

THEODORE BENDITT

HAPPINESS

(Received 11 September, 1972)

I. HAPPINESS AS APPRAISAL AND IDEALS OF HAPPINESS

A. *Happiness as Appraisal*

In the literature on happiness it is generally held, in some form or other, that a person's properly being called happy (or being said to have a happy life or to be happy over an extended period of time), as opposed to his feeling happy, is an assessment of that person's overall condition. This tradition goes back at least to Aristotle. It holds that to say that a man is happy is to appraise him in some way which involves taking into consideration various aspects of his condition and circumstances, as well as how he feels about them. R. M. Hare gives a paradigmatic statement of this when he says "we may say that, when someone calls someone else happy, there is a rather complicated process of appraisal going on."¹ When we call someone happy, "what we have to do is to make an appraisal, not a statement of fact". (p. 128) Likewise, Jean Austin, in 'Pleasure and Happiness', says that a person's being happy is "the highest assessment of his total condition."²

Such appraisals, it is sometimes held, involve moral considerations. For example, Brian Barry, in his book *Political Argument*, has this to say about appraising someone as happy:

Someone may be satisfying a large number of wants but still not be accounted happy if the pattern arising from satisfying these wants adds up to what is thought of as a radically vicious style of life.³

And according to Hare (*Freedom and Reason*, p. 128) judging that someone is happy involves the application of standards which may differ from those that would be used by the person being appraised.

... before we call a man happy we find it necessary to be sure, not only that *his* desires are satisfied, but also that the complete set of his desires is one which we are not very much averse to having ourselves.

Thus, says Hare, a judgment that someone is happy is an appraisal, not a statement of fact.

I do not wish to deny that there are some uses of 'happy', ascribed to a person or to a life, for which this is the case; but I would like to maintain that there are other uses of 'happy', philosophically important ones, in which a judgment that a third person is happy is not an appraisal, but is rather a report about him which may be true or false; and in which a first person judgment that one is happy, while it involves an appraisal, is still a report which may be true or false.

B. *Ideals of Happiness*

There are at least three well known philosophical accounts of happiness or ideals of the happy life. These are set out by von Wright in *The Varieties of Goodness*.⁴ Von Wright calls the first of these 'Epicurean ideals', according to which happiness consists in having (as opposed to doing) certain things that give one pleasure. For example, one might get pleasure from having certain possessions, or from being well thought of, or from exotic foods. Happiness for such an individual consists, then, in getting sufficient pleasure by having enough of these pleasure-producing things; and the good life for an individual, on this view, would be one which contained enough pleasure-producing things. Now the obvious difficulty with this as an account of happiness (that is, either as saying what happiness is or as providing a recipe for anyone's attaining it) is that there are [obviously] people for whom a life of receiving passive pleasures would not be a happy one. Such a life might make some people happy; but it will not do for all. We can look upon it at best as just one way of attaining happiness, which will work for some but not for others. But it is not the case that the life of passive pleasure is the happy life, or that seeking pleasure in things is the only way to attain happiness.

The second kind of ideal of the happy life is one that is found in the writings of utilitarians, in which happiness depends upon the satisfaction of desire. "Happiness, on such a view, is essentially contentedness – an equilibrium between needs and wants on the one hand and satisfaction on the other." (*Varieties*, p. 93) On this view happiness is having one's wants – perhaps most of them, or perhaps one's important wants – fulfilled. (There is a subclass of this kind of happiness – the ascetic ideal – according to which one should minimize one's wants so as to maximize

the chance of satisfaction and thus of happiness.) The good life for a person, on the utilitarian view of happiness, would be a life in which as many as possible of one's needs and wants (especially one's important wants) were fulfilled. The utilitarian ideal of happiness will not do, however, as an account of happiness. For a person could conceivably have all of his needs and wants – including his important ones – satisfied, and yet fail to be happy. As von Wright points out (p. 94), taking asceticism as the extreme of the utilitarian ideal brings this out clearly. The point of the ascetic extreme is to avoid frustration of desire, since frustration often leads to unhappiness. But mere avoidance of frustration and thereby of unhappiness does not necessarily make one happy: happiness and unhappiness are contraries, not contradictories. So, as far as the utilitarian ideal is concerned, avoidance of frustration need not make one happy: and satisfaction of desire need not do so either, for there are, or could be, people who get everything that they want and still are not happy. Alexander the Great stands out as an illustration of this.

It might be thought that if one has *important* wants, then if these are fulfilled, one must be happy; and that if one is not happy despite the fulfillment of certain wants, then they are not important wants. There are at least two ways that we can understand 'important want' (without making it analytically true that fulfilling important wants makes one happy): (i) A want is important for a person if that person devotes a lot of time, energy, and/or resources to fulfilling it; (ii) A want is important for a person if that person will be unhappy if it is not fulfilled. If we adopt (i) as the way to understand 'important want', then it need not be the case that satisfying important wants necessarily makes one happy: a person can devote a lot of time, energy, and resources to accomplishing something, and then, when he gets it or does it, decide that it wasn't worth the trouble. If we adopt (ii), then it is still not the case that fulfilling an important want necessarily makes one happy, for, as pointed out above, avoiding unhappiness is not the same as being happy.

The third type of ideal of happiness given by von Wright is that found in Aristotle in which happiness is thought to come from the pleasure that one takes in certain doings or activities – especially those that involve capacities that one has made an effort to develop.⁵ For example,

one may enjoy skiing, or playing chess; and the better one is at these activities, the more one enjoys doing them, and the happier one is. The good life corresponding to this ideal of happiness would be one in which a person developed and exercised these capacities as much as he desired. This ideal of happiness, however, will not do as an account of happiness; for obviously one could be good at something and do it often, and yet lack many of the necessities of life and be unhappy. But even barring this objection, a person could conceivably have all of the necessities and spend his time doing what he did well and still find his life somehow hollow and even detest it. Such a person could not truly be said to be happy.

C. *Happiness is a Property of Persons, not Lives*

Before evaluating the claim that judgments that someone is happy are appraisals, something should be said concerning the sorts of things that are said to be happy. Two sorts of things – persons and lives – are generally said to be happy, and one finds either or both of these in the literature. For example, von Wright says

We could make a distinction between a happy *man* and a happy *life* and regard the second as a thing of wider scope. This would make it possible to say of somebody that he had a happy life although, for some time, he was a most unhappy man.⁶

And Jean Austin, in her essay ‘Pleasure and Happiness’, says: “I shall confine myself to ‘happy’ as predicated of a person, or of the life of a person, or of a portion of that life.”⁷

I would like to suggest, however, that happiness is properly, or primarily, predicated of persons, not of lives; and that it is by looking too hard at the notion of a happy life that philosophers have viewed happiness-ascriptions as appraisals. I will consider the second of these points first, and will attempt to make the point by considering a recent essay entitled ‘Happiness’ by D. A. Lloyd Thomas.⁸ Thomas distinguishes what he takes to be the four main uses of the word ‘happy’. The first is the use in which to say that one is happy is to refer to a feeling, usually of short duration – for example, as in “I am feeling happy.” (pp. 97f) The second use, according to Thomas, is that in which one is ‘happy with’ or ‘happy about’ something, where these expressions have the force of ‘satisfied with’ or ‘contented with’, and do not at all imply that one

has any particular feeling. (p. 101f) The third use is a behavioral use of 'happy' which is in some ways parallel to the adverb 'happily', as in 'The leader of the Opposition happily delivered one devastating argument after another against the Minister's policy'. (p. 103f) Thomas seems to have in mind here a use of 'happy' which might be replaced by 'gleeful' or, in adverbial form, by 'with relish'. The fourth use, which I want to discuss, is that in which it is said that a person has had a happy life. Thomas says:

This use of 'happy' is distinguished from the preceding ones. The person who makes this claim is not saying that he has felt happy every moment of his life.... This use is distinguished from the second use because, if a man says that he has a happy life, he is saying more than that his life has been merely satisfactory: he is saying that it has been good. This use is different from the third use, as it is neither necessary nor sufficient for a man to have had a happy life that he should have frequently (or perhaps even ever) behaved happily. (p. 104)

Here we see an example of the move that I mentioned above: one tries to understand happiness in terms of lives being happy, and then one moves to saying that a happy life is at least a good life; one then notes that to say that a person has had a good life is to appraise his life, and from this it is an easy step to saying that calling a person (or oneself) happy is appraising the person.

We must distinguish between the following locutions:

(A) *N* has been happy throughout his life (or some part thereof);

and

(B) *N* has had a happy life (or some part thereof).

(A) is the conceptually prior case of happiness-ascriptions: happiness is primarily a property of persons, not of lives. (B) has the sense either of (A), or of

(C) *N* has had a good life (or some part thereof).

The notions of a good life and being happy are distinct.

D. *Hare's Account Rejected*

Let us see, taking into consideration the three ideals of happiness discussed in Subsection B, whether happiness-judgments are appraisals.

To say that happiness-judgments are appraisals amounts to saying that there are certain criteria in accordance with which people are evaluated in respect of their happiness, that these criteria have to do with the conditions and circumstances of a person's life, and that whatever person satisfies these criteria to a high degree is a happy one. The criteria established by the three ideals previously discussed are, respectively, having what gives pleasure, having a favorable balance between needs and wants and their fulfilment, and engaging in enjoyed activities. As we have seen, however, none of these provide an adequate account of happiness, for it is always possible for the criteria to be satisfied in the highest degree and yet for a person not to be happy or even to be unhappy.

If, according to some criteria or other, a happiness-judgment would be in order, but the person to whom we would ascribe happiness claims (sincerely, we may suppose) that he is not happy, then according to Hare this shows conclusively that he is not happy and a judgment that he is happy is in all such cases inapplicable. Thus, according to Hare, judgments that someone is happy are only in part appraisals; they are also in part reports as to state of mind:

However highly we appraise the state of life of a person, we cannot call him happy if he himself hates every minute of his existence. It is a mistake to treat happiness-statements either as implying no report on a man's state of mind, or as nothing but such a report.⁹

One thing that we may note about what Hare says in the above passage is that it is too strong. It is true that however highly we appraise the conditions and circumstances of a person's life, we cannot call him happy if he hates his life; but it would also seem to be true that we can't call him happy if he doesn't like his life. That is, Hare makes it a condition of a person's being happy that he doesn't hate his life – i.e. that he isn't unhappy with his life; but it would seem, rather, that a person's not being happy with his life (which is not the same as being unhappy with it) is sufficient for the falsity of our judgment that he is happy.

It isn't clear from Hare's writings whether he would agree with the foregoing; but whether he would or not, there are some other reasons why his account is not wholly adequate. First, if it is a necessary condition of a person's being happy that he not hate every minute of his life, then Hare needs to explain the latter notion in order to provide a full account of a person's being happy. Hare apparently thinks that hating one's life

involves having certain feelings, for he holds that happiness-statements are in part reports as to state of mind.

Second, if *N* is happy if and only if (a) the conditions and circumstances of *N*'s life measure up to my standards for measuring lives, and (b) *N* does not hate every minute of his life, then presumably *N* is unhappy if and only if (c) the conditions and circumstances of *N*'s life rank extremely low according to my standards for appraising lives, and (d) *N* does not love every minute of his life. We have here what seems to me to be an implausible state of affairs – namely, that the existence of a feeling of a certain sort (loving (hating) every minute of one's life) can defeat the claim that a person is unhappy (happy), but is irrelevant to the question of whether he is happy (unhappy). It would seem, to the contrary, that the fact that a person loves every minute of his life, or even that he has some less intense positive feeling toward his life, is hardly irrelevant to his being happy, but rather is most important.

Third, the nature of Hare's conception of happiness is indicated in the following passage: "Anybody who thinks that to call a man happy is merely to report on his state of mind should read a little poetry and make a collection of the different circumstances in which people have been called happy." (*Freedom and Reason*, p. 129) In a footnote appended to this, Hare offers the following: "... du Bellay, 'Heureux qui comme Ulysse...'; Wotton, 'How happy is he born and taught...'; and Papageno's aria in *The Magic Flute*, 'O, so ein sanftes Täubchen wär' Seligkeit für mich' ['Oh, so sweet a dove would be happiness for me'] – to say nothing of the Beatitudes." I do not wish to deny that there is a notion of happiness of the sort to which Hare here refers. Such uses suggest that a man is enviable, as in 'Oh, happy man...'. But there is another, and, I think, philosophically more important, notion of happiness which I will develop shortly. I will first try to indicate what Hare's notion lacks, which an account of happiness should have.

Suppose *N* lives a kind of life which is such that Hare would not consider him happy even though *N* thinks himself happy – say, *N* is a vicious person, to use Barry's example. Hare, since he does not think *N* happy, is presumably prepared to recommend a different style of life to him. But on what ground can Hare recommend a different kind of life? The only grounds available to Hare are that changing his life style would make *N* happy, or that doing so would make him happier than

he is now. There is no reason why the second of these need be the case. But Hare certainly can't recommend that *N* change his life style for the former reason, for *ex hypothesi* *N* is already (according to his lights) happy, and, we may suppose, wouldn't be happy with the style of life that Hare recommends. There can be no reason of this sort (i.e. that it will make him happy) for *N* to adopt a style of life that would lead Hare, but not *N*, to call *N* happy. What Hare's notion of happiness lacks is that, given his notion, happiness cannot be recommended to everyone.

II. A NON-APPRAISAL ACCOUNT OF HAPPINESS

A. *Happiness Defined*

I will attempt a definition of 'being happy', and then discuss it in the rest of part II.

A Person *N* is happy (overall) throughout a period of time *t* if (and only if) *N* is satisfied with his life throughout *t*.
N is satisfied with his life throughout *t* if (and only if) *N* is disposed, when he considers his life during *t*, to feel satisfied with his life.

B. *Being Satisfied with Something*

'Being satisfied' has an object, although a very general one which is person-relative. The central notion is 'being satisfied *with*' something, and it is this notion that must be explained. Before proceeding further, it would be well to point out an ambiguity in the expression 'be satisfied with something'. To say that *N* is satisfied with *X* might mean (i) that *N* will settle for *X*, that he will make do with *X*, that he is resigned to *X*, that *X* is satisfactory, or it might mean (ii) that *X* gives *N* satisfaction, or that *N* gets satisfaction from *X*, or that *X* is satisfying to *N*. I am primarily concerned with the notion of being satisfied with something in the second sense, although the two are related.

The notion of being satisfied with something implies that one's hopes, expectations, requirements, demands, etc. are involved. If a man says that he is satisfied with his accomplishments, he implies that what he has accomplished does not (significantly) fall short of his hopes and expectations, with the goals which he has, explicitly or implicitly, set

himself. One can be satisfied with some department of one's life, or with one's life as a whole. The 'something' in 'being satisfied with something' can be anything concerning which one has hopes, expectations, requirements, or whatever. We can call these 'expectations'. Thus, one can be satisfied (or dissatisfied) with one's job, one's marriage, one's holiday, the settlement of a lawsuit, or with one's life as a whole. It would seem in addition that one could even be satisfied (or dissatisfied) with such things as the national or world situation, so long as one sees oneself or one's life as bound up with these. It is difficult, however, to see how one could be satisfied (or dissatisfied) with some state of affairs which could not possibly affect one.

When one is satisfied with something, one need not be satisfied with every aspect of it. One need only be satisfied with most of it, or with the important aspects of it, so that on the whole one's satisfaction with something sufficiently outweighs the dissatisfaction with it. Whether one is satisfied with something can be determined by seeing whether he *feels* satisfied with it. This will be discussed in section C and following.

C. *Feeling Satisfied: An Account Rejected*

One is satisfied with something if and only if one is disposed to feel satisfied with that something. Before providing an account of feeling satisfied with something, however, it is first necessary to dispose of a certain account of feeling satisfied which can be found in recent literature. It is suggested by Gilbert Ryle¹⁰ and claimed by A. R. White¹¹ that the feeling of satisfaction and other feelings are 'completions', and that "each of these 'completeness' feelings consist essentially in a lack of its opposite.... To feel in any of these 'completeness' ways is to feel in varying degrees... free from the opposite feelings." I agree that there are situations in which feeling satisfied is just feeling free from its opposite – feeling free from doubts, uncertainties, frustration, dissatisfaction, or whatever. But there are two difficulties with White's suggestion. First, there is also a positive feeling of satisfaction which is not just feeling free from its opposite. The feeling that one is usually disposed to have concerning one's marriage when one is not dissatisfied with it is different from the feeling that one is usually disposed to have when one finds his marriage satisfying. It is the positive feeling of satisfaction, and not just feeling free from dissatisfaction, that I will be concerned with. Second, the

suggestion that feeling satisfied is just feeling free from dissatisfaction does not solve anything; we would still need to inquire as to what it is to feel dissatisfied, and it will not do to say that to feel dissatisfied is to feel free from its opposite.

So far it has been indicated that feeling satisfied involves the having of some sort of feeling with positive tone. But nothing that has been said thus far indicates what is involved in feeling satisfied *with* something; and in particular nothing has been said concerning how feeling satisfied with something is different from merely feeling contented. This will be considered in the next section.

D. *Feeling Satisfied with Something*

There are many different kinds of feelings of satisfaction just as there are many different kinds of feelings of pain.¹² Gas pains and stubbed toes feel different, but both are pains. Likewise, one can feel satisfied (or contented) while sitting in a warm bath or while running a race or while thinking about things; but while the feelings involved are different (i.e. feel different), they may all be feelings of satisfaction (or contentment). With regard to pains a distinction is often drawn between feelings of pain and painful feelings; and it is sometimes contended that there is no specific sensation called a pain, but rather painful modes of experiencing other feelings. We need not consider whether this latter view is correct. It might be helpful, however, in drawing out the analogy between feelings of pain and feelings of satisfaction, to draw a similar distinction between feelings of satisfaction or contentment, and what might be called satisfactual or contentful feelings. Drawing this distinction helps to highlight the fact that we need not assume that there is but one feeling of satisfaction or contentment; there may be some special feeling of contentment, but there are in addition many satisfactual or contentful feelings. In what follows I will, however, speak of 'a feeling of contentment' and 'a feeling of satisfaction'.

Any number of things can make a person feel contented (as distinguished from feeling satisfied *with* something).¹³ One may just wake up feeling that way, or feel that way when one is exhausted – as from pleasurable or productive physical activity. A hot drink on a cold day can produce such a feeling, as can a good meal; and one can experience such a feeling when doing ordinary day-to-day things. Contentful feelings

are generally diffuse, unlocalized. They are akin to, but often introspectively distinguishable from, a sense of well-being, which involves a feeling of vitality, health, energy. Feelings of contentment can be lingering, perhaps peaceful, feelings; they can be feelings of equanimity, of ease, repose, relaxation, elation, or others.

The cases of feelings of contentment just described are notably physiological in origin. They do not involve feeling satisfied *with* anything. A person with such a feeling may at the same time make judgments about the satisfactoriness of his life or of some aspect of it; but the feeling does not need, conceptually, to be completed in this way. It does not need an object, either extensional or intensional. But one can also find things satisfying; one can feel satisfied *with* things – in particular, with his life or some aspect of it; and the question arises as to how feeling satisfied with something, and merely feeling satisfied (contented),¹⁴ are related. Phenomenologically, the feelings are indistinguishable; one cannot distinguish a feeling of contentment (simpliciter) from a feeling of satisfaction with something, solely by how they feel. When one feels satisfied with something, however, the feeling is in some way causally related to the something.

But there are two possible causal relations that must be distinguished when one has a feeling of satisfaction connected with, say, one's job. One may feel satisfied (contented) because of the job (that is, the job causes the feeling); or one may feel satisfied because one judges that the object of some expectation connected with one's job is realized or is in the way of being realized, and that what one gets or expects to get is or will be worthwhile. Only in the latter case is it appropriate to say that one feels satisfied *with* his job. The former case is quite similar to the case in which one feels satisfied (contented) owing, say, to having engaged in pleasurable physical activity: in neither case does one feel satisfied *with* something; one feels satisfied (contented) only *because* of something. One feels satisfied with something only if one gets a feeling of satisfaction caused by his judging that the object of some expectation has been realized or is in the way of being realized.

Applying the foregoing account of feeling satisfied with something, a person feels satisfied with his life if and only if he gets a feeling of satisfaction when he judges that his expectations in life are being attained. A person who is disposed during a period of time *t* to feel satisfied with

his life *is* satisfied with his life during *t* – that is, is happy during *t*. This account of happiness is such that happiness-ascriptions are reports – that is, to say that a person is happy is to say that he is disposed to have certain feelings as a result of his making certain judgments. These feelings are inner episodes, the disposition to have which is reported by a happiness-ascription. The fact that the presence of these inner episodes is not, or may not be, detectable by third parties does not prevent happiness-ascriptions from being reports.

When one feels satisfied with something, one has a feeling of satisfaction produced by some judgment of favorable assessment of the something. The feeling involved, as has been pointed out, is phenomenologically indistinguishable from feelings of satisfaction produced in other ways. These views raise the following questions: Why, if happiness involves feelings of satisfaction, does it matter how these feelings are produced? Why is a feeling produced in one way distinguished from and more important than a similar feeling produced in another way? What distinguishes such feelings is that the feeling in such cases, although it feels the same as feelings not produced by judgments of the sort in question, has an object, a target, whereas the feelings with which these are being contrasted do not. In this regard these feelings, although perhaps not emotions, have certain properties in common with emotions.¹⁵ Feelings of satisfaction produced by the making of certain judgments are particularly important because human beings make assessments concerning what is going on in their lives and concerning their lives as a whole. The making of these assessments produces feelings of certain sorts, whether one likes it or not, and thus determines whether or not one is happy. We might consider here the matter of whether people *necessarily* make such assessments; for if some don't, then either we haven't yet given an adequate account of human happiness, or else we must say, implausibly, that there are some people who can't be happy although they seem to be. Now it does seem to be the case that making assessments of their lives is something that normal adults do; but this doesn't tell us whether they must do so, unless this is part of the concept of a normal adult. I would like to suggest that the latter is indeed the case. Human beings are planners; they make plans for the short and the long run. It seems to be part of the idea of planning that one make assessments of the success or failure of his plans. It is hard to see how one can be a

planner without making assessments of the success of his plans. And likewise it is hard to see how a person can fail to be a planner; one who is not a planner strikes us as in some way deficient as a human being. Of course, making plans for living is a more or less matter, not ordinarily an all or nothing matter. Some people can and do chart out their whole lives, while others' vision of their future is limited to the near future, perhaps even to the next week. Not only do human beings make plans, but they also, and necessarily, have wants which may be fulfilled or not. As in the case of making plans, it is a necessary feature of having wants that the normal person who has wants makes assessments of whether or not his wants are being fulfilled and whether what he gets is worthwhile. A person who does not make assessments of this sort (e.g., one who is never aware that his wants are being fulfilled) strikes us as in some way deficient as a human being. A person who wants absolutely nothing also strikes us as being deficient – such a being could be no more than what is called a vegetable.

Can we say that a normal adult necessarily makes assessments of his life as a whole? I think we can say that they do. Of course, people don't usually make self-conscious assessments of their lives, but it would be strange to find someone who, when asked to make such an assessment, couldn't produce an answer – even a ready answer. And it is not really so hard as it might appear to make an all-in assessment of this sort. There are usually in any given person's life only a few very important areas which will weigh heavily in an assessment of that life; these include one's job or career, one's marriage or other family life, one's social relationships in general, one's standard of living, and perhaps others. It is not too difficult to consider all of these together in one assessment of one's life as a whole. Indeed it seems likely that people sometimes implicitly evaluate their lives as a whole, without being self-consciously aware that they are doing so. For example, if a person judges that some area of his life is not what it could be but that nevertheless it is acceptable because other areas are going well, what we have here is in effect an overall evaluation of a life.

On the account of happiness that has been given, it would not seem that babies and very young children can be happy; and yet we do think that these individuals can be happy – we speak of a happy baby or a happy child. The happiness of a baby or a child, however, seems to be

a different sort of thing from the happiness of a normal adult. A baby that gurgles and laughs a lot is a happy baby; a very young child that laughs and plays is a happy young child. We determine whether a child is happy by observing what it does, how it responds to things; we do the same for pet animals. We try to get certain reactions from children and animals so as to assure ourselves that they are happy. It hardly makes sense to suggest that an animal or very young child that behaves in certain characteristic ways is not happy. Thus, the account of happiness that has been given here does not apply to beings of this sort, although it is well worth noting that adults often do apply criteria which are relevant only to the happiness of children to determine whether other adults are happy; we often prize reactions by others as evidence that we are making them happy, although we sometimes discover to our dismay that a person who laughs a lot may not be happy. The account or 'definition' presented here, then, is limited to normal adults, and one might complain that it is therefore not an adequate account. This complaint is mistaken, however, for there is no reason to expect that happiness is the same sort of thing for all sorts of beings.

E. Some Problems Considered

Inasmuch as the account of feeling satisfied with something that has been given is a causal one, there are problems that can arise which must be considered. (1) A person might make a mistaken judgment concerning something – for example, he might think, mistakenly, that his wife is faithful. The question that arises here is whether this person can feel satisfied with his marriage if his feeling satisfied with it depends on his believing that his wife is faithful. Ordinarily there would be no difficulty with saying that he feels satisfied with his marriage, except that one might feel reluctant to allow that a person could be happy in such circumstances. It seems to me, however, that any unwillingness to call such a person happy can stem only from our awareness of how he will feel when he discovers the deception, together with the belief that it will probably be discovered. But if the man in question were to die tomorrow, I think we should have no hesitation in saying that he was happy (assuming that in all other respects he was), albeit deceived. Hence the mistakeness of a judgment that produces a feeling of satisfaction with something does not prevent one from being happy.¹⁶ (2) A person might make a correct

judgment concerning X , such that he should have a feeling of satisfaction concerning X , and yet fail to have it. For example, a person may judge that his career is going well, that he is accomplishing all that he set out to accomplish; and yet he may fail to feel satisfied when he makes these judgments. Such a person needs either to find another career, one that will give him a feeling of satisfaction; or he needs to learn to find value in what he does (psychiatric attention might be helpful with this task). This case presents no difficulty for the account of happiness that has been given here. Nothing in the account suggests that successfully fulfilling the expectations in one's life must make one happy; in fact, this was explicitly denied in Section IB. (3) A person might come to feel satisfied with something due to his making a judgment about it that he would not ordinarily make. For example, a person might generally feel dissatisfied with, say, his career; but after having a bit to drink he might judge that his career is going well, and the making of this judgment may lead him to feel satisfied with his career. Now this situation does present some difficulty for the account of happiness given here. For in this case the person does indeed feel satisfied with things; and if he feels satisfied with his life as a whole, then we might, on my account, have to say that he is happy; but we would be justifiably reluctant to say this. One way to handle this case is to point out that although the person in question does feel satisfied with his life, he is not disposed to do so, and thus is not happy. He feels this way only when he puts on his rose-colored glasses (e.g., gets drunk or high on drugs); but when he is not wearing them he does not feel satisfied with his life. The account of happiness being presented says that one is happy if one is disposed throughout t to feel satisfied with his life; it does not say that one is happy if one is disposed under certain conditions throughout t to feel satisfied with his life. If there is any ambiguity in the formulation, it can be cleared up by amending it to say that one is happy if and only if one is disposed (but not merely in special circumstances) to feel satisfied with his life.¹⁷

F. *Polar Kinds of Lives with Which One Can Be Happy*

Given the foregoing account of a person's being happy, it should be apparent that there are many kinds of lives people can lead that can make them happy. Some might be happy as a result of having (as opposed to doing) things that give pleasure; and some might be happy as a result

of doing certain things, especially those things which involve capacities that they have made an effort to develop. (The utilitarian 'ideal' does not involve a different kind of life which can make one happy; it is compatible with either the Epicurean or Aristotelian 'ideals'.)

I would like to suggest that there are two polar kinds of lives that people can lead (although almost no one leads a life at either pole) and with which they can be satisfied, or happy. These polar kinds of lives seem to correspond very roughly, to the Epicurean and Aristotelian ideals. The following quotation (from Anouilh's *Antigone*) is intended to show that there are indeed two polar kinds of lives, or kinds of things to seek in a life in order to be happy during it. At the one pole is a life in which one wants to feel as contented as possible, and at the other a life filled with thrills, feelings of excitement, rapture, or whatever.

CREON: And get married quickly, Antigone. Be happy.... Life is not what you think it is. Life is a child playing round your feet, a tool you hold firmly in your grip, a bench you sit down upon in the evening, in your garden. People will tell you that that's not life, that life is something else.... Believe me, the only poor consolation that we have in our old age is to discover that what I have just said to you is true. Life is nothing more than the happiness that you get out of it.¹⁸

ANTIGONE: I spit on your happiness! I spit on your idea of life – that life must go on come what may. You are all like dogs that lick everything they smell. You with your promise of a humdrum happiness – provided a person doesn't ask too much of life. I want everything of life, I do; and I want it now! I want it total, complete; otherwise I reject it! I will *not* be moderate. I will *not* be satisfied with the bit of cake you offer me if I promise to be a good little girl. I want to be sure of everything this very day; sure that everything will be as beautiful as when I was a little girl. If not, I want to die!¹⁹

A person can want to do something just for the contentment it will bring. A person who has been dissatisfied because his life was disordered might want, for instance, to get married just because it will produce order in his life and so bring him contentment. It is a commonplace that psychological hedonism is false because (among perhaps other reasons) it is not pleasure that all people always want, but certain specific things the having of which will bring them pleasure. But it is nevertheless the case that pleasure *can* be all that is ultimately wanted; a person may ultimately want only pleasure, although he must do or get other things in order to get the pleasure. It is the same with feelings of contentment:

one may ultimately want only contentment although he must do other things in order to get the contentment.

Now what it is important to bring out is that a life of many contentments of the sort described above need not be a happy one, even for the person who ultimately wants only these contentments. These various contentments are not the same (although they perhaps feel the same) as the contentment that one has when one feels satisfied *with* something. Getting contentment from one's marriage does not itself constitute feeling satisfied with one's marriage, even if contentment is all that one ultimately wants; nor does having a life of contentments itself constitute feeling satisfied with one's life, even if a life of contentment is all that one wants. For the fact that one gets what he wants out of life is no guarantee that he will find it satisfying when he gets it. As indicated in Section IID, one feels satisfied with his life only if one gets a feeling of satisfaction from judging that he has realized or is in the way of realizing the ends of his expectations in life. In the case being considered here, one feels satisfied with his life only if he has a feeling of contentment which is caused by his belief that he is getting what he wants out of life – namely, as much contentment as possible.

At the other pole is the kind of life in which one seeks as many of what might be called feelings of happiness as possible. We can distinguish three sorts of feelings of happiness. First there are feelings of euphoria, which are purely feelings (not feelings *of* anything), perhaps drug-induced. Second are what may be called the thrills (excitement, feelings of exhilaration) of doing *X* – say, deep-sea fishing, sky-diving, or auto-racing. These sorts of feelings may or may not be introspectively distinguishable from feelings of euphoria. Third are feelings of happiness with areas of one's life or with one's life as a whole. This last class of feelings are the same as what were called above feelings of satisfaction with something.

All of these three are loosely called feelings of happiness; and there is nothing wrong with calling them all by the same name so long as we appreciate the differences among them. The question 'Are you happy?' can be asked indifferently of someone on a drug-induced trip, or the guest of honor at a surprise party, or of one's spouse. But the simple answer 'Yes' that might be given in the last case differs in what it says from the same answer given in either of the other two cases.

Feelings of euphoria and of thrills of *X*-ing stand to feeling happy with

areas of one's life or with one's life as a whole as feeling contented stands to feeling satisfied with areas of one's life or with one's life as a whole. That is, there might be people who want out of life as much as possible in the way of euphoria and thrilling, exhilarating experiences; and such people might want to do specific things only as ways of getting these. But having a life filled with feelings like these does not itself constitute feeling happy (=satisfied) with one's life, for the fact that one gets what he wants out of life is no guarantee that he will find it satisfying when he gets it. One feels happy with his life only if he has a feeling of contentment which is caused by his belief that he is getting what he wants out of life – namely, as much in the way of thrills and euphoria as possible.

G. *Comparatives of 'Is Happy'*

I would now like to indicate some plausible comparatives of 'is happy', as these occur when it is said that one person is happier than another or that a person is happier at one time than at another.

I have said that being happy overall during a period of time is being satisfied with one's life as a whole during a period of time. Now in addition to being satisfied in this way, one may have further feelings caused by his judgments about how his life is going. One may be radiant, or radiantly happy; overjoyed, thrilled about having a happy life. On the account of being happy that I have given, neither having feelings of this sort, nor even being disposed to have them, is necessary for being happy. But this is quite compatible with saying that the person who has them is happier than the one who doesn't. This is one plausible use of the comparative of 'happy'.

A second use is as follows: I have said that a person may be happy overall with his life even though it fails in some ways – perhaps not all of the objects of his expectation-attitudes are realized, or not in the highest degree. A person *N* may be said to be happier than a person *P* if his life measures up in more areas, or to higher degrees; and in a like manner a person's life may be happier at one time than at another.

Third: *N* might be happier than *P* in that he feels more contented with his life than *P* does. The feeling may be more intense or more enduring. The plausibility of this comparative of 'is happy' depends upon the sense, if any, that can be given to interpersonal comparisons of feelings.

The foregoing are the only plausible uses of 'is happier than' that I can discern. The following is *not* a plausible use: There is no ideal of life which is such that a person who lives it successfully is necessarily happier, or even likely to be happier, than a person who successfully lives another sort of life. Happiness is a matter of getting *whatever* it is that one wants and finding it worthwhile when one gets it.

Duke University

NOTES

¹ *Freedom and Reason*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1965, p. 126.

² *Philosophy* 43 (1968), 52.

³ *Political Argument*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1965, p. 41.

⁴ *The Varieties of Goodness*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963, pp. 92-94.

⁵ There are difficulties in interpreting Aristotle. Aristotle's word 'eudaimonia' is usually translated 'happiness'; some scholars, however, think that this is a mistranslation, and that 'living and doing well' comes closer. In any mention of Aristotle that is made herein I will be dealing with him merely for purposes of example; no claims to exegetical accuracy are made.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁸ *The Philosophical Quarterly* 18 (1968), 97-113.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 128-9.

¹⁰ 'Feelings', *The Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1951), 193-205, at 195.

¹¹ *The Philosophy of Mind*, Random House, New York, 1967, p. 121.

¹² I do not mean to imply by drawing this comparison between feelings of satisfaction and feelings of pain that the former are, like the latter, sensations, although they may have sensational aspects.

¹³ Webster's New International Dictionary (Second Edition) distinguishes between satisfaction and contentment as follows: "To CONTENT is to bring to the point where one is not disquieted or disturbed by a desire for what one does not have, even though every wish is not fully gratified; to SATISFY is to appease fully one's desires; between to be content (or contented) and to be satisfied there is a corresponding distinction; as, 'When I was at home, I was in a better place; but travelers must be content' (*Shak*); 'I am satisfied and need no more than what I know' (*Shak*). The O.E.D. draws a similar distinction. This distinction corresponds to that which I have drawn between something's being satisfactory and something's being satisfying. As indicated earlier, it is the latter with which I am concerned, and what I am arguing at this point is that there is, within the notion of something's being satisfying, another distinction which can appropriately be classified as being between contentment and being satisfied with something.

¹⁴ In the previous footnote a new contentment-satisfaction distinction was alluded to; the suggestion is that the distinction in question is between that contentment or satisfaction which does not have an object and that which does. Linguistic usage may not clearly mark out this distinction (although there seems to be some evidence in its favor), but I will usually adhere to it (unambiguously, I hope).

¹⁵ On emotions and their objects, see, among others, John Wisdom, 'God and Evil', *Mind* 44 (1935), 10ff.; Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963, ch. 3; A. R. White, *The Philosophy of Mind* (*op. cit.*, n. 11), ch. 5; O. H. Green, 'Emotions and Beliefs', in *Studies in the Philosophy of Mind* (ed. by Nicholas Rescher), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1972, pp. 24–40 (*American Philosophical Quarterly Monograph Series* 6).

¹⁶ As indicated earlier, there is a use of 'he is happy' by means of which we praise someone happy – that is, express envy of the person or his situation. We would not, in the case described above, praise the man happy (i.e. envy him), although in the use of 'he is happy' that I have been discussing, the man is happy.

¹⁷ I am aware that the distinction between ordinary and special circumstances would be difficult to draw, and that there would be borderline cases. Any such distinction would probably have to be person-relative, for we might feel inclined to say of someone who was always high and had every prospect of remaining so that these were his ordinary circumstances. Nevertheless, it is usually clear to us when circumstances are ordinary and when special; we usually know when a person is fooling himself.

¹⁸ Jean Anouilh, *Antigone* (transl. from the French by Lewis Galantière), Methuen and Co., London, 1957, p. 56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.