

Alex C. Michalos and Steven R. Robinson

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## Introduction

In very broad strokes, one may think of the quality of life of an individual or community as a function of 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 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 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. The most important point to be made here is that the classical notion of a Fool's Paradise requires at least the sort of two-variable model mentioned in the first paragraph. This notion is based on the common sense view that there is a real world, however roughly apprehended, and that there are good reasons for believing that some perceptions, etc. are more acceptable than others.

As the remnants of the works of ancient authors are examined below, 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 override 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 also ultimately definitive. So, for example, it seems to be supposed that if some people are satisfied living in unsanitary environments, breathing polluted air and drinking polluted

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A.C. Michalos (✉)  
Brandon University, 270 – 18th Street, Brandon,  
MB R7A 4P9, Canada  
e-mail: michalos@brandonu.ca

S.R. Robinson  
Philosophy Department, Brandon University, 270 – 18th Street,  
Brandon, MB R7A 6A9, Canada  
e-mail: Robinsons@brandonu.ca

water, abusing and being abused by family members and strangers, suffering imposed restrictions on opportunities for personal achievement and development, and generally facing an array of life chances promising a life that is relatively nasty, brutish, and short rather than pleasant, elegant, and long, then that is acceptable. It seems to be supposed, wittingly or not, that however constrained the perceptions, beliefs, and so on of the people living in such conditions and assessing them as satisfactory, their assessments are paramount. For people holding such populist and somewhat post-modern views, there can be no Fool's Paradise, because there can be no fools foolish enough to misjudge their own satisfaction. 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.

For the purposes of this essay, 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. Inherent in the notion of a Fool's Paradise is the commitment to a higher, more scientific level of knowledge or awareness from which peoples' everyday, unreflective notions of happiness may be interrogated and evaluated. It is important to remember that the world contains many people living in poverty, lacking adequate food, shelter, and medical care, and facing life chances offering little hope of relief. 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. In the ancient world, it was those we label "philosophers" who most self-consciously took up the task of working beyond common-sense notions towards an evidential basis for such epistemic claims. That is why this chapter will concentrate mostly on the work of the ancient philosophers.

Veenhoven (2000) provided an excellent review of many classificatory schemes for the idea of quality of life and presented his own preferred schemes. Some of these may be found in his essay on happiness in this

volume. The most complete explanation of our general taxonomy of issues concerning the definition of "quality of life" may be found in Michalos (1980, 2008). It would take us too far off our main topic to examine this approach and compare it with Veenhoven's in any reasonable level of detail. Briefly and roughly speaking, we think the word "quality" in the phrase "quality of life" is used to refer to two kinds of things, descriptions and evaluations, which are conceptually distinct but in fact usually more or less blended. Veenhoven believes there are many kinds of qualities, but he prefers a scheme with four main species. In particular, he thinks that there are the qualities of livability, life-ability, utility, and life appreciation. He seems to grant that these four species are neither exhaustive of all possible types nor mutually exclusive in pairs. He recognizes that practically everything can be regarded as useful for something, which implies that everything in the other three categories could be included in the utility category. Sure we agree that no scheme developed so far is powerful enough to capture the great variety of ideas and issues involved in defining and measuring quality of life. For the purposes of this essay, we think the fourfold scheme presented above is particularly useful, although Veenhoven's fourfold scheme would also be workable.

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. Specialists in ancient philosophy may wonder why Cynics, Cyrenaics, Stoics, and Sceptics have been neglected, and the answer is simple enough. It seemed more useful to provide more details on the work of a few than fewer details on the work of many. 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, the literature review that follows is a review of bits and pieces of their thoughts, sayings, and/or writings. For the presocratics especially, there are fragments purported to be actual quotations, but often liable to be paraphrased or rough approximations of the philosophers’ actual views. 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 McKirahan (1994) and Annas (1993, 1999), this overview would have been greatly impoverished. As the text will reveal, our debt to these two authors is substantial, and it is matched by much admiration for and appreciation of their work.

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## General Issues

Because a somewhat detailed examination of authors might lead readers to focus only on the trees as it were but fail to see the forest, we supposed that some general comments would be useful. They have been assembled here under the rubrics of Tragedy, Orphism, and Politics.

### Tragedy

With the exception of Homer, Hesiod, and Theognis, the authors reviewed here are all philosophers, and yet these same philosophers were oftentimes reacting to expressions of contrary ideas in print or in practice by the non-philosophers around them (sophists, dramatists, orators, poets). It might therefore interest readers to be aware of some of the powerful positions that these philosophers were up against in putting forth their own theories. An example is tragedy. Tragedy was not just a dramatic genre, but tended to project a set of substantive views about the scope and meaning of human life. Plato, for one, saw those substantive tragic views as socially corrosive, and apparently sought to supplant them in his own work. An example of the substantive views to be found in tragedy is that humans are not in control of their destinies and are the playthings of the gods. The tragic plays thus have implications for notions of human agency, success, and happiness, ranging from extreme religious conservatism to outright pessimism. For example, in the play *Oedipus at Colonus*, the playwright Sophocles (1954) has his chorus declare, almost as if it is the moral of the story, that the best thing for humans – the highest human good – is to not even be born in the first place; second best is to die quickly (ll.1224ff). It would not be stretching things too far to suggest that the tragic poets were toying with the idea that all of human life is a Fool’s Paradise – and that the notorious cases they dramatize in their plots teach us the lesson that it cannot really be otherwise. The tragedians claimed this privileged insight not on the basis of scientific inquiry but rather by offering a hard look at our collective self-deceptions. By contrast, the philosophers (with the exception of some like Heraclitus, perhaps) tend to reject outright the substantive theses of tragedy, and instead see “critical human reason” as providing

a deeper understanding of human nature which can empower us to master ourselves and guarantee our human happiness and success in life.

## Orphism

Greek religion divided into two in the crucial period that we are surveying here. There was the standard version that we are all familiar with (Delphic/Homeric religion) which employed public, politically established cults based on well-known myths and traditional practices; and then there was “mystery religion” (Orphic/Bacchic) which operated in private cults based on secret teachings. In the former, there was a clear doctrine of a dismal afterlife (captured effectively in Homer’s *Odyssey* Bk XI, as Odysseus visits the underworld to commune with the dead). On Homer’s view, our earthly life is brief and is really all we get; it is therefore important that we use it correctly and not throw away our one-and-only chance at happiness. By contrast, in the Orphic “mystery religion,” human souls are immortal and travel from life-to-life in a sequence of bodies, some not even human (described in our section below on Pythagoras). It is taken for granted that life here on earth is bad (in fact it is meant to be a kind of punishment), and true happiness comes only to those who have been purified of their bodies through long practice of morally upright behavior; those blessed ones rejoin the gods in the afterlife. It is also taken for granted by the Orphics that “higher” lives here on earth have more opportunity for happiness, and that “lower” lives are correspondingly miserable (including higher and lower human lives), and that souls earn differential placements in the next life through the moral choices they make. It seems to us that whether a philosopher has Orphic or Delphic/Homeric sympathies is going to profoundly affect the way they view happiness in this life. For Orphics, there might once again be a real possibility of sliding into the view that what most humans take for happiness is a Fool’s Paradise – but unlike the tragedians, the Orphics believe that there is “a way out” into a Real Paradise (for Orphic philosophers, this “way out” leads through science, mathematics, and philosophy).

Now, of the philosophers we will consider here, Pythagoras, Empedocles, and Plato all have clearly Orphic sympathies. We would therefore expect that their views of human happiness will be conditioned by their belief in an afterlife that rewards morally upright behavior

in this otherwise generally bad and unhappy life of ours. For instance, in Plato’s account of Socrates’ trial, *Apology*, Socrates declares he is happy with the outcome, despite the fact that he was convicted of a serious crime he did not commit and will promptly be executed – unjustly. This shows how a belief in the afterlife can complicate definitions of happiness in the here and now. Socrates goes on to describe the imagined afterlife as an “extraordinary happiness” [EUDAIMONIA], spending his time there questioning the other dead just as he had questioned the living: “I think it would be not unpleasant;” moreover, “They are happier there than we are here in other respects...if indeed what we are told is true” (Plato 2000, p. 42). If Plato shares the views he attributes to Socrates, then it is at least questionable the extent to which he would authentically commit to any view of happiness that lines up with popular conceptions. Other philosophers considered here, like Heraclitus, Protagoras, Antiphon, Democritus, and Epicurus, emphatically reject Orphic principles and espouse a correspondingly this-worldly conception of happiness.

## Politics

There is an inherent aristocratic bias in most Greek views of happiness or success in human life. All of the authors considered here were members of an educated elite in Greece, though not all of them are elitists, strictly speaking. A standard ancient Greek formula was that happiness corresponds to goodness: “living well and doing well,” where living well means enjoying the good things in life, and doing well means winning praise and fame for one’s moral responsibility and leadership. Only aristocrats really had any opportunity to “do well” (i.e., to engage personally in high-profile activities that could benefit their whole community and thereby draw praise). The “little people” had little scope to perform beneficial acts and therefore little scope to be “good” – and likewise little hope of enjoying “the good things in life.” Nonetheless, there was a very definite decline in the prospects of the aristocracy across the period discussed here, and with it a democratizing tendency in conceptions of both goodness and happiness (so for Aristotle, in principle, almost every free man has the potential to be happy – slaves, however, do not). An important part of this story is that some of our authors (like Homer, Theognis, and perhaps Plato) took a staunchly aristocratic line

(i.e., some people are inherently better and therefore properly more happy than others), while other authors, like Hesiod, Aristotle, Democritus, and Epicurus, take a much more democratic line (i.e., nothing “heroic” is required in order to achieve happiness). These two ideologies spar with each other throughout our period, and a philosopher’s politics sometimes informs what he says about human happiness. In this regard, it is worth mentioning one of the lyric poets, named Simonides. He was employed professionally to write praise poetry celebrating the greatness, and happiness, of his wealthy patrons. What he says in those poems not only conveys his own sense of proper limitations on expectations for happiness but also illustrates the degree to which aristocratic power had declined by his day. For instance, the following lines were written to celebrate the career of a notorious tyrant:

To become a truly good man is difficult, in hands and feet and mind foursquare, fashioned without reproach.... For this reason I shall never cast away my allotted span of life on an empty, unrealizable hope by searching for something that cannot come into existence: a human being altogether blameless.... I am not prone to fault-finding; I am satisfied with anyone who is not bad nor too shiftless.... All things are honorable in which the shameful is not mingled. (Plato 1992a, b, Protagoras, p. 34–44)

And likewise, all people are happy who succeed in not debasing themselves *too much*. For Plato, this was far too democratic a conception of life and happiness.

These background notions and assumptions about human happiness (tragedy, Orphism, and political ideologies) were culturally effective in ancient Greece during this period. But in a sense, perhaps, they are timeless: At any rate, one could find a range of modern expressions from our own time to parallel them. They should be kept in mind as one surveys the following outline of ancient conceptions of happiness.

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## 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*, were larger than life characters, born to and raised in privileged, noble, and wealthy families, occasionally boasting gods or goddesses in their family trees and displaying physical

attractiveness and dexterity, as well as the qualities of practically wise leadership, strength of character, courage, justice, generosity, and piety. 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. Still, a notable conflict may be found between Homer’s two classic epics, in 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 differ significantly. 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, on the other hand, 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 from Troy and reunification with his long-suffering wife and son. So in contrast to Achilles, Odysseus 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.

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)

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 fourth 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 philosopher 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, and

enjoying the fruits of their labor, 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 and 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).

There is a bit of an anomaly with this author because his two surviving poems seem to be at odds. It has been proposed that he was writing in two different registers: one (*Theogony*) for performance competition before elite judges – praising the justice of kings – and the other (*Works & Days*) for general consumption, condemning the rich and promoting the anti-aristocratic ethic of the common farmer – very different. The latter poem’s description of the “town” as a dangerous place where “gift-devouring kings” dispense “justice” for a fee looks a lot like the second quotation (above) giving Hesiod’s vision of complete decline in the last age of the world. In contemporary terms, one might say that Hesiod’s bad society is one in which the institution of morality has been totally undermined, including people’s sense of justice, resulting in the total destruction of its social capital.

## Pythagoras of Samos (c. 560–480 BCE)

Pythagoras is one of history’s most extraordinary people, brilliant, charismatic, and enigmatic. He and his friends created associations that engaged in socioeconomic, political, religious, and academic activities. Although he seems to have written nothing, so remarkable were his talents and character that incredible legends were attached to him, e.g., that he could walk on water and be in two different places at the same time. The man himself was likely not a philosopher, nor a mathematician, but rather an early Orphic religious cult-leader who used number-magic as part of his cult doctrine. Most

of what we associate with him has been retrojected back onto him by his followers, who considered any revision in the understanding of his doctrine to be the true meaning of the original prophet (and hence attributed it directly to him as the original intent of his words). Central to this cult was the idea of purification (ultimately, purification of the body from the soul), which in time led his followers to create a genuine school of philosophy (the Pythagoreans) based on the notion that scientific learning and abstract mathematics were the kinds of purification that Pythagoras had had in mind.

Economically and politically, Pythagorean societies were relatively successful aristocracies, religiously they were relatively secretive and ascetic, and academically they came in time to nourish highly original scientists and mathematicians. While the theorem bearing Pythagoras' name was not new, being known to earlier Babylonians, his followers seem to have discovered that musical intervals could be expressed mathematically, i.e., that musical qualities could be expressed quantitatively. Since the essence of social indicators or quality of life research is precisely the measurement (quantification) of qualities, it is fair to regard the Pythagoreans as the first researchers in our field.

As one might have expected, these initial efforts were not uniformly successful. Pythagoras himself 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...

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 also 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 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. He apparently believed that all living things (plants as well as animals) have immortal souls which at death transmigrate among diverse species, trading up or down as it were, depending partly on individuals' behavior 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 and ultimately being released from the whole process. This notion of a harmonious soul or a soul at peace with itself found a place in the writings of many 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 reasonable rules, e.g., eating in moderation and only vegetables, not eating beans, not keeping swallows in the house, and not urinating facing the sun. However one assesses the two distinct paths characterizing the Pythagorean "way of life," this figure'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 behavior have an impact on that individual's unobservable soul. Most importantly, 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 behavior, Pythagoras directed our attention away from overt appearances to 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.

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

Heraclitus was born to an aristocratic family and throughout his life maintained deep doubts about (if not disdain for) the capacities and character of those with less fortunate origins. Of the hundred or so remaining fragments of his works, those positing a world constantly undergoing changes while preserving identities are most frequently associated with his philosophy, e.g., "Upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow" (McKirahan 1994, p. 122). He believed that the universe was not made but always existed, and formed a coherent unity displaying great diversity. The ultimate material building blocks were fire, water, and earth, which were distinct but periodically transformed into one another. The fundamental principle of order was referred to as the LOGOS, which is a multipurpose word connoting discourse, word, story, opinion, reason, and cause, to mention a few. 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.

Perhaps because he was so deeply 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.

In the presence of such paradox, 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 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 behavior 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." It is a life relatively free of drunkenness, anger, and violence. 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.

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### 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 and Peisistratus 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 also 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)

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

Although Anaxagoras was a teacher, consultant, and/or a friend of the great orator and statesman Pericles, 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' 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). Among the fragments of his works, the following is particularly revealing: “The Greeks are wrong to accept coming to be and perishing, for no thing 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.”

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### Empedocles of Acragas (c. 492–432 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.

Broadly speaking, 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. “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.

Human bodies are 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. 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).

At some time, the DAIMONES enjoyed a state of bliss overseen by Love that was eventually shattered as a result of an act of murder provoked by Strife. Human beings are the product of that Fall, with human bodies wrapped around DAIMONES as “an alien garb of flesh.” Depending on individuals’ own behavior, their DAIMONES might be reincarnated in greater or lesser beings. 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).

The next step up from being able to dine “with other immortals” would bring some kind of closure to the process of reincarnation, at which point one’s individuality would be blended with that of a supreme being conceived of as “only mind, holy and indescribable.”

Important features of Empedocles’ vision of a good life are clearly discernable 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).

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### Protagoras of Abdera (c. 490–420 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 and Hippias (both also featured in the *Protagoras*), and Gorgias. 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 preferences, and Protagoras certainly had his own preferences. 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.

Plato’s *Protagoras*, one of our main sources, is actually a very interesting document. Strikingly, Protagoras’ famous dictum (individual relativism) never arises in it. Instead, Plato attributes to Protagoras a very sophisticated (one might even say, convincing) version of cultural relativism (see the “Great Speech,” pp. 15–23). Then, amazingly, Socrates leads Protagoras and the other sophists into a trap by praising their abilities as masters of the *objective* “science of measure” which, with coaxing, they confess to being. Socrates draws this out of them with the bait of a “hedonistic calculus” which they are proud to admit they are experts at using (they are portrayed as if quite flattered that Socrates articulates this position so well and attributes it to them). Socrates, however, then snaps the trap shut by confronting them with the fact that Protagoras’ science of measure does not match his professed cultural relativism. The upshot may well be contrary to Poster’s assessment above: that the sophists are *pretending to be* cultural relativists in order to protect themselves from social conservatives, while in reality, and behind closed doors, they are convinced hedonists (which would shock and outrage the social conservatives) – and that hedonism is part of the substantive content that they are teaching to their young

proteges. You can perhaps see Plato here redirecting the charges that were actually laid against Socrates onto the sophists instead. This then resonates with the dramatic opening of the dialogue where Protagoras boasts that sophistry is a very dangerous profession, but that he has “taken measures” to protect himself from repercussions.

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### 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 speechwriter. 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, 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 favoring personal pleasure over pain. Below we will show some interesting ways in which Democritus and Epicurus offered improvements to the rougher hedonism of Antiphon.

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

According to Vlastos (1946, p. 62), “Democritean ethics...[was]...the first rigorously naturalistic ethics in Greek thought.” 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 and the best sort of person.

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 exist in an unlimited void, to be unlimited in number, shape, and size, and to be constantly in motion. The shapes were imagined to be rough or smooth, concave or convex, and 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 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 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.

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, and Epicurus. A fragment attributed to Democritus by Diogenes Laertius asserted that "The goal of life is cheerfulness, 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" (McKirahan 1994, p. 339). 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 or the reverse; 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 ...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...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. 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." 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 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 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 should also be regarded as the founder 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 the founder of the latter as well.

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## Plato of Athens (c. 427–347 BCE)

According to Kahn (1998, p. 43), "Plato and Socrates [469–399 BCE] have been described as a double star [by Shorey 1933] which the most powerful telescope will never succeed in resolving." According to Diogenes 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 former's Academy in Athens. Assuming there is some truth in this story, Plato might have been exposed to Socrates for 7 or 8 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 publish 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, many scholars have taken a develop-

mental 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 Diogenes Laertius (2000a, pp. 149–163) to have been the son of a sculptor and a midwife, a pupil of Anaxagoras and Archelaus, 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). Much more will be said about these “two central themes” as this review progresses. For now it is enough to notice that ARETE connoted excellence in practically any sense, e.g., a knife, horse, lute, or human being could display ARETE, each in its own relatively unique way. EUDAIMONIA, which literally means “favoured by the DAIMONES (near-gods or gods)” 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 will show below, the Greek words for pleasure and pain were also central to philosophical discourse about a good life. Moral philosophers working in the eudaemonist

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 favor 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.

Diogenes Laertius (2000a, pp. 277) claimed that Plato was the son of a mere “citizen of Athens” (his father) but was a descendent of Solon 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, 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, 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 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 potatoes; 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 sweetmeats." 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 neighbors. 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 and Democritus 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 eudaemonist 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. 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 (see above, “Protagoras”). We 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 cauterization, 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).

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 defense of hedonism 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).

Annas (1999, p. 158) commented on the extraordinary nature of all these passages as follows:

Nowhere else in Plato is the function of reason, in shaping the happy life, taken to be that of playing a purely instrumental role in enabling us to maximize pleasure as that is ordinarily conceived. Nowhere else is pleasure, as that is ordinarily conceived, taken to be something which can be taken up uncriticized and untransformed into the happy life. In all the other four dialogues [which deal with pleasure at length] pleasure is an element which appears greatly altered in the final product. The *Protagoras* passage, in which the ordinary notion of pleasure becomes our final end and has reason to serve it, is thus exceptional. However, it has chanced to fit in well with post-utilitarian theories of pleasure to such an extent that its eccentricity as a Platonic position tends to escape us.

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. We 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). 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,” “colors,” “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 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. We 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 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 and Democritus 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 Protagoras 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 our 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. We 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,” 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 also 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 1992a, b, 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 worthwhile” (Plato 1930, p. 71) and more precisely, whether “the life of the just man is more profitable” than that of the unjust man (p. 83) or “whether it is 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 also 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 1992a, b, 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 “honor-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 1992a, b, 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 1992a, b, 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 1992a, b, pp. 112–116).

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 honor-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 1992a, b, 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. We 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 1992a, b, 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 1992a, b, 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 50, 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 1992a, b, 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 1992a, b, 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 eudemonistic 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 Iamblichus (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 Iamblichus. Simply put, he 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.

Iamblichus 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 Iamblichus 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, Iamblichus 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, Iamblichus 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.

### Aristotle of Stageira (c. 384–322 BCE)

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 20 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 Aristotle (1999, p. xiv), “the nearly complete modern English translation of Aristotle's extant works (in [The Revised Oxford Translation]) fills about 2,450 pages,” though many works are lost.

Discussions of the good life appear prominently in five treatises, namely, *Eudemian Ethics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Magna Moralia*, *Rhetoric*, and *Politics*. The *Eudemian 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 *Eudemian 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 essay 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 as pleasure, 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).

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 combined with virtue, 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.” 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 us that our contemporaries would regard all the good things in this list as still good. Apparently, then, if Aristotle and we are accurate in our judgments about the conventional wisdom of our contemporaries, there are some great similarities of views across nearly 2,500 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, watching slaves fighting to the death, reading the entrails of dead animals, sacrificing bulls to gods, and so on. 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 books 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.

Further, it is the most continuous activity, since we are more capable of continuous study than any continuous action.

Besides, we think pleasure must be mixed into happiness; and it is agreed that the activity in accord with wisdom is the most pleasant of the activities in accord with virtue... Moreover, the self-sufficiency we spoke of will be found in study more than in anything else. For admittedly the wise person, the just person, and the other virtuous people all need the good things necessary for life. Still, when these are adequately supplied, the just

person needs other people as partners and recipients of his just actions; and the same is true of the temperate person, the brave person, and each of the others. But the wise person is able, and more able the wiser he is, to study even by himself; and though he presumably does it better with colleagues, even so he is more self-sufficient than any other [virtuous person]...

[Besides] the activity of understanding, it seems, is superior in excellence because it is the activity of study, aims at no end apart from itself, and has its own proper pleasure, which increases the activity... Hence, a human being’s complete happiness will be this activity, if it receives a complete span of life, since nothing incomplete is proper to happiness... as far as we can, we ought to be pro-immortal, and go to all lengths to live a life in accord with our supreme element...

Moreover, each person seems to be his understanding, if he is his controlling and better element... For what is proper to each thing’s nature is supremely best and most pleasant for it; and hence for a human being the life in accord with understanding will be supremely best and most pleasant, if understanding, more than anything else, is the human being. This life, then, will also be happiest (Aristotle 1999, pp. 163–165).

These passages clearly reveal 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' 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. In Michalos (1985) and later publications, for example, 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 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 there was little evidence of this.

Contrary to the somewhat academic, contemplative good lives sketched in the final chapters of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemean 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 unions 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," 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 and Plato'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).

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.

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### Epicurus of Samos (c. 341–271 BCE)

According to Diogenes 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 7 years after Plato's death and 19 years before Aristotle's death. The same source reported that "his bodily health was pitiful" (Diogenes 2000a, b, p. 525) and provided a quotation from Epicurus' letter to Idomeneus saying that he had "continual sufferings from strangury and dysentery" (Diogenes (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 (Diogenes 2000a, b, pp. 531–537). Still, at the end of his summary of the views of Epicurus’ critics, Diogenes Laertius said that all “these people are stark mad” (p. 537).

As evidence against Epicurus’ critics, Diogenes 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’ works consists of “a booklet of 69 pages,” although Diogenes Laertius (2000b, p. 555) claimed that the philosopher “eclipsed all before him in the number of his writings...[which amounted] to about 300 rolls, and contain not a single citation from other authors.” While none of his writings is complete, Book X of Diogenes Laertius’ 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’ 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 and Plutarch.

Epicurus’ 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...(Diogenes 2000a, b, 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 Menoecus* 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” (Diogenes 2000a, b, 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 (Diogenes 2000a, b, pp. 613–615).

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 (Diogenes 2000a, b, pp. 615–627).

The upside of his adherence to the “method of plurality of causes” was that it freed him and those who followed him from troublesome beliefs such 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” (Diogenes 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 downside, 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.” Since there are clearly bodies that move, there must be space for them to move in. 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 “upward *ad infinitum*” or “downward,” 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 (Diogenes 2000a, b, 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. 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 Epicurus’ 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 (Diogenes 2000a, b, 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 as 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, Diogenes Laertius (2000b, p. 543) said that “in his correspondence” Epicurus “replaces the usual greeting, ‘I wish you joy,’ by wishes for welfare and right living, ‘May you do well’ and ‘Live well.’” This is practically the same language we saw Aristotle using earlier, i.e., “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 (Diogenes 2000a, b, p. 653).

Between Epicurus’ letters to Pythocles and Monoceus, Diogenes Laertius 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 (Diogenes 2000a, b, 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.” It is worth noting, however, that Epicurus’ view represents something of a turning point in ancient views of the political and social dimensions of human happiness. 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. Plato, Antiphon, and others, like Aristotle, take the “doing well” portion of the formula to mean significant demands for social engagement. Even the trust required by Antiphon to constitute social capital requires an active collective effort to maintain just institutions (EUNOMIA). But for Epicurus, such pursuits are apt to be vexatious and perhaps even painful, frustrating, or futile. How much better to turn away and enter the comfortable enclave of the Garden with one’s philosophical friends and colleagues? This could be seen as representing the final defeat of the aristocratic trend in Greek ethics: Now, virtually anybody is capable of “doing well,” in principle, regardless of their station in life.

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 Monoceus* Epicurus claimed that

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

To this direct quote from Epicurus, Diogenes Laertius (2000b, p. 663) adds this: “And we choose the virtues too on account of pleasure and not for their own sake, 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 (Diogenes 2000a, b, 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 2,000 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 behavior much easier to sell to most people. While we appreciate the motivation for the position, we are 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" (Diogenes 2000a, b, 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 Monoecus 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 (Diogenes 2000a, b, 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 us 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, in our 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. 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 2010, 2005, 2003). 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.

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## Summary

This essay 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 of 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 included flourishing and prosperous communities, populated by honest people, living in peace, and enjoying the fruits of their labor, with an absence of worries and disease.
- About 200 years later, Pythagoras claimed that the good life we seek lies in the unobservable harmony within an unobservable entity, the immortal soul.
- Pythagoras' contemporary, Heraclitus, espoused a confusing mixture of absolutist and relativistic views, but believed that the maximization of desire satisfaction is neither necessary nor sufficient for the good life.
- A later contemporary of Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, issued something close to a 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 that ultimately experienced a current good or bad life and accumulated credits or debits toward a following life.
- 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.
- His contemporary, Antiphon of Rhamnous, claimed that the best sort of life can be led by making careful and accurate observations of nature, thinking "correctly" about what causes "distress" and "joy," and generally following nature's guides to a long and pleasant life.
- A younger contemporary of Antiphon, Democritus, mixed his own atomism with Anaxagoras' credo and Pythagoras' emphasis on 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 explained by unobservable orderly and harmonious atomic activity.
- Democritus was also the first philosopher to recommend downward comparisons as a strategy for attaining happiness and, by implication, was an early advocate of social comparison theory.
- A young contemporary of Democritus, Plato, recognized the importance of external goods like wealth and goods of the body like health, but regarded goods of the mind like moral virtue as most important for a good life.
- Although Plato clearly rejected the idea that the good life was identical to a life of pleasure, he believed that pleasure had a useful role to play in a good life, and he recognized at least five theories of pleasure's origin, identified here as a desire satisfaction theory, a needs satisfaction theory, a harmony theory, a true pleasures theory, and a class theory of pleasure.
- A relatively obscure contemporary of Plato, known as Iamblichus, was an early advocate of what we now call social capital theory, insofar as he recognized the importance of trust and law-abidingness for good human relations.
- Plato's greatest student, Aristotle, believed that EUDAIMONIA, happiness, "living well and doing well," is achieved 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, provided that the deliberation and activities are undertaken from a virtuous character and accompanied by an appropriate amount of external goods and pleasure.
- Finally, Epicurus agreed that "living well and doing well" was required for pleasure and that pleasure

consisted of a healthy body, peace of mind, and moral virtue. Rather than aiming at Aristotle's vigorous active life in the world of affairs, Epicurus aimed for a relatively passive, intellectually stimulating life surrounded by friends in his Garden.

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

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