critics, Laertius (2000b, pp. 537–541) provided plenty of direct quotations from the philosopher contradicting charges of his critics and claimed that the

philosopher has abundance of witnesses to attest his unsurpassed goodwill to all men – his native land, which honoured him with statues in bronze; his friends,...his gratitude to his parents, his generosity to his brothers, his gentleness to his servants...and in general, his benevolence to all mankind...Friends...came to him from all parts and lived with him in his garden...a very simple and frugal life...In his correspondence he himself mentions that he was 'content with plain bread and water...and a little pot of cheese, that, when I like, I may fare sumptuously'.

DeWitt (1967, p. 6) reported that the total extant body of Epicurus's works consists of "a booklet of sixty-nine pages", although Laertius (2000b, p. 555) claimed that the philosopher "eclipsed all before him in the number of his writings... [which amounted] to about three hundred rolls, and contain not a single citation from other authors". While none of his writings is complete, Book X of Diogenes Laertius's text contains substantial parts of four of them. Of these four, three are written to his disciples. The *Letter to Herodotus* is a summary of Epicurus's physics and/or metaphysics, the *Letter to Pythocles* deals with astronomy and meteorology, and the *Letter to Menoecus* deals with ethics. The fourth treatise contains

his 40 “Principal” or “Authorized Doctrines”, of which “almost all are contradictions of Plato” (DeWitt 1967, p. 48). These four works are conveniently collected in a single volume edited by Inwood et al. (1994), which also includes some of the “so-called ‘Vatican Sayings’...[which] is a mixture of sayings from Epicurus and other Epicureans” discovered in the Vatican Library, and Testmonia of other scholars, some of which were hostile to his philosophy, like Cicero (106–43 BCE) and Plutarch (c. 50–c. 120 CE).

Epicurus’s school in Athens was called “the Garden” and was not very different from Plato’s Academy and Aristotle’s Lyceum. They contained the residences of the founders and disciples, a library and some lecture rooms. The emphasis of the curricula at the three schools was different. The island of Samos was politically and culturally very much an Ionian community, making it scientifically and technologically progressive. Besides Epicurus, among the famous names associated with Ionia were Anaximander, Thales, Anaxagoras, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Hippocrates and Asclepius.

As we will see in greater detail shortly, Epicurus believed that the chief end or aim of human beings was peace of mind or tranquility (ATARAXIA) and a healthy body (APONIA). Metaphorically speaking, he compared the “turmoils of the soul” with “storms and squalls at sea” (DeWitt 1967, p. 226). For present purposes what has to be emphasized is that he regarded scientific knowledge and methods as the essential vehicles for the journey to peace of mind and a healthy body. Near the end of his *Letter to Herodotus* he wrote “Further, we must hold that to arrive at accurate knowledge of the cause of things of most moment is the business of natural science, and that happiness depends on this...” (Laertius 2000b, p. 607). In this sentence and many others, ‘happiness’ is used to translate MAKARIOS, which sometimes is closer to ‘blessed’ in English, but is often interchangeable in Greek with EUDAIMONIA (Aristotle 1999, p. 318). At the beginning of his *Letter to Menoecius* he wrote “So we must exercise ourselves in the things which bring happiness [EUDAIMONIA], since, if that be present, we have everything, and, if that be absent, all our actions are directed toward attaining it” (Laertius 2000b, p. 649).

At the beginning of his *Letter to Pythocles* he wrote

In your letter to me...you try, not without success, to recall the considerations which make for a happy life...you will do well to take and learn...the short epitome in my letter to Herodotus...remember that, like everything else, knowledge of celestial phenomena...has no other end in view than peace of mind and firm conviction. We do not seek to wrest by force what is impossible, nor to understand all matters equally well, nor make our treatment always as clear as when we discuss human life or explain the principles of physics in general...: our one need is untroubled existence (Laertius 2000b, pp. 613–615).

Asserting that “knowledge of celestial phenomena...has no other end in view than peace of mine”, Epicurus apparently leaned toward Socrates’ rather than Anaxagoras’s view regarding the value of knowledge. Concerning the use of the science of “celestial phenomena”, Epicurus was convinced that inattention to facts and diverse possible naturalistic explanations combined with attention to mythology and religion were jointly responsible for troubled minds. The following passages are representative of many more as he worked his way through possible

naturalistic explanations of such “celestial phenomena” as the sun, moon, turnings of the sun and moon, regularity of orbits, variations in the lengths of days and nights, stars, clouds, rain, thunderbolts, winds, hail and so on.

All things go on uninterruptedly, if all be explained by the method of plurality of causes in conformity with the facts,...But when we pick and choose among them [explanations], rejecting one equally consistent with the phenomena, we clearly fall away from the study of nature altogether and tumble into myth...Those who adopt only one explanation are in conflict with the facts and are utterly mistaken as to the way in which man can attain knowledge...always keep in mind the method of plural explanation and the several consistent assumptions and causes...[For example,] Clouds may form and gather either because the air is condensed under the pressure of winds, or because atoms which hold together and are suitable to produce this result become mutually entangled, or because currents collect from the earth and the waters; and there are several other ways in which it is not impossible for the aggregations of such bodies into clouds may be brought about (Laertius 2000b, pp. 615–627).

The up-side of his adherence to the “method of plurality of causes” was that it freed him and those who followed him from troublesome beliefs such as that natural phenomena like “solstices, eclipses, risings and settings, and the like” were the result of “the ministration or command, either now or in the future, of any being who at the same time enjoys perfect bliss along with immortality” (Laertius 2000a, b, p. 607). Although he believed that “God is a living being immortal and blessed” and that “verily there are gods” (p. 649), he did not appeal to such beings to account for natural phenomena. The down-side, of course, was that many contemporary and later theists regarded such views as heresy.

While he did not need an invisible God or gods to create and maintain the regularities perceived everywhere, like Democritus before him, he did need invisible “atoms and the void”. Early in his *Letter to Herodotus* he affirms the standard assumption that “nothing comes into being out of what is non-existent [sic]”. Since there are clearly bodies that move, there must be space for them to move in, contrary to the view of Parmenides (c. 515–c. 450 BCE). Some bodies are “composite”, made up of “elements” that have “weight”, “vary indefinitely in their shapes”, are “indivisible and unchangeable, and necessarily so...[and]...the sum of things is unlimited both by reason of the multitude of the atoms and the extent of the void”. As in Democritus, both human bodies and souls are composites of different sorts of atoms and when people die their atoms are totally dispersed.

Some atoms are “in continual motion through all eternity” moving linearly “upwards ad infinitum” or “downwards”, some moving in a vibratory fashion in composites or compounds, some swerving a bit inexplicably and others swerving as a result of human beings’ free choices (Laertius 2000b, pp. 569–593). While randomly swerving atoms might account for collisions and aggregations or combinations, it is unclear why or how they would account for free choice. The causal arrow must run in the opposite direction. In any event, freely chosen activities creating swerving atoms were posited as necessary for people to be accountable and held responsible for their own actions. There was nothing comparable to swerves in Democritus’ physics or metaphysics, which made his world thoroughly deterministic and incapable of supporting an institution of morality such

that some actions would be morally praiseworthy and others morally blameworthy. Regardless of all his condemnations of mythology and “the gods worshipped by the multitude”, in the interests of ensuring that people are the free agents of their own future, he was even more critical of a thoroughly deterministic physics. Thus in his *Letter to Menoeceus* he wrote

Destiny, which some introduce as sovereign over all things, he [who follows Epicurus’ teaching] laughs to scorn, affirming rather that some things happen of necessity, others by chance, others through our own agency. For he sees that necessity destroys responsibility and that chance or fortune is inconstant; whereas our own actions are free, and it is to them that praise and blame naturally attach. It were better, indeed, to accept the legends of the gods than to bow beneath that yoke of destiny which the natural philosophers have imposed...the misfortune of the wise is better than the prosperity of the fool. It is better, in short, that what is well judged in action should not owe its successful issue to the aid of chance (Laetius 2000b, 659).

So, the rabbit of free human agency was pulled out of the apparently thoroughly deterministic hat of his own physics and metaphysics. He may have been the first to perform this trick, but he was certainly not the last. To be clear, atomic swerves were probably not the uncaused causes of free choice as Cicero claimed (Inwood et al. 1994, pp. 47–51). Rather, at least some swerves were the effects of free choice (free human volition) on atoms.

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

We must also reflect that of desires some are natural, others are groundless; and that of the natural some are necessary as well as natural, and some natural only. And of the necessary desires some are necessary if we are to be happy [EUDAIMONIA], some if the body is to be rid of uneasiness, some if we are even to live. He who has a clear and certain understanding of these things will direct every preference and aversion toward securing health of body and tranquility of mind, seeing that this is the sum and end of a blessed life (Laetius 2000b, p. 653).

Between Epicurus’ letters to Pythocles and Menoeceus, Diogenes Laetius inserted a list of characteristics of “the wise man”, providing his readers with an aid “to the conduct of life, what we ought to avoid and what to choose” (p. 643). While some would be affirmed by “the many and the cultivated” Greeks of his day (and by many people today), some would be challenged and rejected.

There are three motives to injurious acts among men – hatred, envy, and contempt; and these the wise man overcomes by reason...He will be more susceptible of emotion than other men; that will be no hindrance to his wisdom...Even on the rack the wise man is happy...[he will not] punish his servants... fall in love... trouble himself about funeral

rites... make fine speeches...[engage in] sexual indulgence...marry and rear a family...drivel, when drunken... take part in politics... make himself a tyrant...[or commit suicide] when he has lost his sight...[He will] take a suit into court...leave written words behind him...have regard to his property and to the future...never give up a friend...pay just so much regard to his reputation as not to be looked down upon... be able to converse correctly about music and poetry, without however actually writing poems himself... will make money, but only by his wisdom...be grateful to anyone when he is corrected... found a school...give readings in public, but only by request...on occasion die for a friend (Laertius 2000b, pp. 643–647).

Supposing that “the wise man” is better than average at “living well and doing well”, it appears that such a person would find the quality of life good if it were free of mental and physical pain, full of like-minded friends and intellectually stimulating. In fact, this is the sort of life Epicurus and his disciples probably would have had in the privacy of his residence and school, “the Garden”. Contrary to Aristotle’s recommendation to actively engage life and the world in all its diversity in the pursuit of excellence, Epicurus recommended a relatively passive and contemplative life in pursuit of a healthy body and peace of mind.

What, then, is the nature and role of pleasure in the good life envisioned by Epicurus? We have seen that Plato, Aristotle and Epicurus often refer to the final aim or end of life as happiness, although the happiness they are referring to is not exactly the same thing. On the role of pleasure, there appears to be a fundamental difference between the views of Plato and Aristotle on the one hand and Epicurus on the other. For the former, pleasure was at best a “handmaiden to virtue” and never the final goal. However, in his *Letter to Monoecus* Epicurus claimed that

We call pleasure [IDONI] the alpha and omega of a blessed life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge of every good thing (Laertius 2000a, b, p. 655).

To this direct quote from Epicurus, Laertius (2000b, p. 663) adds this: “And we choose the virtues too on account of pleasure and not for their own sake [contrary to Aristotle], as we take medicine for the sake of health”.

The trouble is that when Epicurus describes the nature of pleasure, it seems to be inextricably joined to virtue. To Monoecus he wrote,

When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or willful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul...it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul. Of all this the beginning and the greatest good is prudence [PHRONESIS]...from it spring all the other virtues, for it teaches that we cannot lead a life of pleasure which is not also a life of prudence, honour, and justice; nor lead a life of prudence, honour, and justice, which is not also a life of pleasure. For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them (Laertius 2000b, p. 657).

Taking these passages literally, the analogy of medicine and health is inaccurate. It would be more accurate to say that the relation between pleasure and the virtues is

analogous to that between health and a good life. Health is clearly instrumentally valuable for a good life, but also intrinsically valuable and hence, constitutive of a good life, as Aristotle recognized. Sen (1999, pp. 36–37) makes a similar point about freedom.

Annas noticed that the connection Epicurus made between pleasure and virtues was also made by John Stuart Mill in *Utilitarianism* over two thousand years later.

Mill...fully realizes that in claiming that pleasure is the agent's *summum bonum* he runs into the problem of completeness. He regards it as comparatively simple to show that happiness (by which he explicitly means pleasure and the absence of pain) is desirable as an end; but he has to show something far harder, namely that happiness thus conceived is the *only* thing desirable as an end. In particular, he recognizes that he has to square this with the recognition that we seek the virtues for their own sake. His solution is to expand the notion of happiness in such a way that seeking the virtues for their own sake counts as seeking happiness, since doing the former counts as part of being happy (Annas 1993, p. 339).

At another point, Annas clearly indicates the importance of these expansions for the morality of the hedonists' position.

So if, as Epicurus holds, pleasure is our complete final end, and we also need real friendships, then... We need, in our lives, real friendships, which may sometimes involve caring about others as much as about ourselves. What gives this its point in our lives is ultimately pleasure. But this does not lead to selfishness, or to viewing friendship instrumentally; for pleasure as our final end has been expanded to include the pleasure from genuine other-concern. The argument is, as the Epicureans saw, exactly the same as with the virtues; the pleasure we seek is expanded so that we achieve it precisely by having non-instrumental concern for virtuous action and the interests of others (Annas 1993, p. 240).

This is certainly ethics without tears. If caring for others gave most people as much pleasure as caring for oneself, the average price of moral virtue for most people would probably be reduced considerably and make morally good behaviour much easier to sell to most people. While I appreciate the motivation for the position, I am not convinced by the expansion. Expansion of ordinary concepts in extraordinary ways often creates more problems than it solves. As suggested earlier, the expansion of the idea of good health to the idea of "complete physical, mental and social well-being" confounds health with the broader idea of quality of life, and makes otherwise reasonable questions about the impact of health on the quality of life redundant (Michalos 2004).

Besides the problem of expanding the meaning of 'pleasure' to include concern for others as well as oneself, a problem arises because Epicurus distinguished at least two kinds of pleasure static and kinetic. Peace of mind or tranquility (ATARAXIA) and the absence of physical pain (APONIA) are static pleasures in the sense that they represent ends in themselves, final ends. "Kinetic pleasure is the pleasure of getting to this latter state, static pleasure, the pleasure of being in it" (Annas 1993, p. 336). For example, a thirsty person finds kinetic pleasure in drinking and static pleasure when thirst is thoroughly quenched; a person with physical pain finds kinetic pleasure as the pain is reduced and static pleasure when it is entirely gone.

The clear implication of Epicurus' remark that "By pleasure we mean the absence pain in the body and of trouble in the soul" is that, contrary to the views of Socrates and Plato, there is no neutral point between pleasure and pain. So far as the latter exists, the former does not, and vice versa. Since people are not always in pain, they must sometimes experience pleasure. What's more, one of Epicurus' Authorized Doctrines says that "The magnitude of pleasure reaches its limit in the removal of all pain" (Laertius 2000b, p. 665). For example, once one's hunger or thirst are satisfied with food or drink, the pain of wanting both is removed, leaving one in a state of pleasure. If the pain of wanting anything at all, mentally or physically, is removed, then one's life would be "complete and perfect". Armed with these premises, Epicurus was led to one of the most famous and intriguing philosophic arguments ever written. To Monoceus he wrote,

Accustom thyself to believe that death is nothing to us, for good and evil imply sentience, and death is the privation of sentience; therefore a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not by adding to life an illimitable time, but by taking away the yearning after immortality...Whatsoever causes no annoyance when it is present, causes only a groundless pain in the expectation. Death, therefore, the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not. It is nothing, then, either to the living or to the dead, for with the living it is not and the dead exist no longer (Laertius 2000b, p. 651).

This argument probably engages contemporary philosophers nearly as much as it has engaged all philosophers since Epicurus, e.g., see Gordon and Suits (2003). The bottom line is that once one experiences freedom from physical and mental pain, that is as good as it gets. Just as one has no interest in eating more or drinking more when one's hunger and thirst are satisfied, one should have no interest in living more because extending the length of time one is in the state of being free of physical and mental pain will not make it more pleasurable. It can only bring more of the same. If nothing else, this is a very hardy view of death.

This is not the place to examine this notorious argument, but it is worth quoting for readers who have never seen it. For present purposes, the problem arising from the static versus kinetic distinction that merits more attention is that some people believe that Epicurus completely psychologized pleasure and more generally, the good life by insisting that the final end was the static pleasure described as peace of mind and a healthy body. We have already seen that he claimed that "Even on the rack the wise man is happy". In his letter to Idomeneus, the sentence following the sentence quoted earlier about his "sufferings" is "...over against them all I set gladness of mind at the remembrance of our past conversations". According to Annas, (1993, pp. 349–350),

...it is not in any way illogical that the good Epicurean should be said to be happy even while screaming in pain on the rack. For he has what matters: the right internal attitude to what happens to him, and this is not removed by present pain...Epicurus' thesis about happiness on the rack appears paradoxical only if taken out of context; it makes perfect sense given his stress on two points. First, happiness is a condition that involves life as a whole, and does not come and go with particular intense episodes of pleasure or pain. But second, happiness is not to be identified with the course of our life as a whole, but with the inner attitude the agent has to that extended course, an attitude that is not dependent

on the way that course goes on. Thus, being happy is consistent with the collapse or reversal of the outward course of one's life...Epicurus has produced a bland rather than a shocking hedonism by fitting pleasure into a eudaimonistic framework; the radical and interesting part of his theory lies in his internalizing our final end, so that what we aim at, what we bend our lives towards and monitor our actions to achieve, is something which, once achieved, is altogether indifferent to the temporal shape of a human life.

This seems to me to be perhaps generous, but unfair to Epicurus. After telling us over and over in many contexts that the pleasurable end we seek is peace of mind and a healthy body, it is more than "paradoxical" to say that he does not, after all, regard the state of his bodily health as important. What matters, says Annas, is "attitude". If this were true, we would have to say that he did not believe that the good life required objectively good circumstances plus an appropriate attitude toward them. Only attitude mattered to him. All the talk about the importance of scientific knowledge to a good life would have been pointless. One might have reached a proper attitude with the right drugs or the power of positive thinking. Hence, on this view in my terms, he could not logically distinguish a Fool's Paradise from Real paradise. His most considered philosophical view about the good life would have been inconsistent with his most frequently used description of it. It is possible, but seems very unlikely.

It seems more likely that in those passages about his own suffering and wise men on the rack, he only means to say that regardless of the suffering, he knows that on the whole (not every part) a wise man and he himself have had a good life. As a eudaimonist, Epicurus

...values the absence of pain because he thinks of an agent's attitude to his life as a whole. If I think about how things have gone for me and how I expect them to go for me, and I find that they have gone well and can be expected to go on that way, I can claim to be in a desirable condition even if I do not feel any particularly strong sensation at the time (Irwin 1991, p. 71).

It is certainly logically possible and there is now plenty of evidence that objectively catastrophic events in people's lives (e.g., serious physical injury, death of loved ones) are consistent with people's judgments that on the whole, their lives are good (Michalos 2003, 2005, 2010). It also often happens that objectively measured maladies are found that have been destroying the quality of people's lives, although they have been unaware of it. Such people typically recognize that they have been living in a Fool's Paradise.

Zeno of Citium (c. 333–261 BCE)

Zeno of Citium on the island of Cyprus was the founder of the philosophy of Stoicism, a name it received from the school's original residence, the STOA POIKILE (Painted Porch). Laertius (2000b, pp. 111–127), reported that Zeno "was lean, fairly tall, and swarthy", "flabby and delicate" with "thick legs", personally "sour and of a frowning countenance" and "very niggardly too, clinging

to meanness unworthy of a Greek”. That he was nevertheless highly regarded by Athenians is supported by the fact that he was given “the keys of the city walls, and...[honoured] with a golden crown and a bronze statue”. He lived on a modest diet of a “little loaves and honey” and “a little wine of good bouquet”, and was supposed to have “readily adapted himself to circumstances” which, given his dislike for being “too near to people”, led to his usually selecting “the end seat of a couch” to reduce such contact by half.

He arrived in Athens at the age of twenty-two and studied philosophy in the Socratic tradition. For philosophers working in this tradition, philosophy was not “an interesting pastime or even a particular body of knowledge, but a way of life” (Baltzly 2004, p. 2). Around the age of forty-two he founded the Stoic school. According to Baltzly (2004, p. 15),

Stoicism became a “popular philosophy” in a way that neither Platonism nor Aristotelianism ever did. In part this is because Stoicism, like its rival Epicureanism, addressed the questions that most people are concerned with in very direct and practical ways. It tells you how you should regard death, suffering, great wealth, poverty, power over others and slavery. In the political and social context of the Hellenistic period (where a person could move between these extremes in very short order) Stoicism provided a psychological fortress which was secure from bad fortune.

Laertius (2000b, p. 149) wrote that he “decided to give a general account of all the Stoic doctrines in the life of Zeno because he was the founder of the School.” He listed 20 books by this author, but there may have been more. While Zeno was indeed the founder of the Stoic School, it is generally recognized that Chrysippus of Soli (c. 280–c. 207 BCE) was a more prolific writer, adding depth and systemization to the ideas of the founder. Laertius (2000b, pp. 299–319) claimed that there were 705 works of Chrysippus and he lists titles of 163 of them, several of which have more than one volume. According to Gould (1970, p. 207), the philosophy of Chrysippus “remained for centuries the standard of orthodoxy” for Stoicism. I have tried to focus on the founder’s views, although as with most of the pioneers examined here, it is often impossible to say with certainty what was said or written by whom. For the most part, only views specifically attributed to Zeno and/or Chrysippus by Diogenes Laertius are presented here. Generally, I have not introduced material from the later Stoics of the Roman Empire, i.e., Epictetus of Hierapolis (c. 55–135 CE), Seneca the Younger (c. 4 BCE–c. 65 CE) and Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE). These works “tend to be long on moral exhortation but give only clues to the theoretical bases of the moral system” (Baltzly 2004, p. 2).

Zeno and Chrysippus were empiricists who held that the ultimate sources of knowledge were presentations, mental impressions or appearances (PHANTASIA) “imprinted on the soul”. Presentations were said to come in two species, as data from our sense organs (e.g., perceptions of colour) or as data by way of the mind (e.g., inferences from arguments). Regarding sense data, they might be apprehensions of real objects or not. When sense data proceeded from real objects, agreed with the nature of those objects and were stamped on the mind, they were supposed to provide truth in the sense of correspondence with reality (Michalos 2006). When one had an “unerring apprehension” or complete certainty with

respect to a presentation (i.e., one had a “clear and distinct” presentation), one had knowledge. Dialectic was regarded as a virtue (ARETE) “embracing” others in the form of knowledge, e.g., knowledge of “when to give or withhold the mind’s assent to impressions” (Laertius 2000b, pp. 153–161). In these philosophers’ lifetimes, critics correctly claimed that because one could not always distinguish “clear and distinct” impressions proceeding from real objects and agreeing with the nature of those objects compared to those not proceeding from such objects and agreeing with their nature, it would be impossible to know if one’s beliefs were true and if one had knowledge.

The world view of Zeno and Chrysippus was thoroughly pantheistic and deterministic. According to Laertius (2000b, pp. 239–255), the universe (KOSMOS) has “two principles”, a “passive principle” which is “a substance without quality” and an “active principle” which is “the reason inherent in this substance, that is God”. God (THEOS) is known by many names “according to his powers”, including, Reason, Fate, Zeus, Athena, Hera, Hephaestes and Poseidon.

The whole world...is a living being, endowed with soul and reason...The deity...is immortal, rational, perfect or intelligent in happiness, admitting nothing evil [into him], taking providential care of the world and all that therein there is, but he is not of human shape. He is...the artificer of the universe and, as it were, the father of all, both in general and in that particular part of him which is all-pervading...

Beyond the world there is only “the infinite void, which is incorporeal”. For both philosophers, “all things happen by fate or destiny” and “Fate is defined as an endless chain of causation, whereby things are, or as the reason or formula by which the world goes on”. In some mysterious way, God is supposed to have created the four elements of earth, air, fire and water from the “substance without quality” and periodically the world of elements comes to an end in a great conflagration after which it is created again.

According to Gould (1970, p. 207), Chrysippus in particular was never successful in his “attempt to reconcile his doctrine of determinism with his assumption that men are responsible for some of their conduct”. It is unlikely that anyone else has either.

For Zeno and Chrysippus, “An animal’s first impulse...is self-preservation” and “pleasure...[is] a by-product...an aftermath comparable to the condition of animals thriving and plants in full bloom”. Plants and animals are by nature (PHYSIS) disposed to behave in ways that contribute to their well-being. Human beings possess reason and “for them life according reason rightly becomes the natural life”. For Zeno, the proper end (TELOS) for humans was described as “life in agreement with nature (or living agreeably to nature) which is the same as a virtuous life, virtue being the goal towards which nature guides us” (Laertius 2000b, pp. 193–195).

Presumably, emphasizing the empirical basis of his view, Chrysippus altered Zeno’s description of the end as

...living in accordance with experience of the actual course of nature...for our individual natures are parts of the nature of the whole universe. And this is why the end may be defined as life in accordance with nature, or, in other words, in accordance with our own

human nature as well as that of the universe..And this very thing constitutes the virtue of the happy man and the smooth current of life, when all actions promote the harmony of the spirit dwelling in the individual man with the will of him who orders the universe (Laertius 2000b, pp. 195–197).

In these passages we find the ethical naturalism of the Stoics in plain view, proceeding from an ‘is’ to an ‘ought’. The word “nature” is used in both a descriptive and an evaluative sense. We are by nature disposed to behave in certain ways to promote the well-being of ourselves and the universe, and we ought to live virtuously or excellently to achieve the aims assigned to us by nature. “Common nature, in natural philosophy conceived as the irresistible and unimpeded force governing the universe, becomes in Chrysippus’ moral philosophy a *norm*, in conformity with which men ought to mold their lives” (Gould 1970, p. 166). Thus, Annas (1993, p. 171) wrote,

...the notions of living according to virtue and of living according to nature are interdependent. Living according to virtue is a matter of coming to have the right attitude to the things towards which we have natural attraction or repulsion. We start out with natural tendencies; virtue comes when we have developed a rational attitude towards their objects. Nature provides the material of virtue, as Chrysippus puts it. On the other side, living according to nature requires virtue.

Having “the right attitude” or disposition toward the right things is fundamental for Stoics. One’s virtuous acts are always performed in contexts including variables over which an actor has no control. The consequences of such acts are therefore a product of the total set of circumstances that may or may not be consistent with an actor’s intentions. However, like Epicurus and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) much later, it is precisely the intentions that carry the burden of virtue. In the end, the skill of a virtuous person is contained in that person’s own aims, attitudes and disposition. In Annas’s (1993, p. 408) terms, the skill is essentially “internalized”.

That “this very thing”, “living in accordance with experience of the actual course of nature”, “constitutes the virtue of the happy man” is a view attributed more clearly to Zeno, Chrysippus and Hecaton (late second century BCE), and rejected by two other Stoics in the following passage.

“Virtue in itself they hold to be worthy of choice for its own sake...Moreover, they hold that it is in itself sufficient to ensure well-being [EUDAIMONIA]: Thus Zeno, and Chrysippus in the first book of his Treatise *On Virtues*, and Hecato in the second book of his treatise *On Goods*: ‘For if magnanimity by itself alone can raise us far above everything, and if magnanimity is but a part of virtue, then too virtue as a whole will be sufficient in itself for well-being [EUDAIMONIA]’... Panaetius, however, and Posidonius deny that virtue is self-sufficing: on the contrary, health [UGIEIA] is necessary, and some means of living and strength” (Laertius 2000b, p. 233).

In a later passage attributed directly to Chrysippus from his book *On the Means of Livelihood*, the philosopher boldly wrote that “virtue in itself is sufficient to constitute happiness [EUDAIMONIA]” (Laertius 2000b, pp. 297–299). Thus, in these passages our translator, R.D. Hicks, treated ‘virtue’, ‘well-being’ and ‘happiness’ as

synonyms, while ‘health’ is treated as designating a more specific additional thing. Plutarch reported that a follower of Zeno, “Ariston of Chios [c. 320–c. 250 BCE] made virtue one in essence [OUSIA] and called it health” (Annas 1993, p. 80). As well, “a person who lives in accordance with nature, virtue, or perfect reason, at the same time lives free from emotions, attains APATHEIA” (Gould 1970, p. 187). Freedom from emotions, according to Baltzly (2004, p. 14), “in its Hellenistic sense, is not the view that you shouldn’t care about anything, but rather the view that you should not be psychologically subject to anything—manipulated and moved by *it*, rather than yourself being actively and positively in command of your reactions and responses to things as they occur or are in prospect. It connotes a kind of complete self-sufficiency”. Self-sufficiency, as we have seen, is a relatively constant desired feature of a good life according to most of the scholars considered here.

Annas believed that Jeremy Bentham’s (1724–1804 CE) reaction to the claim that virtue is sufficient for happiness was totally but too rapidly dismissive. “What benefit,” Bentham wrote, “in any shape, could be derived from impregnating the memory with such nonsense?” In Annas’s view,

The problem here lies not with our notion of virtue, but with our notion of happiness. It is easy for us to fall into Bentham’s mindless assumption that happiness must be a determinate and specific state, especially a state of feeling good about something. And of course it is mysterious why anyone would think morality a good strategy for achieving *that*. But... there is no reason to think that this is what the ancient notion of happiness is. Happiness has been introduced as a thin and indeterminate specification of our final end. It is a mistake to bend the notion of virtue to fit happiness; in the ancient way of thinking it is happiness which is the weak and flexible notion, which has to be modified when we understand the nature of the demands which virtue makes in our lives (Annas 1993, pp. 128–129).

Chrysippus believed that virtue is a skill [TECHNE] that can be taught and lost, and that the many species of virtue were forms of knowledge, e.g., “wisdom...as the knowledge of things good and evil... courage as knowledge of what we ought to choose” (Laertius 2000b, pp. 199, 231). He also believed that anyone who was “the possessor of one is the possessor of all...For if a man be possessed of virtue, he is at once able to discover and to put into practice what he ought to do. Now such rules of conduct comprise rules for choosing [resulting from wisdom], enduring [resulting from courage], staying [resulting from temperance] and distributing [resulting from justice]” (Laertius 2000b, 229–231).

According to Stoics, Laertius (2000b, p. 201) wrote, “Good [AGATHON] in general is that from which some advantage comes, and more particularly what is either identical with or not distinct from benefit...Another particular definition of good which they give is ‘the natural perfection of a rational being *qua* rational’.” For rational human beings, this “natural perfection” is virtue. We are also told that “Chrysippus in his work *On the Morally Beautiful*” held that “all that is good is beautiful [KALON], or that the term ‘good’ has equal force with the term ‘beautiful’... [and] that all goods are equal and that all good is desirable in the highest degree and admits of no lowering or heightening of intensity” (Laertius 2000b, p. 207).

For Chrysippus then, being good is like being pregnant, not admitting of degrees.

Annas (1993, p. 390) was strongly critical of the Stoic understanding of ‘good’. In her view,

Intuitively, we understand being benefited as getting what is good for us, and we understand the latter in terms of our perceived wants. The Stoics, of course, do not mean this: virtue gives us what is good for us whether we realize it or not, and whether we want it or not, and health and wealth can harm us even if we deny that we are being harmed. The notion of benefit that the Stoics are using here is a completely objective notion of good. But this limits the intuitive appeal of the claim, reducing it in fact almost to nothing. I may well accept that I am happy if I am getting what benefits me; but if I am then told that what benefits me does so whatever I think about it, the notion of happiness in play comes to seem highly unintuitive.

As explained earlier, an absolute rejection of the very idea of an objective assessment of what is good in favour of only subjective assessments destroys the possibility of anyone falling into the errors labeled a ‘Fool’s Paradise’ and a ‘Fool’s Hell’. Rather than an apriori flat rejection of either sort of assessment, one must grant the more reasonable position that the two kinds of assessment are normally both necessary and together sufficient for a plausible judgment about the quality of life or a good life.

The most troublesome feature of Stoic views about goods concerns their treatment of things that they regard as morally “Neutral (neither good nor evil)” and thus “indifferent” or “morally indifferent” but nevertheless have value (AXIA) and are to be “preferred” because “they are typically appropriate, fitting or suitable (OIKEION) for us [as rational agents]” (Baltzly 2004, p. 10). Chrysippus is reported to have said that

...such things (as life, health, and pleasure) are not in themselves goods, but are morally indifferent, though falling under the species or subdivision ‘things preferred’. For as the property of hot is to warm, not to cool, so the property of good is to benefit, not to injure; but wealth and health do no more benefit than injury, therefore neither wealth nor health is good. Further, they say that that is not good of which both good and bad use can be made; but of wealth and health both good and bad use can be made; therefore wealth and health are not goods...[Chrysippus denied] that pleasure [IDONI] is a good either; for some pleasures are disgraceful, and nothing disgraceful is good...[and he asserted] that sins are all equal...For he who is a hundred furlongs from Canopus and he who is only one furlong away are equally not in Canopus (Laertius 2000b, p. 209).

Many people might grant that moral virtue cannot be measured against or traded off with non-moral virtue. For example, such people would say that someone’s excellence (i.e., non-moral virtue) at mathematics or painting cannot be used as a plausible reason for allowing him or her to escape condemnation for the morally wrong (i.e., morally evil) act of killing an innocent person. Others might be willing to allow people who are extra-ordinarily brilliant at something to get away with moral indiscretions. Comprehensive indexes of the quality of life or human well-being are called ‘compensatory’ if they allow all kinds of virtues or goods to be traded off against all other kinds of goods and evils, and in fact most indexes developed over the past 50 years are compensatory. The Stoics considered here would have rejected such indexes.

What is more troublesome about the things designated as “morally indifferent” by the Stoics is the fact that some kinds of moral virtue cannot be displayed

without some things that they designated as “morally indifferent”. This problem was observed by many of the Stoics’ contemporaries. For example, as we saw above, Aristotle suggested that poor people cannot display generosity in sharing goods that they do not have and rich people cannot display their generosity in sharing goods that they have in a community where all others are equally endowed. Clearly, wealth and poverty circumscribe, create advantages and disadvantages for one’s ability to display certain moral virtues. So it is implausible to write such things off as “morally indifferent”.

While Laertius (2000b, pp. 225, 229) claimed that Chrysippus believed that the wise man or sage “is naturally made for society and action” and he “will take part in politics, if nothing hinders him...since thus he will restrain vice and promote virtue”, Plutarch quoted from one of Chrysippus’ books saying that “I think that the wise man does not meddle in the affairs of government, is of a retiring nature, and attends to his own affairs, good men being, in a similar way, people who are concerned with their own affairs and lead a retiring life” (Gould 1970, p. 173).

Annas’s comparisons between the political views of Zeno and Plato are particularly instructive.

The most striking feature of Zeno’s work, as far as we can tell, was the one in which it most resembles Plato’s *Republic*, namely that only the virtuous are citizens of the ideal state. Zeno’s answer to the problem of how to improve actual cities is so idealized that it removes those factors that lead to specifically political problems. Like Plato, Zeno abolished conflict, and does so by abolishing the obvious sources of conflict, namely attachment to goods other than virtue...This gives us an idealized model for a political association; but like Plato it gives us no political programme for achieving this...Like Plato’s just agent in the *Republic*, she will take part in the politics of no society but the ideal society, which exists nowhere on earth. This does not mean that she will be inactive politically in her own city...but her political activity as a Stoic will consist simply in trying...to bring the actual state of affairs closer to the ideal. And since what this demands is making everybody moral, no one political programme is indicated (Annas 1993, pp. 306–307).

Thus, for these two philosophers and, as we saw, Aristotle, the virtue of individuals interacts with the virtue of communities such that progress toward the good life or a life with a good quality is mutually dependent on both. Recognizing this interaction, one can see that for these ancients, questions like ‘What is the best sort of person to be and the best sort of life to live?’ are essentially connected to questions like ‘How should we define and measure a society’s progress toward a good quality of life?’ Pursuing answers to such questions, we are reminded of significant similarities between the human conditions of those who lived over twenty-five hundred years before us and us.

Summary

This treatise has reviewed ideas about the good life according to some of the most remarkable historic figures writing in the period from the eighth century to the third century BCE. Although many of the beliefs of these men are little more than

historical curiosities for us today, many of them are still relevant and shared by many of our contemporaries. As well, a surprising number of embryonic roots of some contemporary controversies and views have been revealed. The following list provides a brief summary of some highlights.

- Writing in the eighth century BCE, the good life characterized by Homer's heroes included wealth, physical health and attractiveness, strength of character, courage, justice, generosity and piety.
- For Homer's near contemporary, Hesiod, a good life stretched beyond the personal virtues of heroic individuals and included flourishing and prosperous communities, populated by honest people, living in peace, enjoying the fruits of their labour, with an absence of worries and disease.
- About 200 years later, Pythagoras stretched his vision beyond observable individuals and communities, claiming that the good life we seek lies in the unobservable harmony within an unobservable entity, the immortal soul.
- Pythagoras's contemporary, Heraclitus, espoused a confusing mixture of absolutist and relativistic views, but adopted a naturalistic and pragmatic philosophy, claiming that thinking rightly and acting in accordance with the nature of one's species and in harmony with the conditions of the world would produce a good life.
- Theognis regarded the aristocratic life of Homer's heroes as the best sort and, adopting a naturalistic view that may have seemed extreme to Heraclitus, he rejected the idea that a bad man leading a bad life could be educated to become a good man leading a good life.
- A later contemporary of Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, was an early proponent of the view that scientific investigation purely in the interest of better understanding our world was an appropriate end in itself and he issued something close to a rather opaque scientific credo for his age and many to follow, namely, that "Appearances are a sight of the unseen".
- A close contemporary of Anaxagoras, Empedocles, posited a transmigrating soul-like DAIMON within each individual experiencing a good life featuring love, friendship, harmony, peace, joy, social and self-esteem or a bad life featuring strife, quarrels, murder, war and all manner of human distress, with credits or debits accumulating toward a following life until the credits become sufficient to allow the DAIMON to enjoy a blessed life among "other immortals".
- Another fifth century philosopher, Protagoras, was a clear relativist, holding that the best life and the best sort of person to be are entirely dependent on individual preferences and the balance of pleasure or pain obtained from them.
- His contemporary, Antiphon of Rhamnous, followed Heraclitus in his belief that the best sort of life can be led by making careful and accurate observations of nature, but unlike Heraclitus, Antiphon held a thoroughly egoistic ethic prescribing individuals to use their knowledge of nature in the interest of pursuing their own pleasure and avoiding their own pain.
- A younger contemporary of Antiphon and the first philosopher to recommend downward comparisons as a strategy for attaining happiness, Democritus mixed

his own atomism with Anaxagoras's credo and Pythagoras's emphasis on unobservable harmony, believing that all observable mental and physical disorders could be explained by unobservable disordered and discordant atomic activity, while observable human well-being could be obtained and explained by unobservable orderly and harmonious atomic activity.

- A contemporary of Democritus, Hippocrates, became the Father of Medicine with a variety of views attributed to him regarding the constituents and determinants of human well-being and ill-being emphasizing the general themes of natural harmony and balance but more particularly the importance of individual constitutions, humours, diets, exercises, geography, seasonal climates, heavenly bodies and government.
- A contemporary of Democritus and Hippocrates, Antisthenes, advocated the traditional value of living according to nature while asserting that virtue is the same for men and women and sufficient to produce happiness and self-sufficiency.
- Aristippus of Cyrene ("the elder") was a younger contemporary of Democritus, Hippocrates and Antisthenes who held that the only end (TELOS) identifiable for humans is the experience of particular pleasures because knowledge is based on people's transitory, unique and infallible affections which precluded the discovery of any long-lasting self whose life as a whole could be perceived and whose long-term interests could be pursued.
- A contemporary of Aristippus, Plato, believed that the final end or best life as a whole for humans was a happy life lived in a community of happy people, which in his eudaimonistic terms meant people with lives that were virtuous or excellent in all its forms, healthy, noble, experienced as pleasant and justifiably attractive to reasonable human beings.
- A relatively obscure contemporary of Plato, known as the Anonymous Iamblich, was an early advocate of what we now call social capital theory, insofar as he recognized the importance of trust and law-abidingness for individual and community well-being.
- Diogenes of Sinope, a younger contemporary of Aristippus, believed that because the gods lived divinely happy without needs or wants, a divine-like best life for people would be a life with all conventional needs and wants shunned entirely or reduced to a bear minimum.
- Plato's greatest student, Aristotle, believed that EUDAIMONIA, happiness, "living well and doing well" is achieved insofar as one lives one's whole life deliberately engaged in the unimpeded excellent exercise of one's capacities for the sake of doing what is fine, excellent or noble, provided that the deliberation and activities are undertaken from a virtuous character and accompanied by an appropriate amount of conventionally accepted external goods and pleasure.
- Rather than aiming at Aristotle's vigorous active life in the world of affairs, Epicurus aimed for a relatively pleasant, passive, healthy, peaceful, morally virtuous and intellectually stimulating life surrounded by friends in his fairly exclusive Garden.

- A contemporary of Epicurus, Zeno of Citium, picked up the Heraclitean theme of living in accordance with nature but added that although conventional goods of the body and external goods are to be “preferred” by rational agents, they do not contribute to moral virtue and it is precisely moral virtue itself that is sufficient for happiness.

All things considered, these ancient philosophers left quality of life researchers with quite a legacy.

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Life Timelines for Ancient Scholars, BCE

	800	700	600	500	400	300	200
Homer c.800–c.700	*****						
Hesiod c.750–c.650	*****						
Pythagoras c.560–c.480					*****		
Theognis c.550–?				*			
Heraclitus c.540–c.480				*****			
Anaxagoras c.500–c.428					*****		
Empedocles c.492–c.432					*****		
Protagoras c.490–c.420					***		
Antiphon c.480–c.411					***		
Democritus c.460–c.370					*****		
Hippocrates c.450–c.380					*****		
Antisthenes c.445–c.360)					*****		
Aristippus c.435–350					*****		
Plato 427–347					*****		
Anonymous Iamblichus c.400–?						*	
Diogenes c.400–c.325					*****		
Aristotle 384–322					***		
Epicurus 341–270						*****	
Zeno 335–263						*****	