

SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON HAPPINESS, FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN:

ARISTOTLE, ADAM SMITH, AND MARTIN E.P. SELIGMAN

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES PROGRAM

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

PATRICK D. WONG

NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

MARCH 2020

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DISSERTATION COMMITTEE:

DANIEL COWDIN, PH.D. – MENTOR

HAROLD LAWBER, PH.D. – READER

MICHAEL BUDD, PH.D. – READER

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Dedication

To my wife Lisa and daughter Sarah,
Who's love and compassion inspired me to keep going, and who never doubted me.

To my parents,
Who taught me that even the largest task could be accomplished if done one step at a time.

To my Aunt Winnie,
Who is the greatest source of motivation and inspiration.

To my esteemed colleagues
who believe in the richness of learning,
...to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or
construction of knowledge...

The best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake.

Abstract

This dissertation employed Ernest L. Boyer's scholarship of integration by synthesizing Seligman, Aristotle, and Smith's literature to discuss what constitutes happiness, a good life, and how to apply Martin Seligman's framework to achieve these objectives. The dissertation will also discuss how happiness was defined during the Aristotle era and how happiness is measured in contemporary society and societal perspective toward individual economics and happiness. This integration is especially necessary for studying humanities, which I used to understand the past and its influence on the present. Understanding our past encourages us to appreciate the present and work with others to establish productive and positive future systems. Thus, increasing our understanding of what it means to be human in the age of technology.

Chapter 1

Introduction

“The very good news is there is quite a number of internal circumstances [...] under your voluntary control. If you decide to change them..., your level of happiness is likely to increase lastingly.”

Martin Seligman - *Authentic Happiness*

The first significant technological revolution occurred around 10,000 B.C. Early human societies were organized into small nomadic bands whose central means of survival were hunting, gathering, and scavenging.¹ Eventually, nomadic peoples began to settle down and farm, marking the beginning of the technology revolution. First, people started to plant crops in controlled environments. Next, humans became active in domesticating animals such as goats, sheep, and pigs. Then for the first time, human beings became dependent on technology they created to maintain their civilization. As a result, these technological innovations changed the natural characteristics of our society and altered the relationships between human beings, technology, and the environment.

The Industrial Revolution of the mid-eighteenth century further changed our way of life. Before the Industrial Revolution, manufacturing was often performed in people's homes using hand tools and small manual machines. With the steam engine's invention, this process shifted from manual labor to the machine powered to factories and then to mass production. The steam engine also later powered the railroad. Britain led the way in much of this advancement as its

¹ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers: A History of Man's Search to Know His World and Himself* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Society* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999); James Edward McClellan and Harold Dorn, *Science and Technology in World History: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

geographical location had the advantage of natural ports, navigable rivers, and most importantly, plentiful coal to power the new machines.

Moreover, new capital from the West Indies and other overseas colonies provided the money to invest in these new enterprises.² New technologies, such as the spinning jenny and flying shuttle, doomed the old system as the textile industry shifted to larger factories almost overnight. The factory system led to substantial population shifts as farmers from rural areas moved to cities, such as Manchester and Birmingham. The development of the telescope, the microscope, the barometer, the vacuum pump, the printing press, and similar contraptions further spawned a societal transformation.

Industrialism further provided the economic and military basis for the West to secure dominance over the rest of the world. These technological innovations led to economic and political expansion.³ Technological innovations continue to change the natural characteristics of our society, from agriculture to transportation to how we communicate with each other. Technological innovations reshape our society, develop more advanced economies, and have allowed the rise of a leisure class.⁴ Yet the technology that created this system has also led to harsh working conditions, loss of human dignity, and child labor exploitation. The very technologies that created massive urban centers also led to profound demographic and social changes.

² Jared Diamond. *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (New York: Norton paperback, 1999), 224.

³ Gloria K. Fiero, *The Humanistic Tradition, Vol. II - The Early Modern World to the Present*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2006), 743-747.

⁴ Thorstein Veblen's Theory of the Leisure discusses how social interactions and economic functions shape society: (1) how citizens earn their livelihoods, (2) how technology and industrial arts are the creative forces of economic production. Veblen's theory is a treatise on economics and social critiques of conspicuous consumption, social class, division of labor, and consumerism. This theory is also in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* - division of labor discussion. Chapter 4 of this dissertation presents a more in-depth discussion on this topic.

The information age revolution has mostly been brought about by advanced communication, nano-technologies, personal computers, and social media. The initial purpose of the internet was to maintain an essential military communication system that could survive a nuclear attack.⁵ During the 1970's, navigating the internet required detailed knowledge of machine language, file transfer protocol, and other technical requirements. The advancement of personal computers and application software altered the direction and purpose of the internet's original objectives. By 1980, the internet had spread to universities, and by the early 1990's, the internet had become commercially available. Today, almost 4.57 billion people are active internet users, which encompasses 59% of the global population.⁶ June Parsons and Dan Oja state that this revolution is an ongoing process of social, political, and economic change brought by digital technology.⁷ In summary, this technology can level the playing field by breaking the monopoly of power held by advanced nations and changing the social-economic landscapes of humankind.⁸

Technology is often associated with economic wealth and resources in our society. The evolution of the internet has been compared to the invention of the printing press. Today, the smartphone has introduced our culture to texting, instant messaging, and video chat. These advancements have not only been perceived as a catalyst for change in humanity but have also

⁵ John Naughton, "The evolution of the Internet: from military experiment to General Purpose Technology," *Journal of Cyber Policy* 1, no. 1 (2016): 5-28.

⁶ J. Clement, "Global Digital Population." Statista, June 4, 2020, accessed June 4, 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>.

⁷ June Parsons and Dan Oja. *New Perspectives on Computer Concepts* (Boston, MA: Thomson Course Technology, 2009); Gary P. Schneider and Jessica Evans, *New Perspectives on the Internet*, 6th ed. (Cambridge: Course Technology/Thomson, 2007).

⁸ Thomas L. Friedman. *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005).

changed the way we live and interact with each other. Have these conveniences made us happier? Has our life become more meaningful and purposeful? Are we living a good life?

These are complex questions with no simple answers that touch all aspects of humanity. Philosophers have long sought an answer to the meaning of human life. People of every religion and culture search for life's meaning and attempt to discover their purposes. Most of us have our own beliefs of what constitutes a good life. Contemporary society portrays money and consumption as the answers. Money is measurable, tangible, fungible, and remains the most powerful motivator in our society. The word *good* is generally considered to be the opposite of evil. The concept of good denotes the conduct that we should prefer when posed with a choice between possible actions. *Good* often expresses moral approval, such as morality, ethics, religion, and philosophy. When we state that someone is living a good life, it implies that a person is courageous, trustworthy, selfless, and loyal. These individuals possess many of the mentioned virtues and devote their time to activities that benefit others.

Aristotle argued that a good life is not merely a subjective “emotional” state, it is how an individual defines their emotional state. Instead, it is an objective state - closer to the concept of well-being, a notion of interpersonal flourishing as opposed to merely social survival. The 20th-century psychologist, Sigmund Freud, inscribed, “what do [people] demand of life and wish to achieve in it? The answer to this can hardly be in doubt. They strive for happiness; they want to become happy and to remain so.”⁹ Today, we know considerably more about happiness determinants than we have in the past. Numerous studies conducted by universities and companies have linked happiness levels with age, gender, income, marital status, employment, health, wealth, and technology advancements. Societal attitudes toward these determinants and

⁹ Sigmund Freud, *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995).

findings are often complex and ambivalent. Many members of society believe that these components, especially technologies, wealth, and social status, possess solutions to daily problems. Others are disturbed by what they view as wealth and technologies being out of control. They believe that these modern devices are a threat to our traditional ways of life, to our environment, and even to the survival of humanity.¹⁰

Albert Borgmann considers technology to be both beneficial and detrimental to our society.¹¹ He argues that past technology has served us in defeating challenges such as food shortages and disease. However, he reflects that when we turn to it for richer experiences, it leads instead to a life dominated by effortless and thoughtless consumption.¹² For example, Google currently invests in the development of the “humble” spoons. These spoons use hundreds of algorithms to enable people with tremors and Parkinson’s disease to eat without spilling. The technology detects how a hand is shaking and makes an instant adjustment to stay balanced. Hence, technological innovations represent a significant step forward in science and have led to the objectification of nature and advancing notions of its development and conquest.

At present, technology is an integral part of our life; it promotes the “good life” and has taken precedence over previously prioritized values. The changes in technological advancements have encouraged shifting values that have led to the formation of political and secular utopian movements. Human inventions and technologies link all aspects of life together; thus, science

¹⁰ Morton E. Winston and Ralph Edelbach. *Society, Ethics, and Technology*, 4th ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), 13.

¹¹ Albert Borgmann, “Society in The Postmodern Era.” *The Washington Quarterly* 23, no.1 (2000):187-2000. Albert Borgmann is a German-born American philosopher specializing in the philosophy of technology. He was born in Freiburg, Germany, and is a professor of philosophy at the University of Montana.

¹² Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry*. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997).

and technology are now our new mythos.¹³ In Charles Handy's bestselling novel, "*Beyond Certainty*," he writes that it would be straightforward to assume life gets simpler and more predictable as technology advances. However, reality portrays a very different picture; the advancement of technology translates to more complexity and societal uncertainty. The challenge is in determining if a balance can be achieved between positive and negative impacts of modern technology to create and sustain happiness.

The pursuit of happiness remains the goal of many individuals, especially in the United States. Our Declaration of Independence states that "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"¹⁴ are inalienable rights that belong to all of us. Life is the foundational good, and it makes liberty possible. Liberty is a prerequisite for pursuing happiness in ways that each of us may freely choose for ourselves. Thus, "our interest in happiness is not, however, merely one interest among many. It is an overarching interest in our complete and comprehensive well-being."¹⁵ Today, much of the literature reviews and research center around hedonic and eudaimonic well-being with assumptions about the measurement of happiness and its determinants. Despite the myriads of investigation and observation, researchers are still searching for the definition of happiness.

¹³ Anne Foerst, *God in the Machine: What Robots Teach Us about Humanity and God*. (New York: Plume, 2004), 53.

¹⁴ Thomas Jefferson, "Copy of Declaration of Independence." The Library of Congress, July 4, 1776, accessed August 12, 2018. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000159>

¹⁵ "Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness." (The President's Council on Bioethics, October 2003), 205, accessed August 12, 2018. <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/559341>

Salve Regina University Ph.D. Program

The Salve Regina Humanities Ph.D. program seeks to investigate, “what does it mean to be human in the age of technology?” Technologies challenge us to ponder what place we occupy in the universe and what it means to be creatures of language, self-awareness, and rationality. For better or for worse, humans have created machines and invented robots to facilitate decision-making processes that protect and mitigate life’s challenges and enrich the quality of life. No matter which technology we adopt, there is always a newer, better, faster, and more innovative technology around the corner. We have many comforts of life that our ancestors did not possess; should we conclude that we are happier than our forefathers were? These are complex and multifaceted questions. It requires creative thinking and interpretation of a large body of previous knowledge, such as Aristotle, Adam Smith’s philosophical frameworks, and contemporary literature to address these questions.

Ernest L. Boyer¹⁶ stated that the scholarship of integration creates connections across disciplines by situating isolated facts within the larger body of knowledge, both within and across research areas. This domain of scholarship happens when scholars put isolated facts into perspective, by integrating Seligman, Aristotle, and Smith’s literature and discovery into larger patterns and frameworks, and interpretations, the scholarship of integration might transcend disciplinary boundaries to convey desiring to isolated facts. Here, integration is especially necessary for the study of humanities, which can be used to understand the past and its influence on the present. Facts, findings, and prior literature have influenced today’s societal environment. Understanding our past encourages us to appreciate the present and work with others to establish

¹⁶ Ernest L. Boyer *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. (Lawrenceville: Princeton University Press, 1990), 19.

productive and positive future systems. Thus, increasing our understanding of what it means to be human in the age of technology.

Scholarly Contributions

In this dissertation, I will be utilizing a “scholarship of integration” approach to illustrate my analysis with Martin E.P. Seligman’s *Authentic Happiness* and Aristotle’s definition of a good life as the main discussion points. I will also be connecting these sources to Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to question the assumptions about economic growth being a positive driving force for our society's advancement.

I conducted a ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database search of “happiness” from 1900 to 2018 and yielded 248,726 results, 219,744 results for “happiness and society” and 83,430 of “Aristotle and the good life.” There are 12,993 results for Martin Seligman as the dissertation advisor or a committee member. None of these publications addressed my dissertation topic.

In this dissertation, I will discuss what constitutes happiness, a good life, and how to apply Martin Seligman’s framework to achieve these objectives. I will also illustrate the impact of economic decisions on happiness within our society. Chapter 1 examines the definition of happiness, how happiness is measured, the meaning of life, and individual relationships with happiness. Chapter 2 looks at Aristotle’s definition of a good life and the contemporary treatment of a good life and happiness. Chapter 3 explores Martin Seligman’s *Authentic Happiness* frameworks and how it relates to Aristotle's teaching. Additionally, I will discuss how positive psychology impacts a good life and happiness. Chapter 4 examines how individuals relate happiness to economic decision making. The final chapter concludes with a discussion of findings, implications, and recommendations for further study.

What is Happiness?

Chapter 1 begins with a historical and contemporary overview of happiness by examining the definition of happiness, how happiness is measured, and individual relationships with happiness. The chapter concludes with why happiness is necessary for individuals in modern society.

Happiness is an ever-present concept in our society, and its significant presence is continually portrayed through a diverse range of visual media. From TV to bulletin boards to social media, the promise of happiness is targeted toward consumers at every turn. The concept of happiness dates back to ancient Greece. The word “*eudaimonia*” literally means having a “good demon” but was commonly translated to “happiness” or “well-being”.¹ Prior to Aristotle, Athenian philosophers such as Socrates and Plato were already entertaining similar concepts.

Socrates, like Plato, reasoned that virtue² was a form of knowledge, specifically, a knowledge of good and evil.³ He saw numerous virtues, such as justice, piety, and courage, as united. Further, Socrates deemed this knowledge as a requirement for humans to attain the “ultimate good” (*eudaimonia*).⁴

¹ Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan. "Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: An introduction." *Journal of happiness studies* 9, no. 1 (2008): 1-11. Samantha Heintzelman, "Eudaimonia in the Contemporary Science of Subjective Well-Being: Psychological Well-Being, Self-Determination, and Meaning in Life.," in *Handbook of Well-Being*, ed. Edward L. Deci, Shigehiro Oishi, and Louis Tay (Salt Lake City, UT: DEF Publishers, 2018), 1-14. Veronika Huta and Richard M. Ryan, "Pursuing pleasure or virtue: The differential and overlapping well-being benefits of hedonic and eudaimonic motives." *Journal of happiness studies* 11, no. 6 (2010):735-762.

² *arête*, the very idea of virtue.

³ Dustin Sebell, *The Socratic Turn: Knowledge of Good and Evil in an Age of Science*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

⁴ Alan S. Waterman, "Two conceptions of happiness: Contrasts of personal expressiveness (*eudaimonia*) and hedonic enjoyment." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 64, no. 4 (1993):678. Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, "Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: An introduction." *Journal of happiness studies* 9, no. 1 (November 2006): 1-11.

Similarly, Plato believed that individuals naturally feel unhappiness when they do something they know and acknowledge to be wrong.⁵ *Eudaimonia* was the ultimate goal of both moral reasoning and behavior. While Plato, to some extent, was credited with refining the concept, he offered no direct definition for *eudaimonia*. However, Socrates viewed virtue as integral to *eudaimonia*. If this idea of an ultimate goal for individuals appears familiar, it is because of the similarities between *eudaimonia* and Abraham Maslow's concept of "self-actualization"⁶ in today's psychological literature.⁷

In 1943, Maslow proposed the hierarchy of needs theory that presents basic human needs in the form of a hierarchy.⁸ The original hierarchy represents the five needs arranged for the lowest to the highest order as follows (1) physiological, (2) safety, (3) love and belonging, (4) esteem, and (5) self-actualization. Maslow reasoned that human nature is the continuous fulfillment of inner needs, beginning with the basic physiological needs and progressing to meta-needs. He stated that the highest needs could not be pursued until lower needs are met. He wrote that "a musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be intimately happy."⁹ Maslow believed that humans are motivated by the desire to achieve or maintain the various conditions upon which these basic satisfactions rest and by specific intellectual desires. He concluded that in self-actualization, a person would naturally experience

⁵ Anthony W. Price. *Virtue and reason in Plato and Aristotle*. (UK: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶ Saul McLeod. "Maslow's hierarchy of needs," *Simply psychology* 1 (2007):1-8.

⁷ Samantha Heintzelman, "Eudaimonia in the Contemporary Science of Subjective Well-Being: Psychological Well-Being, Self-Determination, and Meaning in Life," in *Handbook of Well-Being*, ed. Edward L. Deci, Shigehiro Oishi, and Louis Tay (Salt Lake City: DEF Publishers, 2018), 1-14.

⁸ Abraham H. Maslow, "A Dynamic Theory of Human Motivation," in *Understanding Human Motivation*, ed. Chalmers L. Stacey and Manfred F. DeMartino (Cleveland: Howard Allen Publisher, 1958) 26-47.

⁹ Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943):370 - 396.

ecstasy or bliss, moments of great astonishment, or peak-experiences.¹⁰ Maslow further asserted that “workers could achieve the highest possible productivity if their “humanness” and potential for self-actualization were given the opportunity to grow so that their higher or meta-needs could be fulfilled.”¹¹ In short, self-actualization was not only beneficial to the company’s productivity, but also to workers’ well-being and the betterment of society.

The concept of *eudaimonia* comes from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and his philosophical work on the ‘science of happiness’.¹² *Eudaimonia* is a central concept of ethics and moral philosophy; Aristotle enshrined happiness as a central purpose of humanity and as a goal by itself. He contended that “the happy person is one who expresses complete virtue in his activities, with an adequate supply of external goods, not just for any time but for a complete life.” Thus, happiness is beyond feeling good; it is about doing good.¹³

There are several interpretations offered for Aristotle’s term *eudaimonia*. Generally, *eudaimonia* reflects “pursuit of virtue, excellence, and the best within us,”¹⁴ Further, Aristotle believed that *eudaimonia* was a rational activity aimed at pursuing the “good life.” Where he differed from Plato and other thinkers was in defining the acquisition of knowledge. Plato emphasized that knowledge was a virtue in and of itself, while Aristotle stressed the importance of the pursuit of knowledge. Plato argued that to know the good is to do the good; knowing the

¹⁰ Abraham H. Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).

¹¹ John Sheldrake, *Management Theory*. 2nd ed. (London: Cengage Learning, 2002), 141.

¹² Terence H. Irwin, *Conceptions of happiness in the Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Christopher Shields, *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹³ Rafael Di Tella and Robert MacCulloch, “Some uses of Data in Economics.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20, (2006):25-46.

¹⁴ Veronika Huta and Alan S. Waterman. "Eudaimonia and its distinction from Hedonia: Developing a classification and terminology for understanding conceptual and operational definitions." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 15, no. 6 (2014): 1425-1456.

right thing to do will lead to one automatically doing the right thing. Thus, implying that virtue could be taught by teaching someone right from wrong, good from evil. However, Aristotle stated that knowing what the right thing was not enough; that one had to choose to act appropriately to create the habit of doing good. His definition also required one to be virtuous. He explained the levels of *eudaimonia*¹⁵, otherwise known as happiness, as 1) pleasure, 2) honor or virtue, and 3) contemplation or reason. We can't just act virtuously, but we also need to be virtuous too. In other words, we need to have a virtuous character. How we live our lives determines our happiness and well-being, not how we pursue material wealth and power. Therefore, "eudaimonic happiness" is about lives lived and actions taken in pursuit of *eudaimonia*. For Aristotle, "reason determines the right rule for virtuous action," and "choice is based on a combination of reason and desire."

In contrast, contemporary culture offers varying definitions of happiness. Merriam-Webster¹⁶ defines happiness as "favored by luck or fortune," and happiness is "good fortune or prosperity." Sonja Lyubomirsky elaborates on this definition of happiness. She adds "the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one's life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile."¹⁷ Lyubomirsky's addendum captures the transience of positive emotions that come with happiness and provides a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in life. What's more, it suggests how these emotions and sense of meaning reinforce one another. Similarly, Viktor Frankl argued that "people function best when they perceive a sense of

¹⁵ Aristotle, *NE*, Ibid.

¹⁶ Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, 517.

¹⁷ Sonja Lyubomirsky. *The How of Happiness: a Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 32.

meaning and possess a life purpose, a unique mission to strive for throughout their lives.”¹⁸ In other words, happiness could not be pursued, it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one’s dedication to a cause greater than oneself.¹⁹ Frankl stated that we don’t have a universal term of the meaning of life, we define it our way, with our potential and experiences, discovering ourselves every day.

Researchers such as Paul TP Wong, Viktor Frankl, and Roy Baumeister, have indicated that meaning in life is considered a critical ingredient for human well-being and flourishing.²⁰ Literature reviews establish several models and theories that define what meaning in life is. Wong asserts that there are no simple answers to this complex question since “it touches all aspects of humanity - biological, psychological, social, and spiritual.”²¹ Some philosophers communicate to us that life, in general, draws meaning from being connected to higher and future goals. Frankl equated meaning with purpose. Further, Baumeister added value, a sense of self-worth, efficacy, self-justification, and purpose²² into the meaning of life. Therefore, a holistic approach is required to provide a comprehensive representation of meaningful living. Frankl emphasized that it was up to individuals to define and discover meaning in life and stressed that “the will to meaning” is the key to living a worthy and fulfilling life regardless of personal preferences and circumstances.²³

¹⁸ Michael F. Steger. "Making Meaning in Life." *Psychological Inquiry* 23, no. 4 (2012): 381-385.

¹⁹ Viktor E. Frankl. *Man's Search for Meaning*. (Boston: Packet Books, 1984), 16-17.

²⁰ Martin EP. Seligman, *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. (Simon and Schuster, 2012). Michael Steger and Joo Yeon Shim, “Happiness and Meaning in a Technological Age: A Psychological Approach,” in *The Good Life in a Technological Age*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2012), 110-126

²¹ Paul T. P. Wong, ed., *The Human Quest for Meaning: Theories, Research, and Applications*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3.

²² Roy F. Baumeister *Meanings of life*. (New York: Guilford Press, 1991).

²³ Viktor Emil. Frankl, *Mans Search for Meaning*. (Cutchogue: Buccaneer Books, Inc., 1992), 101-135.

Robert Spitzer, Bernhoft Robin, and Camille De Blasi state that "finding happiness is not easy. The world is full of options that promise happiness. Some actually deliver; many do not. Some deliver fairly well for a while, but decay ultimately into boredom, emptiness, or pain."²⁴ Frankl indicated that the issue seems to lie less in the external environment than in the internal one, and the absence of life's meaning inhibits us from being happy. Spitzer continues by asking, "is there any guide to happiness more helpful than trial and error or the all too fallible advice of family and friends? Is there anything objective enough to predict happiness most of the time? Is there any way to understand happiness in general or to predict what will 'work' for large numbers of people?" I argue that happiness is always available to us; it is always a choice.

In a culture of cynicism, envy, and anger, recognizing the existence of this choice is challenging. The underlying logic of the happiness and unhappiness cycle is a contemporary phenomenon. Not all the routes arrive at happiness.²⁵ Although some routes satisfy deeply, others may satiate for a while but ultimately produce unhappiness. Spitzer reasons that our desire for happiness is destined to frustration if it is simply directed to the immediate sensual satisfaction. He links happiness to desire and purpose such that "to know one's desires is to know one's purpose, since both are oriented toward fulfillment."²⁶ To him, every desire seeks fulfillment since "wherever there is purpose, there is the potential to seek complete actualization and identity." Spitzer reveals to us there is a genuinely objective dimension to human happiness, and that some approaches to life are simply incapable of actually bringing about the happiness

²⁴ Robert J. Spitzer, Robin A. Bernhoft and Camille E. De Blasi. *Healing the Culture: a Commonsense Philosophy of Happiness, Freedom, and the Life Issues*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press), 2000, 60.

²⁵ Spitzer, "Healing the Culture," 61.

²⁶ Spitzer, "Healing the Culture," 58.

that human beings desire.²⁷ Additionally, "the correlation between desire and purpose is so intimate that one can make any one or more of one's desires into one's entire identity or purpose in life."²⁸ He offers a timely explanation of the routes that are productive for fulfillment and true happiness. Spitzer expresses that one's desire is not only linked to purpose; it is also linked to happiness. He divides happiness into four levels; each level of happiness is defined by desires and purposes essential to it. It is helpful for us to understand "the four major interior driving forces within our lives" and to act "upon this understanding in a way that will be beneficial."²⁹

Spitzer further argues that "the level of happiness we tend to live for will determine how we view success, what we mean by quality of life, what we think love is, how we interpret suffering, the system of ethics we live by, and how we understand freedom, rights, and the common good."³⁰ The elucidation of Spitzer's levels of happiness is designed to draw us toward the higher levels. Each level of happiness has different objectives and characteristics, and each differs according to its pervasiveness, endurance, and depth.³¹ He reveals to us that our desire for happiness is heading for disappointment if we are simply aimed at instant gratification (H1) or a self-centered desire to control or dominate others (H2). H3 comes from wanting to contribute to the world beyond oneself. If we do not believe we are contributing to the world, then life ceases to have meaning. H3 is giving our energy, time, and talent to the outer world to make it a better

²⁷ Robert J. Spitzer, *Finding True Happiness: Satisfying Our Restless Hearts* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015).

²⁸ Spitzer, "Healing the Culture," 58.

²⁹ Spitzer, "Healing the Culture," 64.

³⁰ Spitzer, "Healing the Culture," 62-63.

³¹ Spitzer, "Healing the Culture," 75-88.

place.³² Spitzer articulates, "the moment we focus on the good as our true end, our lives, relationships, and emotional states begin to improve immediately."³³ Ultimately, H3 happiness gives life true meaning and purpose. The fourth level of happiness (H4) holds out some promise of real fulfillment. It is when we seek unlimited Truth, Goodness, Love, and Being for their own sake. This desire impels us toward continual self-transcendence in a search for freedom, wisdom, harmony, and peace. H4 affects the way we love, contribute to others, achieve, and live. Accordingly, life is filled with meaning at this level of happiness.

There is no straightforward definition of happiness. You can buy a happy meal, drink a cheap beer during happy hour, pop a "happy pill" to improve your mood or post a "happy" emoji on Instagram. Yet many view happiness to be an elusive problem. Almost everyone wants to be happy. Since March 20, 2013, the United Nations has celebrated the International Day of Happiness. This is a way to recognize the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world.³⁴ The goal is to promote measurable happiness by ending poverty, reducing inequality, and protecting the planet.

The linguistic meaning of happiness is arguably subjective, in that one person's idea of happiness may be different from another's. Even so, happiness can be further divided into two general concepts, (1) a state of mind (psychological) and (2) a life that goes well for the person leading it.³⁵ In order to reconcile these two concepts, modern philosophers and positive psychologists have developed a unified idea of happiness. It captures the momentary positive

³² Spitzer, "Healing the Culture," 62.

³³ Spitzer, "Healing the Culture," 79.

³⁴ United Nations, "Happy, Happiness, Girls, Boys, Equality", n.d., access August 12, 2018. <https://www.un.org/en/events/happinessday/>

³⁵ Dan Haybron, "Happiness," ed. Edward N. Zalta, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, September 23, 2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/happiness/>.

emotions that come with happiness, along with a more profound sense of meaning and purpose in life. Thus, happiness can be understood as a subjective and individualized conceptualization that pertains to an individual's well-being.

For this dissertation, emphasis will be placed on a psychological understanding of happiness that is rooted in a philosophical understanding of happiness as subjective well-being.

Chapter 2

Aristotle - A Good Life and Happiness

“Happiness depends upon ourselves.”

- Aristotle

What is a good life? This is not a simple question to answer. Throughout history, the search for life’s meaning has produced much philosophical, scientific, theological, and metaphysical speculation. A fundamental way we use the word *good* is to express the moral approval of one’s actions. When we convey that our friends are living well or they are living a good life, we may simply mean that our friends are kind, courageous, trustworthy, honest, selfless, loyal, and so on. A good life is a moral concept, and it is not possible to describe it without the analysis of an ethical framework. Socrates and Plato both gave absolute priority to being a virtuous person over pleasure, wealth, or power.¹

Aristotle’s concepts of a good life can be found in his ethical theory described in *Nicomachean Ethics*. He was the first philosopher who inquired into the concept of subjective well-being, and he stated that “all knowledge and pursuit... aims at some good. What is the highest of all goods achievable by action?... Both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say it is happiness and identify living well and doing well as being happy.”² He further “developed a sophisticated, humane program for becoming a happy person, and it remains valid to this day.”³

¹ Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow, in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1156.

² Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 4-5.

³ Edith Hall, *Aristotle’s Way: How Ancient Wisdom Can Change Your Life*. (NY: Penguin Books, 2019).

The Political Animal Inside You

The city, or *polis*, is a political partnership that comes into being for the purpose of self-sufficiency and exists primarily for the sake of living well.⁴ Aristotle saw citizens as equal and free, and therefore in need of political order and established laws that recognize equality and freedom. These laws should shape the *polis* and move us toward our highest potential, the good life. He stated that “*man is by nature a political animal*,”⁵ and a citizen is one who shares in decision making and holding office, thereby making citizens essential to democracy. The most important task for a politician is to create appropriate laws, frame the constitution, and create a system of moral education for their citizens. Aristotle believed that politics had to be based on the fundamental concept of the good as an end objective for human beings.

Aristotle maintained that if we can understand the composition of the *polis*, we can achieve common goods and live a good life. This investigation would also enable us to understand the different kinds of political rules within the polis and household. The household involved three types of rule: mastery (slave), marital (women), and parental (child). He argued that the ultimate good for a human being was a life lived according to virtue and in contemplation of the highest truths of the universe. According to Aristotle, happiness was the ultimate end, or *telos*, for human beings. His political views were indistinguishably linked to virtue and reason in relation to the ultimate good for human beings. He conducted philosophical inquiries based on the presuppositions that the universe was a rational and ordered whole in which each part had a distinct purpose and function. Furthermore, an artifact’s purpose could be

⁴ Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1252a5.

⁵ Lord, “Aristotle’s Politics,” 1253a.

determined by examining its origin and characteristics in order to finalize the end for which it exists. Therefore, ethics followed this method in order to discern the ultimate end of human life.

Aristotle's discussion of slavery⁶ is important for understanding his conception of freedom and its relation to virtue. It is essential to recognize that Aristotle did not support slavery in the conventional sense, rather in the case where the slaves were slaves by nature. A natural slave is one "who participates in reason only to the extent of perceiving it but does not have it."⁷ Aristotle argued that natural slaves had incomplete souls and lacked certain qualities, such as the ability to think properly. Therefore, they needed masters to give them instructions.⁸ He believed that these slaves were living tools and only fit for physical labor. Therefore, it was mutually beneficial that such people be ruled in order to achieve a common good.

According to Aristotle, the best regime was the one that promoted the good life for a human being. The best *polis* had to establish laws that help the citizen to produce enough to become financially sound so that they could engage in leisure time. Rulers needed to come from the leisured classes. The citizens would be exclusively the ruling class, which would rule and be ruled in turn such that the young would be soldiers, the old would rule, and all the laboring classes would be slaves. Moreover, education would be common for all citizens and habituate the children to virtue.

I believe Aristotle's emphasis on living virtuously as the central goal of politics stemmed from a desire to preserve freedom. This is demonstrated by his views on the connection between

⁶ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," Book 1, chapter 5.

⁷ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," 1254b23.

⁸ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," 1254a10-20.

the well-being of the political⁹ community as a whole and that of individual citizens in the *polis*. Aristotle believed that citizens must actively participate in politics if they are to be happy and virtuous. Interestingly, this ideology contrasts with a 2014 social survey conducted by researchers from the University of Chicago that compared political interest and life satisfaction. The findings from this study were significant. Even after controlling for income, education, age, gender, race, marital status, and political views, being “very interested in politics” drove up the likelihood of reporting being “not too happy” about life by about eight percentage points. Arthur Brooks¹⁰ suggested that finding “a way to bring politics more into your sphere of influence, so it no longer qualifies as an external locus of control,” might well contribute to happiness. In other words, participating in the political process may promote happiness.

Aristotle asserted that “the city exists not only for the sake of living rather primarily for the sake of living well.”¹¹ He further stated that “virtue must be a care for every city”¹² and was actually a means to protect the citizens' true freedom. For Aristotle, laws were designed to protect property rights, build financial stability for individuals as well as the greater *polis*, and protect and educate citizens. Laws worked to educate citizens by helping them develop good moral habits, such as consistent religious practices. Aristotle viewed laws as the important building blocks of political order which helped citizens live a good life.

⁹ The modern ‘political’ word derives from the Greek *politikos*, ‘of, or pertaining to, the polis’. The Greek term *polis* is also translated as ‘city’ or ‘city-state’ or ‘polis’. In ancient Greek, city-states like Athens and Sparta were relatively small and cohesive units in which political, religious, and cultural concerns were intertwined. However, the extent of their similarity to modern nation-states is controversial. For discussion, see Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094b7-10, 1129b15, 11609; Aristotle’s *Politics* 1252a1-1253a38 and Richard Kraut, *Aristotle on The Human Good* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Arthur C. Brooks, “Depressed by Politics? Just Let Go,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, March 18, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/17/opinion/depressed-by-politics-just-let-go.html>.

¹¹ Lord, “Aristotle’s *Politics*,” 1252a1-7.

¹² Lord, “Aristotle’s *Politics*,” 1252b29.

Ethics and Politics

In Aristotle's "Politics,"¹³ he shares how the *polis* derived naturally from earlier associations of human interactions. He offered a principle of distributive justice such that benefits are distributed to different people in different ways, depending on the contribution of each to the welfare of the *polis*. Aristotle assumed that any state would consist of the same basic elements, such as male citizens who administer the state, women, slaves, foreigners, and noncitizen laborers who perform the necessary, menial tasks to keep the city running.

Aristotle further rejected a society that was set up to merely protect property rights and stop others from infringing on the freedom of others, such as Locke's conception.¹⁴ The *polis* should be self-sufficient and exists for the sake of a good life.¹⁵ In order to accomplish this individual goal of living well, people naturally seek to live together, form marriages and households, provide sustenance by growing food and plying other crafts, and engage in trade for necessary goods. These activities within the city establish a foundation that enables people to engage in the "noble actions" that comprise a happy and good life.¹⁶ In addition, "a just political" order is necessary; Aristotle stated that without law, man is the "most savage of the animals."¹⁷ Thus, a well-formed government is necessary for the creation and enforcement of laws. This government must first require the contributions of all citizens and assembles citizens

¹³ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," Ibid.

¹⁴ Locke's political theory was founded on social contract theory. He believed that human nature is characterized by reason and tolerance. Most scholars trace the phrase "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," in the American Declaration of Independence, to Locke's theory of rights. For discussion, see Michael P. Zuckert, *The Natural Rights Republic: Studies in the Foundation of the American Political Tradition* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 73–85.

¹⁵ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," 1252b27-30

¹⁶ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," 1281a, 3.

¹⁷ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," 1253a, 37.

who “choose being ruled with a view to a life in accordance with virtue.”¹⁸ Aristotle explained that the city is also comprised of those who rule and those who are ruled. Aristotle distinguished between these two positions, and stated that “the good citizen should know and have the capacity both to be ruled and to rule, and this very thing is the excellence of a citizen--knowledge of rule over free persons from both [points of view].”¹⁹ Furthermore, he continued that this ability to distinguish constitutes “the virtue of a good citizen.”²⁰ These virtues of knowledge, moderation, and justice belong to both the ruler and the ruled, but Aristotle made clear that the virtue of prudence belonged alone to the ruler, whereas true opinion belonged to those who were ruled.²¹ By prudence, Aristotle referred to “political knowledge pertaining to legislation and legislative experience”²² and true opinion referred to being informed and knowledgeable. Therefore, the difference between ruler and ruled was merely one of variation and not radical in nature.²³ This is important because the political rule has to be understood in terms of ruling over people of a similar, although not the same, character or composition as the one who rules.

Overall, Aristotle saw that good citizenry involved both the ruler and ruled. Moreover, Aristotle stressed that the government should step back and enforce basic human freedoms, such as protecting private property rights. Without these relationships, the “just political order” would be reduced to a mere arrangement of people held together in the same way that disinterested

¹⁸ Lord, “Aristotle’s Politics,” 1277b,11-13.

¹⁹ Lord, “Aristotle’s Politics,” 1277b,14-16.

²⁰ Lord, “Aristotle’s Politics,” 1277b, 15.

²¹ Lord, “Aristotle’s Politics,” 1277b, 17.

²² Lord, “Aristotle’s Politics,” 1277b 18-22.

²³ Lord, “Aristotle’s Politics,” 1277b 18-22.

foreign countries interact through a system of international treaties. These countries do not truly exist together in a unifying polis. Further, to move from a generic association of free individuals to a teleologically oriented virtuous citizenry, the “just political order” must orient the society towards a particular conception of the good.

For the *polis*’ citizens to live a good life, individuals must naturally seek to live together, form marriages and households, provide sustenance by producing food and goods, and engage in trade for necessary goods. Thus, an individual is obligated to participate in the government, and the government must promote the good life for its citizens within the *polis*. Therefore, this relationship should be symbiotic. The political order leads to the good life because city life is natural, self-sufficient, secure, lawful, directed toward leisure, and virtuous. Humans are naturally political creatures, and the city a natural state of existence for “living happily and finely.”²⁴ The good life, Aristotle argued, is a notion of interpersonal flourishing as opposed to merely social survival.

Ethics and Virtue

The discipline of ethics deals with right and wrong based on moral duty and obligation. How should one live one’s life? How should one act or react? Which goals are worth pursuing and which are not? What does one owe to oneself and society? These are all ethical questions; the Judeo-Christian morality attempts to tell us how one should live one’s life, the difference between right and wrong, how one ought to act toward others, and so on. For example, if you ask, “is it wrong to lie?” The answer is, “yes, it is wrong to lie; it is right, to tell the truth.” In other words, it is immoral to lie and moral to tell the truth. Moralities differ by time and place.

²⁴ Lord, “Aristotle’s Politics,” 1281a41.

For example, in the 8th century BC Greece, it was not always wrong to lie, nor always right to tell the truth. Therefore, our society is confronted with the ethical dilemma of choosing different moralities. Some moralities may be better than others; many thinkers have argued that only one system of morality is ultimately acceptable. Socrates argued that there is only one true moral code, and it was simple; “no person should ever willingly do evil.”²⁵ Socrates contended that no harm could come to a person who always sought the good, because what truly counted in life is the caretaking of one’s self or soul. Can virtues and ethics be developed?

In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*,²⁶ Aristotle made clear that virtues do not simply develop by themselves. Instead, he said they required both education and training or practice, which eventually turn into habits. Such training and education begin with a person’s upbringing and continue throughout his/her lifetime. A person who is introduced to and keeps practicing a virtue, including a virtuous motivation, according to Aristotle, will eventually *become* what they live, think, and do. This transformation is a guiding role to one’s happiness. Aristotle communicated that the most important factor in the effort to achieve happiness was to have a good moral character; this is what he termed the "complete virtue." However, being virtuous is not a passive state; one must act in accordance with virtue and must strive to possess all of them. Moreover, Aristotle defined the supreme good as an activity of the rational soul in accordance with virtue. This was such that men sought to be honored for their virtue or excellence. Therefore, virtue and excellence were superior to honor. Thus, a virtuous person was someone who performed a distinctive activity, and rationality was humankind’s distinctive activity. Since

²⁵ Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis, ID: Hackett Pub Co Inc., 1987).

²⁶ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” Ibid.

happiness is an activity of the soul in conformity with perfect virtue,²⁷ virtue, then, is twofold, intellectual and moral.²⁸ Intellectual virtue comes from learning, while moral virtue comes from habit.²⁹ According to Aristotle, “none of the moral virtues formed is engendered in us by nature, for no natural property can be altered by habit.”³⁰ For example, to determine whether or not one is in full possession of a particular virtue, the pleasure or pain that accompanies the exercise of that quality can be used as an index. A person who is a coward will feel fear in the face of danger and fail to act, while a brave person may feel fear towards danger but reacts anyway. Hence, certain qualities are exhibited by a virtuous person. Thus, moral virtue is a matter of performing certain acts in our daily life. If these acts are performed in a specific manner, the virtue exhibited is moral. By and large, a person must know what the right thing to do is under specific circumstances and at specific times and do it for the right motivation. Moral virtue is a mean between two vices, one marked by excess and the other by deficiency. It is a mean in the sense that it aims at the middle point in emotions and actions.³¹ Concisely, this is the goal of living a happy life. Furthermore, Aristotle believed moral virtue could be adopted through practice and the experience of life. Merely studying the steps towards achieving this moral virtue will not enable us to achieve this virtue.

Aristotle stated that happiness is an activity that depends on the cultivation of virtue, which contrasts with the modern era’s definition of happiness. Contemporary happiness in its

²⁷ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” *Ibid.*, 13-15.

²⁸ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 26-27.

²⁹ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1103a15.

³⁰ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 26.

³¹ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” Chapter ix, 1098a13.

utilitarian form is merely an emotional state,³² one that is achieved when we feel a certain fulfillment of our wants and needs.³³ We often use the term to describe a range of positive emotions, such as joy, pride, contentment, and gratitude. However, Aristotle revealed that “...the function of man is to live a certain kind of life, and this activity implies a rational principle, and the function of a good man is the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed it is performed in accord with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, then happiness turns out to be an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.”³⁴ He stated that the most important factor in the effort to achieve happiness is to have a moral character. Aristotle coined the term “complete virtue” and stated that a person “is happy who lives in accordance with complete virtue and is sufficiently equipped with external goods, not for some chance period but throughout a complete life.”³⁵ Accordingly, happiness presumably consists in the attainment of goods to live well. Aristotle divided these groups into (1) external goods, such as wealth, fame, honor, power, and friends (2) goods of body, such as life, health, good looks, physical strength, athletic ability, dexterity, etc. (3) goods of soul, such as virtue, life-projects, knowledge, and education, artistic creativity and appreciation, recreation, friendship, etc. The problem is to delineate the ways in which goods are related to happiness. In Aristotle's view, certain goods, such as life and health, were preconditions for happiness, and others, such as wealth, friends, fame, and honor, were embellishments that promoted a good life for a virtuous

³² Sara B. Algoe and Jonathan Haidt, “Witnessing Excellence in Action: The ‘Other-Praising’ Emotions of Elevation, Gratitude, and Admiration,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 4, no. 2 (November 2009): 105-127.

³³ Norbert Hirschauer, Mira Lehberger, and Oliver Musshoff, “Happiness and Utility in Economic Thought - Or: What Can We Learn from Happiness Research for Public Policy Analysis and Public Policy Making?,” *Social Indicators Research* 121, no. 3 (June 2014): 647-674.

³⁴ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1098a13.

³⁵ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1101a10.

person. Furthermore, Aristotle believed that the exercise of virtue was the core element of happiness.

Friendship

Philosophers and cognitive scientists recognize friendship as one of the foundations for human happiness. While happiness is generally understood to consist of a happy life, different kinds of people consider different kinds of life happy.³⁶ In *Nicomachean Ethics*³⁷ books eight and nine, Aristotle addressed the questions of friendship - according to Aristotle, friendship was above both honor and justice and should be highly valued. Aristotle rationalized that friendship “is most necessary for our life, for no one would choose to live without friends even if he had all the other goods.”³⁸ Therefore, friendship is essential to the well-being of an individual. He regarded friendship as one of the true joys of life and felt that a life well-lived must include truly meaningful, lasting friendships. Aristotle wrote that “in poverty as well as in other misfortunes, people suppose that friends are their only refuge. And friendship is a help to the young, in saving them from error, just as it is also to the old, with a view to the care they require and their diminished capacity for action stemming from their weakness; it is a help also to those in their prime in performing noble actions, for ‘two going together’ are better able to think and to act.”³⁹ He continued that “when people are friends, they have no need of justice, but when they are just, they do need friendship in addition.”⁴⁰ Therefore, “friendship is not only necessary but also

³⁶ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 6-7, 1095b14-109610.

³⁷ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 163-209.

³⁸ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1155a5-6.

³⁹ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1155a11-15.

⁴⁰ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1155a26.

noble, for we praise those who love their friends, and an abundance of friends is held to be a noble thing. Further, people suppose good men and their friends to be one and the same.”⁴¹

Aristotle considered friendship one of the true joys of life; thus, a well-lived life must include truly meaningful, lasting friendships. Aristotle elucidated, “For, it seems, not everything is loved, but the loveable, and this is either good or pleasant or useful.”⁴² For Aristotle, not all friendships were the same, and so he categorized friendship into three different types that adhered to the three basic objects of love in life. The three distinct types of friendship are (1) friendships of the utility between those who desire what is useful, (2) friendships of pleasure between those who seek what is pleasant, and (3) friendships of virtue between those who love the good. He further described that “those who love on account of utility feel affection for the sake of their own good, just as those who love on account of pleasure feel affection for the sake of their own pleasure.”⁴³ Therefore, the first two kinds of friendship are short-lived and only accidental, since their friendships are motivated by their own utility and pleasure. Accordingly, it is not by anything essential to the nature of the friend.

The Friendship of Utility

The first type of friendship is a relationship based on utility, meaning two people are friends because “some good may be obtained from each other.”⁴⁴ This is comparable to today’s business relationships since both persons are attempting to gain from each other. In this kind of friendship, the two friends are not in it for the sake of any affection for one another, but because

⁴¹ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1155a29.

⁴² Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1155b18-20.

⁴³ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1156a 15-17.

⁴⁴ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1156a11-12.

each receives a benefit from the relationship. Aristotle expressed that this kind of friendship is shallow and easily dissolved, since the “friendship seems to exist chiefly between old people (for at that age people pursue not the pleasant but the useful) and, of those who are in their prime or young, between those who pursue utility.”⁴⁵ In today’s society, many people think of friendships of utility as the only kind of friendships. According to Aristotle, people do not often recognize that when we love a friend for their utility, we incline to love the profit we gain from the friendship rather than the friend.⁴⁶ Aristotle used the example of trade and argued that friendships of utility are often between opposite people, in order to maximize this trade. This can also be a working relationship; one might enjoy time spent together with co-workers, but once the situation changes, so does the nature of the relationship. The utility friendship, by nature, is self-regarding and selfishly motivated, though mutually satisfactory. Thus, friendships of utility, when they are no longer useful, tend to fade away. In other words, we feel affection for the “usefulness” and not for the person.

The Friendship of Pleasure

The second type of friendship is based on mutual pleasure; Aristotle conveyed that those experiencing this type of friendship “live according to passion and most of all pursue what is pleasant to them and at hand.”⁴⁷ He described this type of friendship as typically formed between the young as passions and pleasures are great influences in their lives,⁴⁸ but their

⁴⁵ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1155b25.

⁴⁶ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1157.

⁴⁷ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1156a31.

⁴⁸ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1156a13.

pleasures become different with increasing age.⁴⁹ Further, this type of relationship is characterized by such feelings as infatuation between lovers, or the feeling of belonging among a likeminded group of friends. Therefore, it differs from the friendship of utility since this kind of friendship is for a business deal or benefits to maximize their trade.⁵⁰ In contrast, the friendship of pleasure is where one seeks something pleasant to them at present.⁵¹ In short, we enjoy the activities we do with a friend; for example, it is common to have friends with whom one goes to the movies or with whom one enjoys similar activities. Nonetheless, friendships of pleasure can fall apart if the friendship is no longer fun and enjoyable. This friendship is also easily dissolved since their friendship changes with the object that is found pleasant. This kind of friendship is most common in general social relationships among the young; a general feeling of well-being is experienced by both parties when they are near each other. People who simply enjoy each other's company fall into this category of friendship, and it encompasses most of what we mean by friendship today.⁵² On the other hand, a friendship between a parent and child is not the same since it has a greater degree of both pleasure and utility than "between unrelated persons, in as much as their lives have in common."⁵³ In Aristotle's time, many marriages were based on utility rather than pleasure. Moreover, Jeremy Bentham's concurred that "marriage is firmly

⁴⁹ Bartlett, "Aristotle's NE," 1156a25.

⁵⁰ Bartlett, "Aristotle's NE," 1159b12

⁵¹ Bartlett, "Aristotle's NE," 156a30-35.

⁵² Robert Sharp. "The Obstacles Against Reaching the Highest Level of Aristotelian Friendship Online." *Ethics and Information Technology* 14, no. 3 (June 2012): 231-239.

⁵³ Bartlett, "Aristotle's NE," 1162a8.

based on the principle of utility, the ‘greatest happiness principle,’ which asserts that all human actions are motivated by a wish to avoid pain and gain pleasure.”⁵⁴

Aristotle regarded both friendships of utility and pleasure as unstable and constantly subject to abrupt change, which in fact dissolves the friendship. All things considered, friendships entail an equal exchange, whether it is utility or pleasure. Anyone can reach the first two levels of friendship, but the last level of friendship is reserved for those who truly seek a life of virtue. Likewise, there are some relationships that by nature exist between two people of unequal standing, such as father-son, husband-wife, ruler-subject.⁵⁵ According to Aristotle, friendships of pleasure are good for sharing the good things in life, similar to friendships of utility, and they quickly fade away when the pleasures are no longer there, or when people’s interests change. Aristotle did not necessarily see these friendships as healthy, but rather he deemed them necessary.

Aristotle’s final form of friendship is to be the most preferable. Rather than utility and pleasure, this kind of relationship is based on mutual admiration for each others’ virtues.

⁵⁴ Mary Sokol, “Jeremy Bentham on Love and Marriage: A Utilitarian Proposal for Short-Term Marriage,” *The Journal of Legal History* 30, no. 1 (March 2009): 1-21; Note: In Plato’s *The Symposium* (Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, trans., *Symposium: Plato* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), Socrates argued that ordinary mortals gain immortality either by physically begetting children or by spiritually begetting the progeny, which is the soul’s nature “to create and bring to birth.” Plato affirmed that moral or spiritual love exceeds physical love in virtue and that spiritual children surpass human children by being immortal and more beautiful. But Bentham concluded that questions about the relative worth of physical or spiritual love were for an individual to decide for himself, not a decision to be made by a legislator for “the species in general.” Later, in his property law writings, Bentham explained again that ‘to administer pleasure in a direct way belongs only to the individual himself - laws can only place the means within his reach.’ Instead, Bentham intended to base his law of marriage on the principle of utility, which asserts that all actions are governed by a wish to avoid pain and gain pleasure.

⁵⁵ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1161b28.

The Friendship of Virtue

Aristotle shared with us the last friendship is the one of virtue and good, in which friends love each other for their own sake, and they wish good things for each other. This kind of friendship is only possible between “good people similar in virtue,”⁵⁶ since only virtuous people are capable of loving another person for that person’s own sake. To attain this level of friendship, we have to love the person and not necessarily the “benefits” that come with the friendship. At this level of friendship, it does not matter if we have shared interests or whether or not we can help each other. The foundation of friendship is that we care about each other as we care about ourselves. Therefore, the basis of this friendship is a mutual love of the good, and each friend loves the other for what they are, as opposed to for a specific quality. Accordingly, Aristotle considered this a unique and permanent friendship since our time and resources are finite and thus do not allow for many virtuous friendships. He reminded us that the need for “active loving... prevents one from being at the same time a friend to many, for one cannot be active towards many at the same time.”⁵⁷ It is essential to remember that an active friendship requires awareness and conscious consideration of the other. Our restricted resources prevent us from fully giving ourselves to many and cultivating perfect friendships with more than one individual. What’s more, the intimacy required for perfect friendship cannot be taken too hastily. As Aristotle reiterated, to find out whether someone is truly good, “one must both have experience of him and be on familiar terms with him, which is extremely difficult.”⁵⁸ Therefore, a true friendship between individuals is practically impossible. Thus, in the perfect form of friendship,

⁵⁶ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1157b5.

⁵⁷ Aristotle. *Aristotle The Eudemian Ethics*, trans. Anthony Kenny (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1238a8-10.

⁵⁸ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1158a14-16.

we feel affection for the friend due to their goodness, and not for the utility or pleasure that we can get out of the relationship. Perfect friendship involves, therefore, not a desire for the useful or the pleasant, but rather a recognition and affection for the goodness of the other.

Aristotle stated that this level of friendship is very rare. It is difficult to find someone with whom you can be a friend, no matter what happens in life. One is lucky if they are to gain more than one perfect friend.⁵⁹ Aristotle's point is that we must be careful who we call friends. It is impossible to be a perfect friend to everyone since this is the highest level of friendship, and it is also the most demanding. I would argue that in today's society, it is difficult to cultivate a friendship based on a mutual appreciation of character and goodness rather than on a certain transactional value. Today's friendships are not necessarily bad, but they do fall short of what Aristotle held to be a very high view of friendship, which he believed even supersedes justice and honor in importance. He found friendship to be an essential stage, a glue that holds the *polis* together and provides citizens with a happier life.

The kind of person one should be

This births the question - "What kind of person should I be?" Aristotle regarded ethics and politics as two related but separate fields of study - Ethics⁶⁰ examines the good of the individual, while politics examines the good of the City-State. Aristotle stated that humans are social, rational animals⁶¹ that seek "liv[ing] well and acting well."⁶² To that end, he proposed a

⁵⁹ Bartlett, "Aristotle's NE," 1158a10.

⁶⁰The interpretations of Aristotle's ethics result from "imprecise" translations from the ancient Greek text. Aristotle uses the word *hexis* to denote moral virtue. But the word does not merely mean passive habituation. Rather, *hexis* is an active condition - a state in which something must actively hold itself.

⁶¹ Christian Kietzmann et al., "Part I: Human Beings as Rational Animals," in *Aristotle's Anthropology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 23–96.

⁶² Bartlett, "Aristotle's NE," 1095a20.

system of virtue ethics to help reach living well and flourishing. Aristotle's virtue manifests itself in action and involves activity, accordingly, when one holds oneself in a stable equilibrium of the soul, in order to choose the action knowingly and for its own sake. This stable equilibrium of the soul is what constitutes character. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle repeatedly states that virtue is a mean. The mean is a state of clarification and apprehension in the midst of pleasures and pains that allows one to judge what seems most truly pleasant or painful. This active state of the soul is the condition in which all the powers of the soul are at work in concert. Achieving good character is a process of clearing away the obstacles that stand in the way of the soul's full efficacy. Aristotle believes that to live in accordance with reason means achieving excellence; this excellence cannot be isolated, and appropriate competencies are required for related functions. Therefore, virtue, an excellent character, is the disposition to act excellently, which a person develops as a result of his/her upbringing and partly as a result of his habit of action.

In Book Two, Chapter One of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle articulated his argument that character arises from habits, such that ethical character is a skill acquired through learning and practice. Moreover, Aristotle argued that a person's character is voluntary since it results from many individual actions that are under their voluntary control.⁶³ Richard Kraut⁶⁴ summarizes Aristotle's position as follows:

What we need, in order to live well, is a proper appreciation of the way in which such goods as friendship, pleasure, virtue, honor, and wealth fit together as a whole. In order to apply that general understanding to particular

⁶³ Bartlett, "Aristotle's NE," 42-66.

⁶⁴ Richard Kraut, "Aristotle's Ethics," ed. Edward N. Zalta, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, June 15, 2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/aristotle-ethics/>.

cases, we must acquire, through proper upbringing and habits, the ability to see, on each occasion, which course of action is best supported by reasons. Therefore practical wisdom, as he conceives it, cannot be acquired solely by learning general rules. We must also acquire, through practice, those deliberative, emotional, and social skills that enable us to put our general understanding of well-being into practice in ways that are suitable for each occasion.

In other words, doing anything well requires virtue or excellence, and therefore living well consists of activities caused by the rational soul in accordance with virtue.

Aristotle described virtue as a habit, a tendency of character to act in accordance with practical reason toward worthy ends. He considered virtues as character traits and tendencies to act in a particular way. For example, humans acquire virtues through practice and by copying 'moral exemplars' until we manage to internalize the virtue. We become temperate by practicing temperance, courageous by practicing courage, and so on. Eventually, virtue becomes a habit. Aristotle described happiness as an “activity,” which distinguishes his conception of happiness both from our modern conception of happiness and from virtue, which Aristotle illustrated as “disposition.” Nowadays, we tend to think of happiness as an emotional state and hence as something we are, rather than as something we do. While happiness is the activity of living well, virtue represents the potential to live well. Aristotle rationalized this distinction between “happiness” and “virtue” by saying that the best athletes only win at the Olympic Games if they compete. A virtuous person who does not exercise virtue is like an athlete who sits on the sideline and watches. Aristotle has a proactive conception of the good life: happiness waits only

for those who go out and seize it. Accordingly, the four cardinal virtues are Prudence, Temperance, Courage, and Justice.

Below are the eleven dispositions outlined in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Book Two and Book Three.

Courage: The midpoint between cowardice and recklessness. The courageous person is aware of the danger but goes in anyways.

Temperance: The virtue between overindulgence and insensitivity. Aristotle would view the person who never drinks just as harshly as the one who drinks too much.

Liberality: The virtue of charity, this is the golden mean between miserliness and giving more than you can afford.

Magnificence: The virtue of living extravagantly. It rests between stinginess and vulgarity. Aristotle sees no reason to be aesthetic but also warns against being flashy.

Magnanimity: Relating to pride, this virtue is the midpoint between not giving yourself enough credit and having delusions of grandeur. It is also a given that you must act on this sense of self-worth and strive for greatness.

Patience: This is the virtue that controls your temper. The patient person must neither get too angry nor fail to get angry when they should.

Truthfulness: The virtue of honesty. Aristotle places it between the vices of habitual lying and being tactless or boastful.

Wittiness: At the midpoint between buffoonery and boorishness, this is the virtue of a good sense of humor.

Friendliness: While being friendly might not seem like a moral virtue, Aristotle claims friendship is a vital part of a life well-lived. This virtue lies between not being friendly at all and being too friendly towards too many people.

Shame: The midpoint between being too shy and being shameless. The person who has the right amount of shame will understand when they have committed a social or moral error but won't be too fearful not to risk them.

Justice: The virtue of dealing fairly with others. It lies between selfishness and selflessness. This virtue can also be applied in different situations and has a whole chapter dedicated to the various forms it can take.

Aristotle gave no real accounts of fully specific decisions that should be considered virtuous or vicious. He never shared with us, precisely, which actions will make us brave, or temperate, or just.

It strikes me that all three of the main areas that Aristotle saw as necessary for friendship raise acute contrasts with our modern views. Aristotle shared with us three types of friendship: a pleasure-based friendship where you stay friends with each other as long as you are having a good time with that person, a utility-based friendship where you stay friends because it is convenient and benefits each other, and a virtue-based friendship, the best kind of friendship, which is out of reach for most of us. It is critical to note that individual characteristics and one's experiences within specific contexts, such as socio-economic status, race, and education, influence how friendships form. Veronica Policarpo's recent study explores the contemporary normative meaning of friendship by

posing the question, “what is a good friend?”⁶⁵ The results reveal 28% of participants select “being there in good and bad moments,” 26% select “being able to count on that person no matter the situation, in good and bad moments,” and 18% select “trust”. The study also shows how respondents identify the meaning of a “good friend.” These responses include moral qualities of the friend, such as sincerity, loyalty, truthfulness, and solidarity. Participants also indicated attitudes towards the friend, such as being a good listener, giving advice, and being understanding. Some respondents identified more general moral qualities, such as being serious, humble, and a good person.

In Aristotle's writing, ethics and politics are interrelated. Aristotle argued that the goal of politics is the ultimate and natural goal for all human beings. Politics aims to produce good citizens, thus enabling citizens to attain the good life, namely, the life of happiness.⁶⁶ For Aristotle, the sphere of politics was conceived in ethical terms; the aim of politics was human goodness. Politics is ethical, and Aristotle's approach to ethics and politics was a single unified project – the project of living well. Nowadays, most of us do not view politics as essential to happiness, nor happiness as “an activity of the soul”, nor friendship itself as being about shared virtue. I believe Aristotle's emphasis on living virtuously as the central goal of politics stemmed from a desire to preserve freedom. Aristotle asserted that the city exists not only for the sake of living rather primarily for

⁶⁵ Veronica, Policarpo, "What is a Friend? an Exploratory Typology of the Meanings of Friendship." *Social Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2015): 171-91.

⁶⁶ In A. W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2004), 194. Aristotle noted that “a city serves three ends that correspond to the three kinds of friendship: living (a goal of utility), living together (a source of pleasure), and living well (the goal of goodness)” and “without linguistic and political structure man cannot achieve a distinctively human life.”

the sake of living well.⁶⁷ He further stated that virtue must be a care for every city⁶⁸ and was a means to protect the citizens' true freedom. From Aristotle's perspective, happiness consisted of health, wealth, knowledge, and friends throughout one's lifetime. I argue that some of the dispositions need more justification for today's reader, whose understanding of virtue may differ significantly from the past. Still, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* stands as one of the most inspired sources for philosophical enlightenment.

⁶⁷ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," 1252a1-7.

⁶⁸ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," 1252b29.

Chapter 3

Authentic Happiness - Martin Seligman

“The good life consists in deriving happiness by using your signature strengths every day in the main realms of living. The meaningful life adds one more component: using these same strengths to forward knowledge, power, or goodness.”

Martin Seligman - *Authentic Happiness*

The search for happiness principles is an old one; philosophers have been inquiring about happiness since ancient times. Democritus, an ancient Greek pre-Socratic philosopher, was the first philosopher in the western world to examine the nature of happiness. He stated that “happiness resides not in possessions, and not in gold, happiness dwells in the soul.”¹ Goodness, Democritus believed, was primarily influenced by practice and discipline rather than by innate human nature. He detailed that one should distance oneself from the wicked, stating that such an association increases disposition to vice. Anger, while difficult to control, must be mastered for one to be rational. Democritus explained that “a happy life is not exclusively the product of a favorable fate or external circumstances but rather of a man’s cast of minds.”² Thus, a happy life does not reside in possessions but dwells in our soul. Similar to Democritus, Aristotle asserted that anyone willing to lead a life following virtue could be happy and live a good life. Roman Stoic philosopher, Cicero claimed a man in possession of virtue could be happy even while being tortured.³ In other words, virtue is so crucial to happiness that if a man possessed it, he could be happy regardless of the circumstances. Although it was taking the matter to the extreme, the concept illustrates how the ancient thinkers interpreted happiness – as neither sentiment nor a

¹ Jonathan Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*. (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 203.

² Pelin Kesebir and Ed Diener, “In Pursuit of Happiness: Empirical Answers to Philosophical Questions,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3, no. 2 (2008): 117-125.

³ Darrin M. McMahon, *Happiness: A History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006), 55.

passion nor an emotional state. Medieval Christian philosophers agreed that virtue was no longer considered sufficient for happiness.⁴ Happiness was an ethereal, spiritual matter; it was now laid in God's hands and was only attainable through devoted faith God's grace. Whereas the earthly happiness was imperfect and impossible, the Kingdom of Heaven promised complete eternal happiness.⁵ Thus, God, and submission to his authority, represented the best way of life. During the period of Enlightenment, the concept of happiness became more secular and less spiritual. The thinkers of this era ushered a new way of thinking, which championed the accomplishments of humankind. Individuals did not have to accept despair and misery; science and reason could bring happiness and progress. At the same time, Greek literature was becoming increasingly available in every part of Europe; people began shifting their views from "divine" wisdom to scientific knowledge.

Scientific discovery played a significant role in Enlightenment discourse and thought. Many Enlightenment philosophers, writers, and thinkers possessed backgrounds in scientific education and advancement. Due to their confidence in scientific concepts, religion and traditional thinking were overthrown in favor of science, progress, toleration, fraternity, constitutional government, separation of church and state, and free speech and thought.⁶ Simultaneously, Western culture was increasing emphasis on "pleasure" and "materialism" as a path to happiness.⁷ These transformations were best illustrated by 19th-century utilitarian philosophers and economists, such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Utilitarianism, Mill

⁴ Kesebir, "In Pursuit of Happiness," 118.

⁵ Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *Analysis of Happiness*, ed. Jan Szrednicki, trans. Danuta Zielińska and Edward Rothert (Warszawa: Polish Scientific Publication, 1976).

⁶ Milan Zafirovski, *The Enlightenment and Its Effects on Modern Society*. (New York: Springer, 2011).

⁷ Richard Eckersley, "Is Modern Western Culture a Health Hazard?," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 35, no. 2 (November 2005): 252-258.

explained, is “the creed which accepts as the foundations of morals ‘utility’ or the ‘greatest happiness principle’” and holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure.”⁸ In other words, Mill maintained the maximum pleasure surplus over pain as the cardinal goal of human striving, and the greatest happiness of the highest number of people should be the basis of morals and legislation.⁹

Is Happiness Possible?

The answer to whether “happiness” is possible is dependent on how we define happiness. If we consider happiness as a perfect, pure, perpetual state with the complete absence of negativity, then it seems unattainable. Cyrenaics argued that happiness is impossible to achieve and could not be the goal of life. He clarified “that complete happiness cannot possibly exist; for that the body is full of many sensations, and that the mind sympathizes with the body, and is troubled when that is troubled, and also that fortune prevents many things which we cherished in anticipation; so that for all these reasons, perfect happiness eludes our grasp.”¹⁰ Furthermore, “the wise man would not be so much absorbed in the pursuit of what is good, as in the attempt to avoid what is bad, considering the chief good to be living free from all trouble and pain; and that this end was attained best by those who looked upon the efficient causes of pleasure as

⁸ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism and the 1868 Speed on Capital Punishment*, ed. George Sher, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, Inc, 2002), 7.

⁹ Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 15.

¹⁰ Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. Charles Duke Yonge (London: Bell and Sons, 1915), 92.

indifferent.¹¹” In other words, one must circumvent pain and sorrow to find happiness.¹²

Throughout history, some thinkers and philosophers saw human happiness as either impossible or at least quite improbable. Many contemporary social philosophers believe that happiness is reachable. Since the 1960s, research has been conducted in various disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, religious sciences, clinical and medical research, and happiness economics. Alongside positive psychology, studies have become widespread on the topic of happiness, what it is, and how to achieve it. In the past decades, psychologists have used empirical methods to investigate the causes, correlations, and consequences of happiness, subsequently creating an accumulation of knowledge that contributes to the understanding of happiness, thus enabling more confidence in addressing some of the topic’s key issues.¹³

Today, the term “happiness” is used in the context of “a mental or emotional state of subjective wellbeing. This most frequently expressed emotion carries the direction of biamental attention toward positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy.”¹⁴ Hence, happiness is used in the context of life satisfaction, subjective well-being, eudaimonia, and flourishing.¹⁵

¹¹ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 92.

¹² It is a principal discussion of this section of the dissertation. I will discuss Martin Seligman and Jonathan Haidt’s well-being theories and how it related to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and how they build on positive psychology to realize one’s potential for lasting fulfillment - flourishing and live a good life.

¹³ Todd B. Kashdan, Robert Biswas-Diener, and Laura A. King, “Reconsidering Happiness: The Costs of Distinguishing between Hedonics and Eudaimonia,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 3, no. 4 (February 2008): 219-233.

¹⁴ Frank John Ninivaggi, *Learned Mindfulness: Physician Engagement and M.D. Wellness* (London: Academic Press, 2020), 56.

¹⁵ In Paul Anand, *Happiness Explained: What Human Flourishing Is and What We Can Do to Promote It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Paul explained the human existence and happiness questions by discussing scientific research from economics, psychology, philosophy, and other disciplines. He stated that human flourishing plays an essential role in assessing national progress and why the traditional national income approach is limited as a measure of human well-being and demonstrates how the contributors to happiness, well-being, and quality of life can be measured and understood across the human life course. I will provide a more in-depth discussion in chapter four of the dissertation.

Positive Psychology

The study of happiness helps us determine what matters most in people's lives. Most research ascertains that social structure and an individual's characteristics and behavior play comparable roles in a person's well-being. In Martin Seligman's *Authentic Happiness*, he suggests that one can develop unprecedented happiness levels by nurturing existing strengths and humor. Seligman intends to offer readers a clear guideline for defining positive emotion. He includes 180 essays written by Catholic nuns¹⁶ who possessed the same lifestyles and fit into the same economic and social class. He concluded that nuns who expressed words relating to "good" and "positive feelings" lived longer. In other words, for these Catholic nuns, positive emotional content in early-life autobiographies was strongly associated with longevity six decades later.

What is positive psychology? This field of study was originated by Martin Seligman and a few other prominent psychologists, such as Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, American psychologist Abraham Maslow,¹⁷ and social psychologist Jonathan Haidt. According to Sheldon and King, positive psychology is the scientific study of ordinary human strengths and virtues.¹⁸ Furthermore, Gable and Haidt state that "positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions."¹⁹ Csikszentmihalyi and Seligman articulate that positive psychology is

¹⁶ Deborah D. Danner, David A. Snowdon, and Wallace V. Friesen, "Positive Emotions in Early Life and Longevity: Findings from the Nun Study.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80, no. 5 (2001): 804-813.

¹⁷ Abraham H. Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences* (New York: Penguin Press, 1994). Note: Maslow described peak experiences as "moments of highest happiness and fulfillment."

¹⁸ Kennon M. Sheldon and Laura King, "Why Positive Psychology Is Necessary," *American Psychologist* 56, no. 3 (2001): 216-217.

¹⁹ Gable, Shelly L., and Jonathan Haidt. 2005. "What (and Why) is Positive Psychology?" *Review of General Psychology* 9 (2): 103-110.

“wellbeing, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present).”²⁰ For Seligman, positive psychology is the study of feelings, emotions, institutions, and positive behaviors that have human happiness as their final goal. Therefore, positive psychology aims to be a psychological science about the best things in life. The main topics of study are positive emotions, positive traits, and positive institutions. *Authentic Happiness* is the first published book that seeks to explain positive psychology, and Seligman is its primary spokesperson. Seligman states that positive psychology is not about hedonism; instead, it is about finding “meaning in those happy and unhappy moments.”²¹ Rather than finding “shortcuts” to happiness, living should be well-being through comfort, joy, rapture, and ecstasy. Therefore, *Authentic Happiness* aims to discover strength and virtue.²²

Positive psychology centers on the character strengths and behaviors that allow individuals to move beyond “just surviving” to build a meaningful and happy life. By focusing on how people can become “happier” and more fulfilled, it is essential to cultivate one’s character and strength-based learning/practice. Accordingly, positive psychology is an umbrella term that describes the scientific study of what makes life most worth living. Christopher Peterson summarized positive psychology into “four different categories:

1. Positive psychologists are concerned with positive experiences like happiness, positive emotions, and the psychological state of flow (being highly engaged in what we do).
2. Positive psychology is concerned with positive traits, more enduring characteristics of the individual. This certainly includes the strengths of character like kindness, curiosity, and the ability to form relationships with other people. It also includes talents and abilities.

²⁰ Martin E. P. Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Positive Psychology: An Introduction,” *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000): pp. 5-14.

²¹ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” Ibid.

²² Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 9

3. Positive psychology is concerned with relationships between and among people. If we were to reduce positive psychology to one simple sentence, it would be "other people matter." Every line of Work brings us back to the importance of other people.
4. Positive psychologists pay lip service to importance of larger institutions like families, schools, communities, whole nations. We are psychologists but we have not done as good a job as we might in characterizing these positive institutions, these enabling institutions, but this is where I am spending my energy now."²³

In other words, positive psychology is the scientific study of what goes right in life. We don't have control over life's circumstances, but we do have control over how we relate to them.

Alan Waterman stated that the fundamental of positive psychology is the psychology of human function, and it centers on the self-realization, human fulfillment, and building on positives (flourishing) aspects of one's life. Thus, happiness and wellbeing is a *eudaimonic* approach.²⁴ Ryan and Deci's subjective well-being (SWB) research further concluded that the path to hedonic experience maximizes positive emotion and minimizes pain (negative effect).²⁵ Therefore, happiness and SWB draw attention to a person's feelings, satisfaction, and understanding of positive human traits. Happiness and wellbeing trace back to the ancient Greek stem "eu," which means "well."²⁶ Aristotle's ethical theory of eudaimonia argued the importance of both internal personal characteristics, as well as external factors such as income and health²⁷. Human traits can be measured and studied scientifically; this includes strengths and virtues, such

²³ Christopher Peterson, "The Strengths Revolution: A Positive Psychology Perspective," *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 21, no. 4 (2013): 7-14.

²⁴ Alan S. Waterman, ed., *Best Within Us: Positive Psychology Perspectives on Eudaimonia* (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2013).

²⁵ Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000): 68-78.

²⁶ Anand, "*Happiness Explained*," vii.

²⁷ Aristotle's understanding of the economy is the distinction between the art of wealth usage (economy proper) and the art of wealth acquisition (see Aristotle's *Politics*, chapter 3, 1253b). I will provide a more in-depth discussion in chapter four.

as the capacity for love, reliance, self -knowledge, wisdom, justice, and fairness. Positive psychologists spend much of their time researching topics like strengths, optimism, life satisfaction, happiness, wellbeing, gratitude, compassion (both for others and self), self-esteem and self-confidence, hope, and elevation.

In summary, positive psychology focuses on the “positive” events and influences in life, including (1) Positive experiences, such as happiness. (2) Positive states and traits that are corresponding to gratitude, resilience, and compassion. (3) Positive institutions as to how to apply positive principles within organizations, institutions, and society. These topics enable positive psychology to strengthen one’s “positive traits and virtues” and assist us in living a happy and flourishing life.

The Authentic Happiness

In *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman argues that happiness occurs when a person identifies a signature strength and uses it towards something more significant than the self. He states that “I do not believe that you should devote overly-much effort to correcting weakness. Rather, I believe that the highest success in living and the deepest emotional satisfaction comes from building and using your signature strengths.”²⁸ A signature strength is a personal strength, such as playfulness, gratitude, kindness, honesty, love of learning, or critical thinking. He calls these traits “signature strengths” and argues that by exercising them frequently and wisely, one can transform one’s life to a higher, more positive plane. The second crucial factor is leisure, such as flow and social life. Seligman suggests that flow can be increased by (1) identifying signature strengths, (2) choosing work that lets people utilize their signature strengths-which will cause an

²⁸ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 13.

increase in flow experience during employment, and (3) recrafting present Work to use signature strengths. Seligman's *Authentic happiness* is organized into three parts: (1) Positive Emotion, (2) Strength and Virtue, and (3) In the Mansions of life.

Positive Emotions

In this section of his book, Seligman focuses on defining and increasing positive emotions. He posits that positive psychology can be used in a preventive manner instead of following a medical model approach of focusing on a person's illness. Seligman highlights his journey moving away from a medical model towards the field of positive psychology. He states that "most psychologists, working on the disease model, have concentrated in therapy, helping people become unbearable...It is my view that therapy is usually too late, and that by acting when the individual was still doing well, preventive interventions would save an ocean of tears."²⁹ He indicates that happiness is important because it helps people live longer and brings meaning into one's life. Furthermore, positive emotions have many benefits, such as friendship, love, creative thinking, and physical health. Regarding therapeutic recreation and leisure services, Seligman references a 2002 study conducted by him and Ed Diener, the results suggested that the most happy people ". . . differed markedly from average people and unhappy people in one principle way: a rich and fulfilling social life."³⁰ That is, happier people spent more time with people during free time and through leisure pursuits. Seligman writes, "feeling positive emotion and expressing it well is at the heart of not only love between a mother and an infant, but if almost all love and friendship."³¹ In brief, a rich social life can help raise the

²⁹ Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," 26.

³⁰ Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," 42.

³¹ Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," 42.

amount of happiness a person will experience. Although life circumstances can impact levels of happiness, one can change his/her internal circumstances to increase one's happiness. Hence, happiness is equated to optimistic thinking, attitude, life circumstances, and set range (known as genetics). Seligman argues that the single most important issue in happiness is positive psychology that one can use to identify and develop one's signature strength in the past, present, and future events. He proposes a formula for us to consider:

$$H = S + C + V$$

H represents the enduring level of happiness, S is the set range, C accounts for the circumstances of one's life, and V signifies factors under our voluntary control.

S - Set Range:

Seligman discloses that our genetics predispose us to have a *set range* for the experience of happiness. We are inherently wired to be very happy most of the time, sad some of the time, or somewhere in the middle. Seligman's *set range* amounts to fifty percent (50%) of our happiness. Some people, by nature, are more morose, and others are simply more optimistic. For example, "if you are low in positive affectivity, you may frequently feel the impulse to avoid social contact and spend your time alone."³² An individual's *setpoint* of happiness is inherited by our genetics and personality. Richard Easterlin states, "life events such as marriage, loss of a job, and serious injury may deflect a person above or below this setpoint, but in time hedonic adaptation will return an individual to the initial setpoint."³³ Richard Kammann discloses that

³² Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," 47.

³³ Luigino Bruni and Pier Luigi Porta, eds., *Economics and Happiness: Framing the Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 29.

the objective life circumstances have a negligible role to play in a theory of happiness.”³⁴

Seligman expresses that “if you do not fight the origins of your *genetic steersman*, you may remain lower in happy feelings than you would be otherwise.”³⁵ We inherit a “*genetic steersman*” who urges us towards a specific level of sadness or happiness; this is our happiness *setpoint*. However, if we do not fight the urgings of our *genetic steersman*, we may not be able to achieve an optimal level of happiness.

The Hedonic Treadmill

Another barrier to raising our happiness level is the *hedonic treadmill*. Any discussion about happiness would be remiss not to mention concerns about “*hedonic adaptation*.” In Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he writes about “the never-failing certainty with which all men, sooner or later, accommodate themselves to whatever becomes their permanent situation.”³⁶ Our emotional systems have the capacity to respond to positive and negative triggers and adjust accordingly.

The *hedonic theory* considers our happiness in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance, where pleasure and pain may pertain to the body, mind, and/or heart.³⁷ A recent Pew Research Center opinion poll³⁸ corroborates this account and reveals that 50% of Americans

³⁴ Richard Kammann, “Objective Circumstances, Life Satisfactions, and Sense of Well-Being: Consistencies Across Time and Place,” *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* 12, no. 1 (1983): 14-22.

³⁵ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 47.

³⁶ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 72.

³⁷ Alan S. Waterman, “Two Conceptions of Happiness: Contrasts of Personal Expressiveness (Eudaimonia) and Hedonic Enjoyment,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 64, no. 4 (1993): 678-691.

³⁸ “Are We Happy Yet?,” Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project, December 31, 2019, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2006/02/13/are-we-happy-yet/>.

consider themselves “pretty happy” and 34% describe themselves as “very happy.” In contemporary usage, the term happiness is generally considered to refer to hedonic happiness. Dan Haybron³⁹ points out that the *hedonic theory* of happiness is considered to be subjective, such as our felt emotions and personal evaluations. The “belief that one is getting the important things one wants, as well as certain pleasant affects that normally go along with this belief.”

On the other hand, the *hedonic treadmill theory* further suggests that people repeatedly return to their baseline level of happiness, regardless of their experiences.⁴⁰ For example, our happiness level rises when we purchase a new car, a new house, receive a promotion, lose a job, etc., despite any temporary changes, whether there are positive results or adverse events. Over time, we are likely to return to our baseline level of happiness.⁴¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes “since these conveniences by becoming habitual had almost entirely ceased to be enjoyable, and at the same time degenerated into true needs, it became much more cruel to be deprived of them than to possess them was sweet, and men were unhappy to lose them without being happy to possess them.”⁴² As we accumulate material possessions and accomplishments, our expectations rise. Therefore, we are expected to obtain more, greater things to boost our level of happiness. In brief, “once you get the next possession or achievement, you adapt to it as well, and so on.”⁴³ While variation in genetics and personality may largely explain our hedonic setpoint, our goals

³⁹ Dan Haybron, “Happiness,” ed. Edward N. Zalta, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, September 23, 2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/happiness/>.

⁴⁰ Ed Diener, Richard E. Lucas, and Christie Napa Scollon, “Beyond the Hedonic Treadmill: Revising the Adaptation Theory of Well-Being,” *American Psychologist* 61, no. 4 (2006): 305-314.

⁴¹ Richard E. Lucas, “Adaptation and the Set-Point Model of Subjective Well-Being: Does Happiness Change After Major Life Events?,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 16, no. 2 (April 2007): 75-79.

⁴² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 165.

⁴³ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 49.

and attentional focus play a role in day-to-day happiness.⁴⁴ The *eudaimonic* approaches, on the other hand, emphasize the process of living well and aspects of positive psychological functioning that go beyond positive emotions and evaluations.⁴⁵

Contrary to *hedonic theory*, the *eudaimonic* theory does not assume that what seems “good” to an individual is necessarily “good” for that individual. In short, the *eudaimonic* approach focuses on experiences that are objectively good for the person.⁴⁶ Instead, these individuals specify certain objective qualities or psychological states essential for happiness, such as virtuous activity, self-sufficiency, positive relationships, etc., that are independent of a person’s interests or beliefs. In other words, we don’t have to stay on the treadmill, and we can use the other remaining variable to improve our level of happiness. Studies⁴⁷ of the hedonic and eudaimonic report that both kinds of happiness are necessary to maximize wellbeing.

C - Life Circumstances:

Seligman emphasizes that some life circumstances may influence happiness for the better, such as age, gender, ethnicity, income, wealth, hometown, and marital status. Some of us strive to change these life circumstances. For example, some might be compelled to purchase a bigger house, find a new job, get married, or have children. “The bad news is that changing these circumstances is usually impractical and expensive.”⁴⁸ For instance, Seligman reveals that

⁴⁴ Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King, and Ed Diener, “The Benefits of Frequent Positive Affect: Does Happiness Lead to Success?,” *Psychological Bulletin* 131, no. 6 (2005): 803-855.

⁴⁵ Eranda Jayawickreme, Marie J. C. Forgeard, and Martin E. P. Seligman, “The Engine of Well-Being,” *Review of General Psychology* 16, no. 4 (2012): 327-342; Carol D. Ryff, “Happiness Is Everything, or Is It? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-Being,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57, no. 6 (1989): 1069-1081.

⁴⁶ Shelly Kagan, “The Limits of Well-Being,” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 9, no. 2 (1992): 169-189.

⁴⁷ Luke Wayne Henderson, Tess Knight, and Ben Richardson, “An Exploration of The Well-Being Benefits of Hedonic and Eudaimonic Behaviour,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 8, no. 4 (2013): 322-336.

⁴⁸ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 50.

there are many reasons to reduce poverty, including improving opportunity, diminishing infant mortality, and creating affordable housing. However, poverty and material wealth have little relation to happiness. He continues, “materialism seems to be counterproductive: at all levels of real income, people who value money more than other goals are less satisfied with their income and with their lives as a whole, although precisely why is a mystery.”⁴⁹ Furthermore, education, climate, race, and gender also have little to do with happiness. Seligman states that people who are active in religious congregations tend to be happier than religiously unaffiliated adults, and he continues, “the relation of hope for the future and religious faith is probably the cornerstone of why faith so effectively fights despair and increases happiness.”⁵⁰ Accordingly, “even if you could alter all of the external circumstances, it would not do much for you, since together they probably account for not more than between 8 and 15 percent of the variance in happiness. The very good news is that there are quite a number of internal circumstances that will likely work for you...this set of variables...are more under your voluntary control. If you decide to change them (and be warned that none of these changes come without real effort), your level of happiness is likely to increase lastingly.”⁵¹

Seligman articulates the key to happiness is not in changing our genes (which is impractical) or changing our life circumstances, but to change our internal circumstances – voluntary control. He argues that the single most crucial issue in happiness is positive psychology, such as identifying and developing our signature strength in the past, present, and future events.

⁴⁹ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 55.

⁵⁰ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 60.

⁵¹ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 61.

V - Voluntary Control:

Voluntary variables account for 40% of our enduring level of happiness. Seligman argues that the most crucial issue in happiness is how we identify and develop our signature strength in past, present, and future events. General happiness is related to three types of satisfaction, (1) satisfaction about the past, (2) satisfaction about the future, and (3) satisfaction about the present life circumstances and situations.

Seligman conveys that human beings continually experience a stream of consciousness whereby they interpret and explain to themselves what is going on.⁵² This intensely personal discussion can sometimes take the form of rumination,⁵³ and other times can become exultation (rejoicing). Jonathan Haidt concurs most mental processes happen automatically, without the need for conscious attention or control.⁵⁴ However, John Bargh differs by using the following example to illustrate his point - “For example, at what time would you need to leave your house to catch a 6:26 flight to London? That’s something you have to think about consciously, first choosing a means of transport to the airport and then considering rush-hour traffic, weather, and the strictness of the shoe police at the airport. You can’t depart on a hunch. But if you drive to the airport, almost everything you do on the way will be automatic: breathing, blinking, shifting in your seat, daydreaming, keeping enough distance between you and the car in front of you,

⁵² Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 64.

⁵³ Rumination refers to the tendency to repetitively think about the causes, situational factors, and consequences of one’s negative emotional experience. One needs to regularly work on these bad habits if you want to break that habit; trying distraction once or twice is not enough.

Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, “Responses to Depression and Their Effects on The Duration of Depressive Episodes,” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 100, no. 4 (1991): 569-582.

Eddie Selby, “Rumination: Problem Solving Gone Wrong,” *Psychology Today* (Sussex Publishers, February 24, 2010), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/overcoming-self-sabotage/201002/rumination-problem-solving-gone-wrong>.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2006), 14.

even scowling and cursing slower drivers.”⁵⁵ In other words, “the imperialistic Freudian view claims that emotion always drives thought, while the imperialistic cognitive view claims that thought always drives emotion.”⁵⁶ Seligman advises us that “each drives the other at times,”⁵⁷ and our emotions derive from this inner conversation.

H - The Enduring Level of Happiness:

Seligman reveals that momentary happiness is not equal to an enduring level of happiness. Momentary happiness can be obtained by a “number of uplifts, such as chocolate, a comedy film, a back rub, a compliment, flowers, or a new blouse.”⁵⁸ Additional studies⁵⁹ also reveal that these activities play a less critical role in our happiness than most of us believe, and our happiness eventually returns to its previous level. However, our goal is to maintain enduring happiness and a feeling about a good, meaningful life. Therefore, the enduring level of happiness (H) is the sum of a person’s genetic capacity for happiness (S), their circumstances (C), and factors that can be controlled (V).

Satisfaction about the Past

Seligman suggests that “motions about the past range from contentment, serenity, pride, and satisfaction to unrelieved bitterness and vengeful anger.”⁶⁰ It implies our past experiences

⁵⁵ Haidt, “The Happiness,” 14.

⁵⁶ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 65.

⁵⁷ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 64-66.

⁵⁸ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 45.

⁵⁹ Ryan T. Howell et al., “Momentary Happiness: The Role of Psychological Need Satisfaction,” *Journal of Happiness Studies* 12, no. 1 (2009): 1-15.

Aaron C. Weidman and Elizabeth W. Dunn, “The Unsung Benefits of Material Things: Material Purchases Provide More Frequent Momentary Happiness than Experiential Purchases,” *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 7, no. 4 (2015): 390-399.

⁶⁰ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 64.

ultimately determine our current emotions and reactions. Our thought processes may be considered a web of multiple feedback loop systems,⁶¹ where our present emotions are, among other things, iterations of our previous ones, but “some of our emotional life is instantaneous and reaction.”⁶² Besides, Sigmund Freud stated that our past psychological events in our lives were influenced by our past encounters no matter how trivial. “Childhood is not just formative, but determining of adult personality.”⁶³ However, recent studies⁶⁴ indicate that overwhelming evidence is against those popularized beliefs. For instance, twin studies show that genes have the most substantial effect on their future personality, not childhood events, which only have a negligible influence on how we end up.⁶⁵ Our interpretation of past experiences and level of satisfaction does have an impact on our mood and happiness – but it is about interpretation. Although Seligman concurs that our emotions about the past “are completely driven by thinking and interpretation,”⁶⁶ he suggests that dwelling on past “negative” events and the expression of anger produces cardiac disease and more anger. He proceeds “insufficient appreciation and savoring of the good events in your past and overemphasis of the bad ones are the two culprits that undermine serenity, contentment, and satisfaction.”⁶⁷ Fundamentally, the continual dwelling

⁶¹ Kristin Layous et al., “What Triggers Prosocial Effort? A Positive Feedback Loop between Positive Activities, Kindness, and Well-Being,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 12, no. 4 (2016): 385-398.

⁶² Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 65.

⁶³ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 66.

⁶⁴ Espen Roysamb et al., “Genetics, Personality and Wellbeing. A Twin Study of Traits, Facets and Life Satisfaction,” *Scientific Reports* 8, no. 1 (2018): 1-13.

⁶⁵ This is not necessarily true because twins are born with the same genes, but how those genes are expressed can be influenced by external circumstances. Something called epigenetics – which studies the relationship between genes and the environment.

⁶⁶ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 66.

⁶⁷ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 70.

on past adverse events is harmful. Still, we must understand the difference between dwelling and understanding the past negative events. Seligman articulates that people need to learn how to forgive and train their minds to remember pleasant events.

Optimism about the Future

Seligman posits that “positive emotions about the future include faith, trust, confidence, hope, and optimism.”⁶⁸ We can control our emotions and happiness regarding future events by being optimistic thinkers. Learned optimism involves developing the ability to view our environment from a positive point of view by replacing the pessimistic thoughts with optimistic ones. Our brain reflects the way we think throughout our lives. For people who tend to view adverse events as persisting and that their causes are permanent, “the bad events will persist, are always going to be there to affect their lives.”⁶⁹ In contrast, those who believe that adverse events will pass tend to possess an optimistic outlook and maintain a healthier mindset for finding happiness.

Seligman discloses, “optimism and hope cause better resistance to depression when bad events strike, better performance at work, particularly in challenging jobs, and better physical health.”⁷⁰ Peter Schulman’s learned optimism study indicates that optimistic insurance salespeople sold 35 percent more, and identified pessimists were two times more likely to quit in the first year than optimists.⁷¹ Thus, Schulman recommends organizations train employees in learned optimism techniques and design their operation to support this practice. Seligman

⁶⁸ Seligman, *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶⁹ Seligman, *Ibid.*, 88.

⁷⁰ Seligman, *Ibid.*, 88.

⁷¹ Peter Schulman, “Applying Learned Optimism to Increase Sales Productivity,” *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* 19, no. 1 (1999): 31-37.

divulges there are two crucial dimensions to our explanatory style (1) permanence and (2) pervasiveness.⁷²

1. Permanence: Optimistic people believe those bad events to be more temporary than permanent and bounce back quickly from failure, whereas others may take longer to recover or may never recover. Furthermore, they believe good things happen for reasons that are permanent, rather than seeing the transient nature of “positive” events. Moreover, optimists point to specific temporary causes for adverse events, while pessimists point to permanent causes.
2. Pervasiveness: “Permanence is about time. Pervasiveness is about space.”⁷³
Optimistic people compartmentalize “helplessness,” whereas pessimists assume that failure in one area of life means failure in life as a whole. For example, the optimist believes good events will enhance everything he/she does, while the pessimist believes specific factors cause good events.⁷⁴ Therefore, optimists are generally more confident and internalize positive events while pessimists externalize them.

Positive psychology encourages pessimists to learn how to be optimists by thinking about their reactions to adversity in a new way, thus, resulting in learned optimism. For example, cognitive psychology explains that it is crucial to learn to argue with ourselves, with that inner

⁷² Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 88.

⁷³ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 90.

⁷⁴ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 91.

stream of consciousness that sometimes leads us to ruminate about the past or view the future with pessimism.⁷⁵ Seligman offers four different strategies to engage in this inner argument.⁷⁶

The first is to review the “*evidence*” systematically and weigh up the positives and the negatives. Second is to review the “*alternatives*.” Almost nothing that happens to us has a single cause; most events have multiples causes. Third, “*implication*” – Seligman suggests the use of *decatastrophizing* techniques to confront the worst-case scenario by asking the “what if...?” questions.⁷⁷ Fourth, “*usefulness*” - Seligman shares with us that “sometimes the consequences holding a belief matter more than its truth.”⁷⁸ If our “negative” thoughts lead us to a dead-end decision, these thoughts are not useful. No matter how bad things appear, the purpose of using our mind and energy is to resolve the situation.

In short, the optimist's “outlook on failure was that what happened was an unlucky situation (not personal) and really just a setback (not permanent) for this particular situation, but not for all their goals (not pervasive).”⁷⁹

Happiness in the Present

Seligman posits that to increase our happiness, we should need to follow Aristotle’s teaching by asking ourselves - “*what is the good life?*” He answers the question by proposing we use positive psychology by developing our signature strength in pursuit of the good life. In

⁷⁵ Robin M. Hogarth and Howard Kunreuther, “Decision Making Under Ignorance: Arguing with Yourself,” *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 10, no. 1 (1995): 15-36.

⁷⁶ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 95 - 97.

⁷⁷ Marty Sapp, *Cognitive-Behavioral Theories of Counseling: Traditional and Nontraditional Approaches* (Springfield: Charles C Thomas, 2004).

⁷⁸ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 97.

⁷⁹ Trevor Wilson, *The Human Equity Advantage: Beyond Diversity to Talent Optimization* (Ontario: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 88.

Authentic Happiness, Seligman spends the first seven chapters articulating the differences between *pleasures* and *gratifications* that make up happiness. Drawing from positive psychology research and ancient wisdom, he expresses that “*pleasures* are delights that have clear sensory and strong emotional components, what philosophers call “raw feels”: ecstasy, thrills, orgasm, delight, mirth, exuberance, and comfort. They are evanescent, and they involve little, if any, thinking. The *gratifications* are activities we enjoy doing, but they are not necessarily accompanied by any raw feelings at all. Rather, the gratifications engage us fully, we become immersed and absorbed in them, and we lose self-consciousness.”⁸⁰

Seligman further outlines Aristotle's teaching, stating that *contemplation* is necessary to experience happiness.⁸¹ In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asserts that there are three types of life that man associates with happiness, (1) a servile life of pleasure, (2) a refined life of politics, and (3) intellectual speculation – contemplation.⁸² For Aristotle, when given a choice between ethical (reasoning) and intellectual (contemplation) virtue, he chose the latter. Aristotle justified that on-going contemplation was the most self-sufficient and pleasantly virtuous activity, thus constituting the complete form of happiness. Moreover, Aristotle revealed to us that happiness is an activity and should be in accordance with the highest virtue.⁸³

Seligman presents a similar strategy of how we can develop our strengths to achieve happiness. Gratifications are a superior form of enjoyment and create higher pleasures that enchant us immediately; these enjoyments are momentary, whereas higher pleasures tend to be

⁸⁰ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 102.

⁸¹ Eudaimonia.

⁸² Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” Book 1.

⁸³ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” Ibid.

more cognitive and long-lasting. The higher pleasures, Seligman writes, “have a lot in common with bodily pleasures... and habituate readily.”⁸⁴ He describes how we can attain and enhance high pleasures. For example, “neurons are wired to respond to novel events, and not to fire if the events do not provide new information,”⁸⁵ thus lessening our pleasures. Nevertheless, we can still learn how to savor this pleasure by “awareness of pleasure and the deliberate conscious attention to the experience of pleasure.”⁸⁶

There are savoring techniques⁸⁷ such as (1) sharing with others, (2) memory building, (3) self-congratulation, (4) sharpening perceptions, and finally (5) absorption; we can practice enhancing our higher pleasure sensation. These techniques “all support the four kinds of savoring: basking (receiving praise and congratulations), thanksgiving (expressing gratitude for blessing), marveling (losing the self in the wonder of the moments), and luxuriating (indulging the senses).”⁸⁸ A final meaningful way of enhancing the pleasures is *mindfulness*, which is a strategy we all naturally possess. Seligman writes, “mindful attention to the present occurs much more readily in a slow state of mind than when one is racing future-minded through experience.”⁸⁹ In other words, when we are experiencing pleasures, it is essential not to take it for granted. Seligman suggests savoring the moment.

⁸⁴ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 102.

⁸⁵ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 105.

⁸⁶ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 107.

⁸⁷ Fred B. Bryant, Colette M. Smart, and Scott P. King, “Using the Past to Enhance the Present: Boosting Happiness Through Positive Reminiscence,” *Journal of Happiness Studies* 6, no. 3 (2005): 227-260.

⁸⁸ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 108-109.

⁸⁹ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 110.

Seligman states that although flow and gratifications provide multiple physical and psychological health benefits, we often choose pleasure activities over gratifications since gratifications entail the possibility of failure and require great discipline and effort to develop the necessary skills. He advises, “The pleasures are about the senses and the emotions. The gratifications, in contrast, are about enacting personal strengths and virtues.”⁹⁰ Seligman continues that modern society has lost the distinction between pleasures and gratifications. For example, distinct from the bodily pleasures, Aristotelian “happiness (*eudaimonia*) is akin to grace in dancing. Grace is not a separable entity that accompanies the dance or that comes at the end of the dance; it is part and parcel of a dance well done.”⁹¹ Similarly, Seligman writes, “contemplation absorbs us and is done for its own sake; it is not intended to refer to any emotion that accompanies contemplation.” Accordingly, *eudaimonia*, what Seligman calls gratification, “is part and parcel of right action. It cannot be derived from bodily pleasure, nor is it a state that can be chemically induced or attained by any shortcuts.”⁹² In other words, “The pleasures are about the senses and the emotions. The gratifications, in contrast, are about enacting personal strengths and virtues.”⁹³

In Jonathan Haidt’s publication, *The Happiness Hypothesis – Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*, he explains three effective methods for altering our thinking to achieve happiness. These include meditation, cognitive therapy, and medications in the Selective

⁹⁰ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,”112.

⁹¹ Martin E. P. Seligman, “Can Happiness Be Taught?,” *Daedalus* 133, no. 2 (2004): 80-87.

⁹² Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,”112.

⁹³ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,”112.

Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor family.⁹⁴ He qualifies the benefits of each process with its possible setbacks and advocates for a holistic and self-aware approach to becoming happier. Haidt states that our behavior is governed by two motivational systems, positive and negative. The first approach system triggers positive emotions and causes us to move toward certain things, and the withdraw system triggers negative emotions and makes you want to pull back or avoid other things.⁹⁵ These two systems remain active, monitor the environment, and produce opposing motives at the same time,⁹⁶ such as feeling ambivalence. Still, the systems' relative balance determines which way you move.⁹⁷ He states that "human thinking depends on metaphor. People often rely on metaphors to understand new or complex concepts. For example, it's hard to think about life in general, but once you apply the metaphor "life is a journey," the metaphor guides you to some conclusions: You should learn the terrain, pick a direction, find some good traveling companions, and enjoy the trip, because there may be nothing at the end of the road."⁹⁸ Namely, "Events in the world affect us only through our interpretations of them, so if we can control our interpretations, we can control our world."⁹⁹ Buddhism and Stoicism teach us that "striving for external goods, or to make the world conform to your wishes, is always a striving after wind. Happiness can only be found within, by breaking attachments to external things and

⁹⁴ Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are some of the most commonly prescribed antidepressants available, such as Lexapro, Prozac, Paroxetine, Zoloft.

⁹⁵ Haidt, "The Happiness," 330.

⁹⁶ Joseph E. LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 14-18.

⁹⁷ Haidt, "The Happiness," 30.

⁹⁸ Haidt, "The Happiness," 2.

⁹⁹ Haidt, "The Happiness," 23.

cultivating an attitude of acceptance.”¹⁰⁰ Haidt articulates that the secret to happiness is “*virtue*,”¹⁰¹ but to be virtuous is not easy, it required constant, even daily effort and reflecting on our relationship with the world, continually appealing to reason and learning self-control. Thus, happiness can be realized when our virtues are reconceived as excellences by practicing our strengths of characters.

Frederic Lenoir stated that “being happy means learning to choose – to choose not only appropriate pleasures, but also our path, our profession, our way of living and loving, as well as our leisure activities, our friends, and the values on which we build our lives.” What’s more gratification, and thus happiness is not sought out, but rather, they come upon us as we engage in meaningful activities. The question cannot be, “how can I be happy?”¹⁰² since this suggests a way of finding an alternative way to achieve this objective. Seligman imparts, “when an entire lifetime is taken up in the pursuit of the positive emotions, however, authenticity and meaning are nowhere to be found.”¹⁰³ He posits that to increase our happiness, we need to follow Aristotle's perspective in asking ourselves, "what is the good life?" Seligman suggests that we identify and use our *signature strengths* in pursuit of the good life.

Strengths and Virtues

Seligman’s *Authentic Happiness* shares with us how to utilize positive psychology to reach the good life. He writes, “science must be descriptive and not prescriptive. It is not the job of positive psychology to tell you that you should be optimistic, or spiritual, or kind or good-

¹⁰⁰ Haidt, “The Happiness,” 82.

¹⁰¹ Haidt, “The Happiness,” 156.

¹⁰² Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 120.

¹⁰³ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 120 -121.

humored; it is rather to describe the consequences of these traits (for physical health, and higher achievement, at a cost perhaps of less realism).”¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, there are six core virtues, 1) Wisdom and Knowledge, 2) Courage, 3) Love and Humanity, 4) Justice, 5) Temperance, 6) Spirituality and Transcendence, to live a good life. Seligman further identifies the 24 strengths corresponding to these virtues. He continues, “what you do with that information depends on your own values and goals.”¹⁰⁵ There are no shortcuts to happiness, but knowing our virtues and strengths is the first step in achieving a happier life. He further states that happiness is not the result of good genes or luck. Real, lasting happiness develops from focusing on one’s strengths, not weaknesses. One must strive to work on improving all aspects of their life. In other words, we can transform from ‘learned helplessness’ into ‘learned optimism’ as the surest route to the attainment of *authentic happiness*.

The Signature Strengths

Seligman shares with us that it is crucial to distinguish between talents and strengths. “Strengths, such as integrity, valor, originality, and kindness, are not the same thing as talents, such as perfect pitch, facial beauty, or lightning-fast sprinting speed.”¹⁰⁶ The difference is that strengths are moral traits, and talents are nonmoral. For example, valor, originality, and kindness, can be built on even weak foundations with practice, persistence, good teaching, and dedication; they can take root and flourish.¹⁰⁷ Talent, for the most part, you either have it or you don’t; “if you are not born with perfect pitch or the lungs of a long-distance runner, there are, sadly, severe

¹⁰⁴ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 129.

¹⁰⁵ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 129.

¹⁰⁶ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 134.

¹⁰⁷ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 134.

limits on how much of them you can acquire.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, talent is something you have, something that you are given, and there isn’t much choice about it. However, developing our strengths requires the development of will and personal responsibility, which is central to positive psychology. Seligman states, “building strengths and virtues and using them in daily life are very much a matter of making choices. Building strength and virtue is not about learning, training, or conditioning, but about discovery, creation, and ownership.”¹⁰⁹ He proceeds to propose 24 strengths that are significant to virtue and further provide criteria to define our strengths:¹¹⁰

1. A strength is a *trait*; it is a psychological characteristic that we come across in different situations at different times.
2. Strength is *valued in its own right* without being attached to positive outcomes. For example, Aristotle agrees, actions undertaken for external reasons are not virtuous, precisely because they are coaxed or coerced; a virtuous person is someone who performs the distinctive activity of being human well.¹¹¹ Thus, strengths and virtues are often enacted in a win-win situation.
3. *Culture* supports strengths “by providing institutions, rituals, role models, parables, maxims, and children’s stories.”¹¹² Although different cultures have different behaviors to express these traits, what courage means for Aristotle is different than

¹⁰⁸ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 134.

¹⁰⁹ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 136.

¹¹⁰ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 136.

¹¹¹ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” Book 1.

¹¹² Aristotle states that courage “is a mean with regard to feelings of fear (Phobos) and confidence (Jtharsos)” (1115a5). Buddha views courage as a vital element of compassionate action to help others and our ability to change our lives. It is the conviction to do the right things and help others be happy, free, and fulfilled.

- Buddha.¹¹³ In modern society, a good deal of what we do as children are designed to instill in us these very strengths.
4. *Role Models and Paragons* - Our culture recognizes specific role models and ideas that illustrate a strength or virtue. Accordingly, role models may be real, such as Mahatma Gandhi's compassion and leadership and the legendary story of George Washington's honesty, or mythical, like Star War's Luke Skywalker. Furthermore, Helen Keller was a paragon of love of learning, Thomas Edison of creativity, Florence Nightingale of kindness, Mother Teresa of the capacity of love, Willie Stargell of leadership, Jackie Robinson of self-control, and Aung San of integrity.¹¹⁴
 5. *Prodigies and idiots* – Some strengths are precociously shown by children through storytelling, dance, acting, singing, or playing a musical instrument. Seligman states, if there are paragons of strengths, then there are also “*idiots*” - individuals who do not have them and who are viewed as exemplars of people who are devoid of individual strength.¹¹⁵
 6. *Ubiquitous* - Strengths are universal and ubiquitous, however, not all cultures value them to the same degrees. Seligman discloses that some of the strengths endorsed by contemporary Americans are not on the list of the *Authentic Happiness* discussion, such as “good looks, wealth, competitiveness, self-esteem, celebrity, uniqueness and

¹¹³ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 138.

¹¹⁴ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 138.

¹¹⁵ The word *idiot* comes from the Greek; a term illustrates a person lacking professional skills, unskilled, and ignorant. In our case, it stands for *not socialized with respect to a strength*. See - Mark Rapley, *The Social Construction of Intellectual Disability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 30-60.

the like.”¹¹⁶ The motive of the criterion is to formulate a good life strategy that applies to all people, not just Americans.

Lee Yearley writes that a character strength is “a disposition to act, desire, and feel that it involves the exercise of judgment and leads to a recognizable human excellence or instance of human flourishing.”¹¹⁷ Yearley’s interpretation implies that character strengths are not segregated mechanisms with automatic effects on behavior; instead, “virtuous activity involves choosing virtue for itself and in light of a justifiable life plan, which means that people can reflect on their own strengths of character and talk about them to others.”¹¹⁸ Table 3.1 summarized the criteria for *Character Strengths*.

¹¹⁶ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 138.

¹¹⁷ Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Boulder: NetLibrary, Inc., 1999), 13.

T. C Kline and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 75.

¹¹⁸ Nansook Park, Christopher Peterson, and Martin E. P. Seligman, “Strengths of Character and Well-Being,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 23, no. 5 (2004): 603-619.

Table 3.1 Criteria for a *Character Strength*

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1. Ubiquity - is widely recognized across cultures.^a
 2. Fulfilling - contributes to individual fulfillment, satisfaction, and happiness broadly construed. The person in this strength experience positive feelings when acquiring new skills and knowledge.^b
 3. Morally valued - is valued in its own right and not for tangible outcomes it may produce.
 4. Does not diminish others - elevates others who witness it, producing admiration, not jealousy. For example, someone's *love of learning* can elevate other people in the vicinity.
 5. Nonfelicitous Opposite - has obvious antonyms that are negative.^c
 6. Traitlike - is an individual difference with demonstrable generality and stability.
 7. Distinctiveness - is *not* redundant (conceptually or empirically) with another character's strengths.
 8. Paragons - is strikingly embodied in some individuals.
 9. Prodigies - is precociously shown by some children or youth.
 10. Selective absence - is missing altogether in some individuals.
 11. Institutions - is the deliberate target of societal practices and rituals that try to cultivate it.
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Source: Adapted from Peterson, Christopher, and Martin E. P. Seligman. *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004.

- a. The Latin root word *Ubique* means *everywhere*. These *Character Strengths* are universally valued in all cultures.
- b. For example, love of learning in Chinese folk term *hao-xue-xin*, in English “heart and mind for wanting to learn,” nicely captures this strength; Jin Li, “A Cultural Model of Learning,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 33, no. 3 (2002): 248-269.
- c. For example, the antonyms of *Wisdom*, such as “foolishness, thoughtlessness, and idiocy” are negative. See - Christopher Peterson and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues a Handbook and Classification* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004), 106.

Seligman proclaims that human virtues, such as wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence,¹¹⁹ can be capitalized in attaining authentic happiness. Figure 3.1 summarizes Seligman's classification of *Character Strengths and Virtues*.

Figure 3.1 Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues



Source: Adapted from VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues.” VIA Character Strengths and Virtues Chart. Accessed January 8, 2020.
<https://www.viacharacter.org/pdf/AdultStrengthIcons2020.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 133.

By asking Aristotle's "what is the good life?" question, Seligman draws on Aristotle's eudaimonia (happiness) concept to illustrate his point. Aristotle did not state we should aim at happiness, but rather that we do aim at happiness. His goal in *Nicomachean Ethics* is not to tell us how we ought to live a happy and prosperous life, but to tell us what this life consists of. In *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman answers Aristotle's question by identifying and using one's strength in pursuit of the good life. He also separates the concept of pleasures, which is a momentary delight in sensory stimulation that requires no thinking, interpretation, or gratifications. Thus, resulting in psychological growth. In short, pleasures are easy to experience while gratifications and flow are challenging. Happiness is attainable only by activity consistent with noble purposes.

The Mansion of Life

Can people be happy? To address this question, Pelin Kesebir and Ed Diener state that we must understand Tatakiewicz's happiness concept and distinguish the difference between *ideal happiness* and *actual happiness*. *Ideal happiness* implies a way of being "that is complete and lasting, and that touches the whole of life, such as perfect, pure, and perpetual, it has exceptionally high standards and may indeed be beyond anyone's reach."¹²⁰ One can experience mostly positive emotions, report overall satisfaction with their lives, and therefore, deem to be happy. Władysław Tatarkiewicz asserts that "satisfaction with life as a whole must be satisfaction with that which is, but also with that which was, and that which will be, not only with the present, but also with the past and the future."¹²¹ In other words, an optimally happy person manages to conceive of everything that has happened to him/her, that is happening to

¹²⁰ Pelin Kesebir and Ed Diener, "In Pursuit of Happiness: Empirical Answers to Philosophical Questions," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3, no. 2 (2008): 117-125.

¹²¹ Tatarkiewicz, "Analysis of Happiness," 140.

him/her, and that ever will happen to him/her. This line of thinking is similar to Seligman's *Authentic Happiness* past, present, and future concepts. Moreover, Aristotle shared with us that happiness is the only thing that humans desire for its own sake, unlike riches, honor, health, or friendship.¹²² He remarked that men sought riches, honor, and health not only for their own sake but also to be happy. Therefore, health, wealth¹²³, friendship, knowledge, and virtue are constituent parts of happiness. Again, Seligman posits that to increase our happiness, we need to follow Aristotle's teaching and identify our *signature strength* in pursuit of the good life. How can we increase positive emotions at work, with love, and for family?

Work and Personal Satisfaction

Seligman notes that “our economy is rapidly changing from a money economy to a satisfaction economy.... The lure of a lifetime of great riches at the end of several years of grueling 80-hour weeks...has lost much of its power.”¹²⁴ He expresses work-life is undergoing a significant change in the wealthiest nations, beyond the safety net, more money adds little or nothing to subjective well-being. The U.S household income has risen considerably over the past ten years,¹²⁵ and yet “the percentage of people who describe themselves as ‘very happy’ has fallen from 36 to 29 percent.” Furthermore, a recent Pew Research Center opinion poll¹²⁶ states

¹²² Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” Book VI - X.

¹²³ Aristotle’s concept of wealth and the contemporary view of wealth as a normative process is discussed in chapter four of this dissertation.

¹²⁴ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 165.

¹²⁵ Gloria Guzman, “U.S. Median Household Income Up in 2018 From 2017,” The United States Census Bureau, October 29, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/09/us-median-household-income-up-in-2018-from-2017.html>.

¹²⁶ “Are We Happy Yet?,” Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project, December 31, 2019, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2006/02/13/are-we-happy-yet/>.

that “about a third of the public has been reporting they are very happy ever since 1972... during these past three decades, the average annual per capita income in this country has more than doubled... Americans have more money now than they did a generation ago....we’re no happier.” Hence, money cannot buy happiness. Seligman raises an additional question - What makes an individual choose one job over another, maintain loyalty to his/her company, or invest all his/her efforts in work?

Seligman articulates that when a job allows us to marshal our signature strengths, it transitions to a calling. He writes, “a calling is the most satisfying form of Work because, as a gratification, it is done for its own sake rather than for the material benefits it brings. Enjoying the resulting state of flow on the job will soon, I predict, overtake material reward as the principal reason for working.”¹²⁷ Therefore, a calling is a passionate commitment that an individual executes for his/her own sake. Any job can become a calling, and any calling can become a job. For example, a hospital orderly can view his/her work as a calling by allowing themselves to deploy their signature strengths to perform these tasks, therefore providing themselves with great satisfaction. Seligman proposes that by using signature strengths at work, individuals can recraft their job and enhance flow, hence, making their job much more satisfying.

Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner, and Barbara Bloch Snyderman's studies¹²⁸ affirm that when companies try to eliminate “bad things” in the workplace, such as low wages, poor working conditions, and autocratic supervision, it does not automatically lead to positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction. In other words, these initial studies found that fixing what was wrong in the workplace may prevent dissatisfaction, but it did not necessarily lead to

¹²⁷ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 165.

¹²⁸ Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner, and Barbara B. Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work* (New York: Wiley, 1959).

satisfaction, improved performance, or happiness. Felicia Huppert's article further brings cognitive, social, physical, and neurological aspects together to examine the meaning of well-being, i.e., flourishing or living a good life. She examines the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for human flourishing and posits creativity, resilience, pro-social behavior, and physical health as contributors to well-being or living a good life.¹²⁹

In Part II of *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman returns to the concept of flow and shares with us that work is a particularly suited activity for engendering flow. He asserts that when an individual utilizes their signature strengths at work, they will operate at full capacity and experiencing flow. The work will soon surpass material benefits as an individual's main reason for working. When companies promote flow for their employees, they can become more prosperous and surpass companies that rely solely on monetary rewards. Seligman continues, "work can be prime time for flow because, unlike leisure, it builds many of the conditions of flow into itself. There are usually clear goals and rules of performance. There is frequent feedback about how well or poorly we are doing. Work usually encourages concentration and minimizes distractions, and in many cases, it matches the difficulties to your talents and even your strengths. As a result, people often feel more engaged at work than they do at home."¹³⁰ A good life is one that is characterized by complete absorption of what one does.¹³¹ However, our

¹²⁹ Felicia A Huppert, "Psychological Well-Being: Evidence Regarding Its Causes and Consequences," *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being* 1, no. 2 (2009): 137-164.

¹³⁰ Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," 175.

¹³¹ The Concept of Flow: In the creative process studied by Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi, Csikszentmihalyi was struck by the fact that when work on a painting was going well, the artist persisted single-mindedly, disregarding hunger, fatigue, and discomfort, yet rapidly lost interest in the artistic creation once it had been completed. The origin of Flow research and theory is to understand the intrinsically motivated phenomenon, such as *autotelic*, an activity rewarding in and of itself. It is apart from its end product or any extrinsic good that might result from the activity.

References:

current society argues that we need to separate ourselves from work and achieve a work-life balance.¹³² The classic perception of balance is that work and spare time are two irreconcilable components. Moreover, Raymond Williams argues that “the real dividing line between the things we call work and the things we call leisure is that in leisure, however active we may be, we make our own choices and our own decisions; we feel for the time being that our life is our own.”¹³³ The problem is that, very often, work is fulfilling, since meaningful, engaging work not only fuels our professional achievements but also contributes to the growth of our organization. Work may create a sense of fulfillment that echoes across all our endeavors. Seligman would likely argue that workaholics are not so much addicted to the work as they are gratified by it. Since work provides flow, it provides a high.¹³⁴

Seligman reflects on a large-scale study, which shows that work provides opportunities for individuals to practice and develop strategies for flow. In contrast, leisure-time provides flow only in as much as we are involved with a physically active setting. Csikszentmihalyi reports that flow is known to “produce intense feelings of enjoyment.”¹³⁵ This enjoyable experience will also

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Row, 2009).

Jacob W. Getzels and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Creative Vision: a Longitudinal Study of Problem Finding in Art* (New York: Wiley, 1976).

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Jeanne Nakamura, “The Dynamics of Intrinsic Motivation: A Study of Adolescents,” in *Flow and The Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 175-197.

¹³² Thorsten Lunau et al., “A Balancing Act? Work-Life Balance, Health and Well-Being in European Welfare States,” *European Journal of Public Health* 24, no. 3 (2014): 422-427.

¹³³ Raymond Williams, “Work and Leisure,” *The Listener*, May 25, 1961, 926-927.

¹³⁴ Steven Kotler, *The Rise of Superman: Decoding the Science of Ultimate Human Performance* (Boston: New Harvest, 2014). Kotler’s research in neuroscience shows how flow states are tied to our biology. It is a unique cocktail of performance-enhancing neurochemicals that include norepinephrine, dopamine, anandamide, serotonin, and endorphins surge through our brain and are amplified by Theta and Gamma brain waves.

¹³⁵ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Selega. Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 15.

lead to positive effects and happiness in the long run.¹³⁶ Happiness is derived from optimal experiences and growth, and flow facilitates personal development experiences. Accordingly, “flow occurs when the challenges – big ones as well as the daily issues that you face – mesh well with your abilities.”¹³⁷ Seligman suggests the following steps to achieve more flow in the workplace:

- “Identify your signature strengths
- Choose work that lets you use them every day
- Recraft your present work to use your signature strengths more.
- If you are the employer, choose employees whose signature strengths mesh with the work they will do. If you are a manager, make room to allow employees to recraft the work within the bounds of your goals.”¹³⁸

Love, Marriage & Family

Sigmund Freud was once asked what people need to be happy, and he simply responded “arbeiten und Lieben”¹³⁹ – “Work and Love.” Most of us spend the majority of our time working. Work is a source of meaning for many of us; the lessons for wellbeing that we learn can be applied to other areas of our life. Gill Coombs states that “love can only bring more than a

¹³⁶ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1998).

¹³⁷ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 176.

¹³⁸ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” Ibid.

¹³⁹ David Allen. Karp, *Speaking of Sadness: Depression, Disconnection, and The Meanings of Illness* (New York: Oxford university press, 2017), 326.

fleeting happiness if it is ‘right’ love, and the same is true for work. Wrong work can make a person very unhappy indeed, as can wrong love.”¹⁴⁰

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asserted that we tend to love three different kinds of things; (1) those that are useful, (2) those that are pleasurable, and (3) those that are good. Aristotle defines a differing type of friendships for each of these three categories. The first type of friendship is between two people who find each other useful. They may view their relationship as an opportunity for profit, such as financial gain¹⁴¹. The second level of friendship is between two people who find it pleasurable¹⁴² to be together, such as two college students who enjoy fun nights together. While there is nothing wrong with these two types of friendships, they are self-oriented and dependent on what each person gains from the friendship, such as profit or pleasure. The last type of friendship is based on virtue, and it is the highest and ideal form of friendship. According to Aristotle, with true friendship, they love each other for their own sake, and they wish good things for each other. This kind of friendship is only possible between “good people similar in virtue,” and only good people are capable of loving another person for that person’s own sake. Therefore, the usefulness (utility) or pleasure is not the source of love. True friends feel for each other and love each other for their virtue and character, which makes their friendship based on something enduring. Many friendships are imperfect relationships. These friendships may arise and die quickly because they are based on momentary possessions such as wealth or shared encounters. Hence, when one or both parties cease to find the relationship useful or pleasant, the relationship may cease.

¹⁴⁰ Gill Coombs, *Hearing Our Calling - Rethinking Work and The Workplace* (Harrison Gardens: Floris Books, 2014), 37.

¹⁴¹ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1156a10.

¹⁴² Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1156a15.

In *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman writes that “love is vastly more than affection in return for what we expect to gain (this is no surprise to romantics, but shocking to the theories of social scientists). Work can be a source of a level of gratification that far outstrips wages, and by becoming a calling, it displays the peculiar and wondrous capacity of our species for deep commitment. Love goes one better.”¹⁴³ Social psychologists define three kinds of love, (1) “the love of the people who give us comfort, acceptance, and help and guidance,” such as children’s love for parents. (2) The love we have for people who depend on us for comfort, acceptance, etc. e.g., the love of parents for their children. (3) The “romantic love - the idealization of another-idealizing their strengths and virtues and downplaying their shortcomings.”¹⁴⁴ Accordingly, marriage combines all three types of love. Furthermore, research has demonstrated a correlation between marriage and happiness. The National Opinion Research Center surveyed 35,000 Americans over a 30-year period. The center reported that 40% of married participants claimed they were “very happy,” while only 24% of unmarried, divorced, separated, or widowed participants said they were happy.¹⁴⁵ Diener and Seligman’s study¹⁴⁶ further shows that the top 10% of happy participants are involved in a romantic relationship. Hence, marriage was more influential than job satisfaction and financial status.

Seligman explains that marriage and relationships improve through practicing our strengths and virtues. Couples that appreciate each other’s strengths, don’t dwell on weaknesses, and look on the bright side of their relationship, tend to report higher levels of happiness. In

¹⁴³ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 185.

¹⁴⁴ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 187.

¹⁴⁵ Tom Butler-Bowdon, *50 Psychology Classics: Who We Are, How We Think, What We Do: Insight and Inspiration from 50 Key Books*. (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2007), 225-226.

¹⁴⁶ Ed Diener and Martin E.P. Seligman, “Very Happy People,” *Psychological Science* 13, no. 1 (2002): 81-84.

short, married people live longer, are happier, have better mental health, and are less likely to suffer from long-term illnesses or disabilities.¹⁴⁷ Seligman concludes that “marriage is unique as the arrangement that gives us all three kinds of love under the same umbrella, and it is this property that makes marriage so successful.”¹⁴⁸

Research reports that kids who grow up living with their biological, married parents demonstrate stronger well-being than kids who are living in different scenarios.¹⁴⁹ In stable family settings, family members are more likely to bond regularly and support each other through emotional distress or economic challenges. Family ties can provide stress relief through boosting self-esteem and lessening anxiety, especially for young people who have been exposed to violence or other forms of trauma. Sociometer theory states that humans strive for belongingness, and self-esteem serves as a gauge to measure the effectiveness of social relations.¹⁵⁰ The strong bond of a parent and child can act as a protective shield and offers a sense of belonging in troubled times. Seligman concludes that marriage is not only good for the couple, but also for their offspring since “the children of couples who are married and stay married do better by every known criterion than the children of all other arrangements. ... they have more positive attitudes toward potential mates, and are more interested in long-term relationships than are the children of divorce.”¹⁵¹ He continues to describe how we develop our

¹⁴⁷ Dimiter Philipov and Sergei Scherbov, “Differences by Union Status in Health and Mortality at Older Ages: Results for 16 European Countries,” *Demographic Research* 35 (2016): 535-556.

¹⁴⁸ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 188.

¹⁴⁹ Jane Anderson, “The Impact of Family Structure on the Health of Children: Effects of Divorce,” *Linacre Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2014): 378-387.

¹⁵⁰ Mark R. Leary and Roy F. Baumeister, “The Nature and Function of Self-Esteem: Sociometer Theory,” *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology Volume 32 Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 2000, 1-62.

¹⁵¹ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 188.

style of loving and being loved; these are learned in our childhood through relationships with our parents and other adults. In conclusion, parent behavior and interactions impact how children develop relationships once they become romantically involved adults.

Seligman imparts to us that early childhood is a time of excitement, playfulness, development. Most children have an optimistic outlook, and it's only in "late childhood and early adolescence that stony indifference, chilly torpor, and the pall of dysphoria set in."¹⁵² Seligman states that the first task of parenting is providing children with opportunities to experience positive emotions. He proposes three principles:

- "Positive emotion broadens and builds the intellectual, social, and physical resources that your children to draw upon later in life.
- Augment positive emotions in your children to start an upward spiral of more positive emotion.
- The positive traits that your child displays are just as real and authentic as his or her negative traits."¹⁵³

Seligman concludes that parenting responsibilities should guide a child to the discovery and development of their strengths and virtues. He argues that "positive emotion leads to exploration, which leads to mastery, and mastery leads not only to more positive emotion but to the discovery of your child's signature strengths. So up to about age seven, the main task of positive child-rearing is increasing positive emotion."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," Ibid.

¹⁵³ Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," 212.

¹⁵⁴ Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," 231.

Meaning and Purpose

The central theme of Seligman's *Authentic Happiness* is a positive emotion and how one can cultivate this emotion to achieve happiness. There are three different crucial kinds of positive emotions: the past, future, and present. Seligman believes, "it is entirely possible to cultivate any one of these separate from the others."¹⁵⁵ He suggests cultivating gratitude and forgiveness for increasing positive emotions about the past, and building hope and optimism for increasing positive emotions regarding the future. In terms of establishing positive emotions in the present, Seligman argues for savoring the present moment by remaining intentional and mindful of one's actions. Seligman also makes an interesting and significant distinction between pleasure and gratification. He draws on Aristotle's notion of eudemonia, such that the state of happiness or gratification (eudemonia) is attainable by activity consistent with noble purposes. For example, positive emotions about the present are usually constructed around pleasures and gratifications. One can develop signature strengths and virtues to obtain authentic happiness and abundant gratification.

Seligman turns to his final topic, finding the meaning and purpose of life. The pleasant life, he suggests, is about "positive feelings, supplemented by skills of amplifying these emotions. The good life, in contrast, is not about maximizing positive emotion but is a life wrapped up in successfully using your signature strengths to obtain abundant and authentic gratification. The meaningful life has one additional feature: using your signature strengths in the service of something larger than you are."¹⁵⁶ Individuals need to refocus on their strengths rather than deficits. Seligman avows, "happiness, the goal of positive psychology, is not just about

¹⁵⁵ Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," 248.

¹⁵⁶ Seligman, "Authentic Happiness," 262.

obtaining subjective monetary states. ... signature strengths are the lasting and natural routes to gratification, and so the strengthens and virtues...The gratifications are the route to what I conceive the good life to be.”¹⁵⁷ To live all three lives is to lead a full and happy life. Seligman’s *Authentic Happiness* theories of positive psychology, position emotion, and positive development are profoundly useful and rich in implication. Positive psychology's next challenge is to improve the social and cultural conditions in which people live.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “The Promise of Positive Psychology.,” *Psychological Topics* 18, no. 2 (2009): 203-211.

Chapter 4

Happiness and The Economic Decision

“What’s the use of happiness? It can’t buy you money!”

Henry Youngman - 1998

Aristotle revealed that happiness is the realization of activities in line with virtue.

Seligman states that practicing positive psychology enables us to live a good life. The study of happiness has moved from philosophers to social scientists to psychologists to economists. Over the past decade, numerous researches have illustrated the relationship between economics and happiness. Henry Youngman¹ pronounced if money can’t buy you happiness, why bother? Contemporary society portrays money as the key to a better life and happiness. However, wealth and happiness aren’t mutually exclusive, but can money buy happiness? When we focus on material goods, we become trapped on the *hedonic treadmill*. We work harder and harder to make more and more money - will this lead us to happiness? Studies indicate that people in industrialized countries are not becoming happier over time, despite their economic growth and material goods.² Jean-Jacques Rousseau explained that “since these conveniences by becoming habitual had almost entirely ceased to be enjoyable, and at the same time degenerated into true needs, it became much more cruel to be deprived of them than to possess them was sweet, and men were unhappy to lose them without being happy to possess them.”³ Over time, we will

¹ Lama Marut, *A Spiritual Renegade's Guide to the Good Life* (Hillsboro: Beyond Words, 2012), 129.

² David G. Blanchflower and Andrew J. Oswald, “Well-Being Over Time in Britain and the USA,” *Journal of Public Economics* 88, no. 7 (2004): 1359-1386. Also see - Christopher J. Boyce, Gordon D.A. Brown, and Simon C. Moore, “Money and Happiness: Rank of Income, Not Income, Affects Life Satisfaction,” *Psychological Science* 21, no. 4 (2010): 471-475.

³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 165.

return to our happiness baseline level, regardless of the wealth we attained. In the economic term, this is known as the law of diminishing marginal utility. Hermann Heinrich Gossen introduced the law of diminishing marginal utility in his 1854 publication⁴; Gossen's first law suggested that the benefit or pleasure obtained from each additional consumed input would diminish until satiation was reached. In other words, the law of diminishing marginal utility states that an individual consumes an item (material goods), the satisfaction (utility) that they derive from the product wanes as they consume more and more of that product. Alfred Marshall explained the law as "during the course of consumption, as more and more units of a commodity are used, every successive unit gives utility with a diminishing rate, provided other things remaining the same; although, the total utility increases."⁵ However, the law applies to all of the items we interact with, although many think that money doesn't have diminishing marginal utility. I argue that a \$100 bill would affect a person very differently than someone with \$1 million in the bank; the more money you have, the extra dollars will lose its luster. In sum, over an extended period, the uninterrupted pleasure and satisfaction have led us to a decreasing intensity of happiness and benefit we derive.

What is a good life? How do humanity, morality and happiness fit into an economic system? Religion, philosophy, and modern self-help books have tackled these questions, yet the answer is elusive. In this chapter, I argue that money and happiness are interrelated to a certain extent. To believe that money and happiness are not positively related is problematic. How can you transform the money you earn into living a good life? I will discuss how past and

⁴ Hermann Heinrich Gossen, *The Laws of Human Relations and the Rules of Human Action Derived Therefrom*, trans. Rudolph C. Blitz (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983).

⁵ Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 8th ed. (London: Macmillan and Co, 1920).

contemporary society relate happiness to our economic system and offer some perspectives on how to live a good life.

Natural Law

In order to understand Adam Smith's work as an economist and moral philosopher, it is necessary to understand the difference between ancient and contemporary economic philosophy. In both cases, ideas about nature and reason have a definite impact on the state and economic activity. Smith's seminal works, *Wealth of Nations* (WN) and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS), play an essential role in founding liberal economics and setting up economics as an autonomous sphere of inquiry. It is essential to familiarize ourselves with the 'natural law' terminology in order to understand economic philosophy. In Aristotle's *Physics*, he stated that nature is a cause which directs toward an end or purpose. He expressed that "for those things are natural which, by a continuous movement originated from an internal principle, arrive at some completion: the same completion is not reached from every principle; nor any chance completion, but always the tendency in each is towards the same end, if there is no impediment."⁶ In summary, natural law is a fundamental idea in ancient philosophy when we speak of human nature and human activities that lead to some end. Aristotle wrote, "it is plain then what nature is a cause, a cause that operates for a purpose."⁷ In summary, life - according to nature, is a good life.⁸

⁶ Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). 199b15-18.

⁷ Barnes, "The Complete," 199b32.

⁸ In Leo Strauss's *Natural Right and History*, he stated that "the good life simply, is the life in which the requirements of man's natural inclinations are fulfilled in the proper order to the highest possible degree,...It is the life according to nature....the general character of the good life "the natural law."'" - Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 127. See additional discussion - Richard Kennington, "Strauss's Natural Right and History," *The Review of Metaphysics* 35, no. 1 (1981): 57-86.

Natural law is an ethical philosophical theory that illustrates human being's intrinsic values; these values govern our reasoning and behavior. Natural law concepts maintain that these rules of right and wrong are inherent and are not created by society or court judges. The quest for good and natural law is not purely rationalistic; it does not make logical inferences from contemporary definitions. In the Aristotle era, good was determined through observation of human actions and their consequences, conversation with mature men, and the use of judgment as well as careful reasoning.⁹ Natural law maintains there are universal moral standards that are inherent in humankind through time; these standards should form the basis of a just society. Natural law philosophers do not explicitly concern themselves with economic matters; likewise, economists systematically refrain from making explicit moral value judgments, yet the two are intertwined and consistently present in economics history.

Economics is derived from the Greek word, *Oikos*, meaning "household management," with the "household" consisting of husband, wife, offspring, and slaves.¹⁰ In classical Greece society, economic activity was confined to the household, where it is most properly the work of slaves, not free persons. Aristotle stated that men's proper activities were war, politics, and philosophy, not an economic activity since it violated the intrinsic nature of work. Thus, economics "represents the antithesis of the 'virtue' characteristic of the ideal human type Aristotle wishes to encourage."¹¹ Therefore, the *polis* provided economic prerequisites for commerce activities. The purpose of economic activities was to trade things necessary for life and flourishing. The good life was the moral life of virtue through which human beings attained

⁹ Bartlett, "Aristotle's NE," Ibid.

¹⁰ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," 1253b.

¹¹ Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 7.

happiness. Accordingly, economics is aimed at the good and is fundamentally moral; Aristotle ascertained that economics was embedded in politics¹² and political economy was essential for living a good life. In summary, political economy or economics is “a study of humankind in the ordinary business of life; it examines that part of individual and social action which is most closely connected with the attainment and with the use of the material requisites of wellbeing.”¹³

Medieval philosopher, Thomas Aquinas, followed Aristotle's teaching regarding the private property framework and addressed economic matters in the justice framework. In *Summa Theologica*, he deemed justice as the highest form of virtues and defined it as “a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will.”¹⁴ Similar to Aristotle, Aquinas stressed that an act of justice must be voluntary, and it must be committed intentionally. He added that justice indicates a relationship with another and must be fair to the poor. Aquinas concluded that since each man's due is that which is his own, “the proper act of justice is nothing else than to render to each one his own.”¹⁵

In the 17th century, advocates such as Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, Francisco Suarez, and John Locke concurred with Aquinas' thinking. These philosophers emphasized natural law as an aspect of their economic theories. For example, John Locke argued that people have a natural right to claim unowned resources and land as private property, thereby transforming them into economic goods by mixing them with their labor.¹⁶ It was a cause of

¹² Lord, “Aristotle's Politics,” Book 1.

¹³ Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 8th ed. (London: Macmillan and Co, 1920), 1.

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province*, vol. II (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 1429.

¹⁵ Aquinas, “*Summa Theologica*,” 1436.

¹⁶ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 285-302.

economic growth since private property expansion also increased the net yield to the commonwealth (something Adam Smith later developed). Locke concluded that money fulfilled the need for an imperishable valuation of worth. When backed by labor and a person's natural rights, money became the basis for expansion beyond the subsistence level of property.

Some Broad Generalization – The Emperor Has No Clothes

In our society, economic events often make headlines in the media. These media articles often fail to portray the causes and consequences of these economic events. Thomas Sowell writes that “the underlying principles involved in most economic events are usually not very complicated in themselves, but the political rhetoric and economic jargon in which they are discussed can make these events seem murky. Yet the basic economic principles that would clarify what is happening may remain unknown to most of the public and little understood by many in the media.”¹⁷ People respond to economic questions in different ways. In a free society, several fundamental types of economic systems exist to answer the what, how, and for whom to produce questions. For instance, Adam Smith articulated that people who engage in the production and sale of goods are motivated by a quest for personal gain. Yet, the competitive market was “led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.”¹⁸ In other words, the allocation of a society's resources made the combination of products desired by consumers, with each item produced most efficiently and sold at the lowest possible price.

We can begin to understand economics by first recognizing what economics means and how our society views our contemporary economy. Lionel Robbins defined economics as “the

¹⁷ Thomas Sowell, *Basic Economics: a Common Sense Guide to the Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 1.

¹⁸ Adam Smith, *The Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of the Nations*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 292.

science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses.”¹⁹ Modern economic theory finds the source of economic problems within relative scarcity. Scarcity is a result of our desire to consume goods and services faster than societal production. Economics is not just about dealing with the goods and services output but also about producing output from scarce resources. Modern economies are market economies that focus on how markets help mediate scarcity problems without the use of force, authority, and tradition. Today’s economists study the consequences of our decisions, such as “use of land, labor, capital, and other resources that go into producing the volume of output, which determines a country’s standard of living.”²⁰ For example, when an economist analyzes prices, wages, profits, and the balance of trade, it is from the standpoint of how decisions in various parts of the economy affect the allocation of scarce resources in a way that raises or lowers the material standard of living. Thus, economics is a systematic study of cause and effect, showing the consequences of specific actions.

Income Inequality and Distribution of Wealth

In the past, life satisfaction has been studied with diverse populations to understand the underpinning factors in achieving and sustaining it. There were limited studies on the relationship between macro-level economic conditions and individuals’ life satisfaction. Some earlier studies explored the relationship between income inequality and health, the relationship between income and happiness.²¹ However, recent studies found that income inequality is highly

¹⁹ Lionel Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science* (London: Macmillan, 2007), 15.

²⁰ Sowell, “Basic Economics,” 3.

²¹ S V Subramanian et al., “Income Inequality and Health: Multilevel Analysis of Chilean Communities,” *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 57, no. 11 (2003): 844-848.

Hui Zheng, “Rising U.S. Income Inequality, Gender, and Individual Self-Rated Health, 1972-2004,” *Social Science & Medicine* 69, no. 9 (2009): 1333-1342.

correlated to individual happiness.²² Andrew Clark and Conchita D'Ambrosio report that personal perception of income disparity stems from how much income individuals receive compared to one's reference groups.²³ These findings illustrate that relative rather than absolute income is key to one's social hierarchy rank. As a result, relative income has also been extensively discussed in the field of happiness research from the perspective of social comparison.

In recent decades, income and wealth inequality in the United States has increased sharply. The inequality will also impact our happiness beyond the essential housing, food, quality education, job, and health care. Although social scientists agree that material wealth is not an essential factor in assessing a life lived well. Kim Weeden asserts that “at every education level, women who work full-time have lower median earnings than men who work full-time. Similarly, at every education level, black Americans have just a fraction of the median wealth of white Americans. When you have a system where inequality is rising – and where some groups are perpetually overrepresented at the bottom of the income and wealth distribution, even when they follow the standard prescription for realizing the American Dream – it's a recipe for a politically and socially divided nation.”²⁴ Jiawen Huang's 2018 study indicates that “people are inclined to report more happiness in places where income inequality is lower.”²⁵ Huang concludes that “personal distributive justice beliefs play a momentous role in happiness.

²² Haksoo Ahn et al., “Impact of Income Inequality on Workers' Life Satisfaction in the U.S.: A Multilevel Analysis,” *Social Indicators Research* 128, no. 3 (2015): 1347-1363.

²³ Andrew E. Clark and Conchita D'Ambrosio, “Chapter 13 - Attitudes to Income Inequality: Experimental and Survey Evidence,” in *Handbook of Income Distribution* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 2015), 1147-1208.

²⁴ Kim Weeden, “Census Report: Worsening Inequality a Recipe for Divided Nation,” September 26, 2019, <https://news.cornell.edu/media-relations/tip-sheets/census-report-worsening-inequality-recipe-divided-nation>.

²⁵ Jiawen Huang, “Income Inequality, Distributive Justice Beliefs, and Happiness in China: Evidence from a Nationwide Survey,” *Social Indicators Research* 142, no. 1 (2018): 83-105.

Specifically, as an effective social psychological mechanism, they can alleviate the negative effects of income inequality on happiness.”²⁶ In other words, people who believe the world treats them fairly will be happier and expect their lives to be orderly, meaningful, and controllable.²⁷ In sum, people will be happier when they feel they got what they deserve.

A recent Pew Research Center survey reports that about six-in-ten adults stated there is a high level of economic inequality in the United States. Most say addressing it requires significant changes to the country’s economic system.²⁸ Although income inequality affects wealth distribution has been the subject of a great deal of research, no clear consensus has emerged. The effects on wealth distribution are indeed neither uniform nor straightforward across nations; additional research needs to be conducted in the context of happiness and will be a crucial step toward a better understanding of how wealth distribution and income growth affects happiness.

This chapter focuses on broad economic and philosophical issues related to happiness, giving specific attention to questions of fairness, justice, and equity.

²⁶ Huang, “Income Inequality,” 83.

²⁷ Robbie M. Sutton and Karen M. Douglas, “Justice for All, or Just for Me? More Evidence of the Importance of the Self-Other Distinction in Just-World Beliefs,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 39, no. 3 (2005): 637-645.

²⁸ Juliana Menasce, Ruth Horowitz, and Rakesh Kochhar, “Trends in U.S. Income and Wealth Inequality,” Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project, August 17, 2020, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2020/01/09/trends-in-income-and-wealth-inequality/>.

Adam Smith

Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, was a Scottish philosopher and economist. He was one of the most influential thinkers and economists in addressing how humans value the needs of work, happiness, social interactions, and economic systems. Smith followed the views of his mentor, Francis Hutcheson,²⁹ who divided moral philosophy into four parts: (1) ethics and virtue, (2) private rights and natural liberty, (3) familial rights (economics), and (4) state and individual rights (politics). Smith described a "system of natural liberty" as being the matrix of true wealth. Many of Smith's ideas are still taught in today's economics courses, such as his three natural laws of economics, (1) the law of self-interest, (2) the law of competition, and (3) the law of supply and demand.

In Smith's 1759, "*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*" (TMS), he argued that happiness comes from exercising virtue, not from maximizing consumption.³⁰ Smith viewed happiness as the final, most important goal for an individual's well-being. Therefore, adequate consumption is necessary but not a sufficient condition of human happiness. Smith expressed that "happiness consists in tranquility and enjoyment. Without tranquility there can be no enjoyment, and where there is perfect tranquility there is scarce anything which is not capable of amusing."³¹ He stated that a reasonable amount of consumption is necessary for happiness, and rationalized that "the preservation and healthful state of the body seem to be the objects which nature first recommends to the care of every individual. The appetites of hunger and thirst, the agreeable or disagreeable sensations of pleasure and pain, of heat and cold, etc. may be considered as lessons

²⁹ Douglas E. Stevens, *Social Norms and the Theory of the Firm - A Foundational Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 92.

³⁰ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Middletown: Pantianos Classics, 2020), 116-141.

³¹ Smith, "TMS," 63.

delivered by the voice of nature herself, directing him what he ought to choose, and what he ought to avoid.”³² Smith recommended we should care about our physical well-being and take part as active consumers. However, overconsumption negatively impacts modern society. Today, we consume an ever-increasing amount of goods and services, such as automobiles, houses, appliances, computers, furniture, books, travel, and entertainment. The list of consumable goods and services humans depend upon is endless. Our modern economic system is based on the continued consumption model; corporations produce more and more to satisfy consumer wants and needs. Thus, this system creates excessive pollution and waste. Alicia Bárcena Ibarra³³ states that “the alarming rate at which materials are now being extracted is already having a severe impact on human health and people’s quality of life and show that the prevailing patterns of production and consumption are unsustainable.”³⁴ This overconsumption and continuous production will eventually deplete our natural resources that propel our economies and lift people out of poverty. She concludes that “a prosperous and equitable world that overcomes these problems will require transformative changes in how we live our lives and how we consume materials.”³⁵ This concurs with Smith’s assertion that “consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to only so far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer.”³⁶ Smith stated that the accurate

³² Smith, “TMS,” 92.

³³ Alicia Bárcena Ibarra is an Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for the United Nations.

³⁴ Moira O'Brien-Malone, “Worldwide Extraction of Materials Triples in Four Decades, Intensifying Climate Change and Air Pollution,” Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL, October 12, 2017), <https://www.cepal.org/en/comunicados/la-extraccion-mundial-materiales-se-triplico-cuatro-decadas-agudiza-cambio-climatico-la>.

³⁵ O'Brien-Malone, “Worldwide Extraction,” Ibid.

³⁶ Smith, “WN,” 376.

measurement of a nation's wealth is not the size of its king's treasury or the holdings of an affluent few, but instead the wages of "the laboring poor."³⁷ However, at the time of Smith's writing, he did not anticipate the enormous growth of today's population and consumption. During Smith's time, economists focused on household consumption and paid little regard to the industrial use of resources.

The modern economy is built around consumption; financial pundits and politicians repeatedly tell us that consumption is an "engine" that "drives" economic growth because it makes up 70% of GDP.³⁸ These consumptions are built around raw material utilization, such as trees, gas, oil, metal ores, etc. Alex Kirby states the amount of the planet's natural resources extracted for human use has tripled in 40 years.³⁹ For example, our smartphone contains cobalt from Africa, copper from Chile, and aluminum from Australia. Debora Patta of CBS News reports that about 40,000 children worked in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) mines, more than half of the world's cobalt supply comes from DRC, and 20 percent of the cobalt is mined by hand.⁴⁰ A 2016 Amnesty report indicates that cobalt mined by children was ending up in products from technology companies such as Apple, Microsoft, Tesla, and Samsung. The soaring demand for cobalt is often met by workers, including children, who labor in harsh and

³⁷ Smith, "WN," Book 1, Chapter VIII.

³⁸ Peter Cohan, "Consumer Spending Is Keeping the Economy From Shrinking - But a New Survey of 10,000 Americans Says That Might End in 2020," December 4, 2019, <https://www.inc.com/peter-cohan/consumer-spending-is-keeping-economy-from-shrinking-but-a-new-survey-of-10000-americans-says-that-might-end-in-2020.html>.

³⁹ Alex Kirby, "Human Consumption of Earth's Natural Resources Has Tripled in 40 Years," July 29, 2016, <https://www.ecowatch.com/humans-consumption-of-earths-natural-resources-tripled-in-40-years-1943126747.html>.

⁴⁰ Debora Patta, ed., "The Toll of the Cobalt Mining Industry on Health and the Environment," CBS News, March 3, 2016, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-toll-of-the-cobalt-mining-industry-congo/>.

Todd C. Frankel, "This Is Where Your Smartphone Battery Begins," The Washington Post, September 30, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/batteries/congo-cobalt-mining-for-lithium-ion-battery/>.

dangerous conditions. The mining activity also exposes local communities to the toxic level, including breathing problems and birth defects, deaths, and injuries common in the DRC.

In sum, overconsumption worsens climate breakdown, increases air pollution and living standards. It exhausts our planet's life support systems that provide us with fresh water and leave us short of materials critical to our health and quality of life. Tommy Wiedmann concludes that "the key conclusion from our review is that we cannot rely on technology alone to solve existential environmental problems – like climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution – but that we also have to change our affluent lifestyles and reduce overconsumption, in combination with structural change."⁴¹ In other words, there is a link between today's wealth, economy, and associated impacts that will impact our well-being and happiness.

The Law of Self Interest

The free-market theories of economics date back to the latter half of the eighteenth century. In TMS, Smith stated that "how selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it."⁴² His axiom is based on observing how human beings actually behave rather than on the principles of a *perfect being* who exists only in the imagination.⁴³ Furthermore, in WN, he claimed that free trade among the members of a society inevitably leads to an outcome that is

⁴¹ Thomas Wiedmann et al., "Scientists' Warning on Affluence," *Nature Communications* 11, no. 1 (2020).

⁴² Smith, "TMS," 92.

⁴³ Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 8th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 2013), 627. In particular, the basic behavioral assumptions are said to be purely axiomatic or, at the most, only supported by very casual observation. Smith's "highest claim to have made an epoch in thought is that he was the first to make a careful and scientific inquiry into the manner in which value measures human motive, on the one side measuring the desire of purchasers to obtain wealth, and on the other the efforts and sacrifices (or 'Real Cost of Production') undergone by its producers"(p. 627).

good for the society as a whole, even though each individual pursues only his own selfish gain. Smith wrote, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our necessities but of their advantages."⁴⁴ He argued that the individual pursuit of economic self-interest, unhindered by government interference, would promote economic, social well-being, and the free market would result in social progress, "as if by an invisible hand."

Why does the baker choose to bake? The answer is self-interest. Smith revealed that self-interest is a powerful force that connects a man's ethical and economic conduct. The baker must earn adequate funds to provide for his family, but he also wants to purchase the goods he desires. The most valuable way for the baker to achieve his goal, is to bake bread to sell. His bread must be delicious and his service hospitable, such that customers are willing to give up money in exchange for his product. Smith stated that free trade among the members of a society inevitably will lead to a good outcome for society, despite the fact that each individual pursues only his own selfish gain. He argued that the self-interested individual unintentionally maximizes the wealth of society for all citizens.

Smith further believed that government intervention and regulations of the economy were neither necessary nor beneficial. Although government intervention and regulations are intended to protect, they are less effective in a freely operating market economy. In many cases, it is harmful to the people to deny them the benefits of an unencumbered marketplace. Scotland and the United States are much more prosperous today than they were in the eighteenth century, and our commerce activities are more regulated. Today, we use regulated materials to construct our

⁴⁴ Smith, "WN," 22.

dwelling. Our means of transportation, such as cars, buses, and airplanes, are made, sold, driven, and maintained under heavy government regulation. The government even heavily regulates the school curriculum. I argue that not all regulation is bad. For example, regulations that focus on the essential workers' rights or consumer safety are often beneficial to individuals and outweigh the costs associated with the regulation. However, many of today's regulations are beyond basic safety and protect established corporations without providing safety benefits to workers, consumers, and potential entrepreneurs in the process. Dustin Chambers, Patrick McLaughlin, and Laura Stanley's 2017 research found that regulations promote higher consumer prices and adverse effect on low-income households. Conversely, the wealthiest households allocate more of their spending on goods and services that are subject to fewer regulations.⁴⁵ In summary, a well-intentioned regulation often gratifies toward the wealthy by regulating otherwise negligible risks and increasing the prices of regulated goods and services; such regulations are likely to have a disproportionately adverse or regressive effect on the poor.

This births a question - doesn't self-interest lead to price gouging, corruption, and cheating? In an open economic system, self-interest is often held in check by competition. For example, if I were a baker, the only way I would be able to earn business is to produce better, cheaper bread and superior customer service than my competitors. Thus, competition is the regulator, a check on self-interest because it restrains my ability to take advantage of my customers.

The economic discussion of self-interest and competition usually results in a discussion of government regulation's proper role. If self-interest is the driving force of economic

⁴⁵ Dustin Chambers, Courtney A. Collins, and Alan Krause, "How Do Federal Regulations Affect Consumer Prices? An Analysis of the Regressive Effects of Regulation," *Public Choice* 180, no. 1-2 (September 2017): 57-90.

prosperity, then competition maintains the system of self-adjusting markets. Some economists perceive a market economy as mostly self-regulating⁴⁶ and assuming enough firms are competing in the market to be a check on self-interest. Others point to examples of fraud where competition has failed to be an adequate check on self-interest, such as the 2008 financial crisis.⁴⁷ However, some economists argue that the government must take a more active role in regulating economic activity. Self-regulation enables firms to decide the safety products and services are safe for the public when those companies have an overwhelming incentive to make products and services merely appear safe such that they can reach the market. It is the reason why industry self-regulation doesn't work. In WN, Smith clearly expressed that the violations of natural liberty are unjust. He demonstrated how removing restrictions on free-market forces would significantly increase the total product of the economy and generate rapid economic growth, thereby improving the laboring classes.⁴⁸

In Smith's view, the greatest hindrance to economic progress was government regulation.⁴⁹ Self-interest in a free society would lead to rapid progress and optimal national growth. He advocated for a laissez-faire capitalist system and argued that self-interest, competition, and "supply and demand" are vital economic forces and the motivator of economic activities; together they form what Smith called the invisible hand. Therefore, it was

⁴⁶ Saule T. Omarova, "Wall Street as Community of Fate: Toward Financial Industry Self-Regulation," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 159, no. 2 (2011): 411-49.

⁴⁷ Eric Helleiner and Stefano Pagliari, "The End of Self-Regulation? Hedge Funds and Derivatives in Global Financial Governance," in *Global Finance in Crisis: The Politics of International Regulatory Change* (London: Routledge, 2010), 56-74.

⁴⁸ Smith, "WN," 11-31 on the division of labor; 121-22 on apprenticeship requirements.

⁴⁹ Smith's attack on government regulations as aimed, at the time, at those that favored the merchants and the monarchs within the mercantile system and countered to his proposed system of a natural, liberal market economic system.

unnecessary for the government to either aid or hamper businesses. I don't believe Smith was a proponent of greed. In contemporary society, human behavior is dominated by economics and self-interest. However, ethical standards require a moral outlook beyond the dominant self-interest framework. Most people have both a benevolent and self-interested attitude, even if self-love is a necessary condition to undertake genuine morality.

The Division of Labor

Economic growth, according to Smith, is rooted in the increasing division of labor.⁵⁰ The *division of labor* concept combines specialization and partition of a complex production task into several sub-tasks. Under this system, each worker becomes an expert in one isolated area of production, thus increasing production efficiency. Smith wrote, “the greatest improvement in the productive powers of labor, and the greatest part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is anywhere directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labor.”⁵¹ The development of assembly-line manufacturing methodology also made it necessary for workers to focus their attention on one small part of the process to increase the overall production outputs.

The concept contrasted with Plato's assertion that all humans are born with different abilities that are convenient to practice in specific jobs. In Plato's *Republic*, he revealed that “natural” inequality of humanity is embodied in the division of labor, he wrote “well then, how will our state supply these needs? It will need a farmer, a builder, and a weaver, and also, I think, a shoemaker and one or two others to provide for our bodily needs. So that the minimum state

⁵⁰ Smith, “WN,” 11-31.

⁵¹ Smith, “WN,” 11.

would consist of four or five men....”⁵² However, Smith foresaw the essence of industrialism by determining that division of labor represents a quantitative increase in productivity. He suggested that these abilities have “much less than we are aware of; and the very different genius which appears to distinguish men of different professions, when grown up to maturity, is not upon many occasions so much the cause, as the effect of the division of labour. The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom, and education.”⁵³ Smith further argued that the difference between a street porter and a philosopher was as much a consequence of the division of labor as its cause. For Plato, the level of specialization determined by the division of labor was externally determined. In Plato’s *Republic*, he stressed the necessity of specialization by virtue of human nature. He further illustrated the importance of the division of labor played a central role in the emergence of cities.

On the other hand, in his *Economist*, Xenophon emphasizes the importance of labor division for enhancing productivity while showing its negative impact on craftsmen as a disadvantage to society. For Smith, it was the dynamic engine of economic progress. However, Smith recognized the potential problems of this development and pointed out that forcing individuals to perform mundane and repetitious tasks would lead to an ignorant, dissatisfied workforce.

In sum, Plato’s views on the division of labor were different from that of Adam Smith in many ways. First, Smith’s labor division is influenced by the market, whereas Plato’s division of

⁵² In Aristotle, *The Republic*, 103. On the use of labor division in Plato and Smith: Plato’s was natural and a means to maintain stability and order in the *polis* while Smith’s was more specifically to an efficiency-enhancing concept, such as increased labor productivity hence nation’s wealth.

⁵³ Smith, “WN,” 23.

labor influences the market. Second, Smith stated that the division of labor benefited the workers and community, whereas Plato believed such division is advantageous to society as a whole. Lastly, Plato articulated that different skills and talents lead to labor division; Smith concluded that the division of labor itself leads to differences in talents and skills.

Fairness, Justice, and Equity

Smith stated, “every man is rich or poor according to the degree in which he can afford to enjoy the necessities, conveniences, and amusements of human life. (...) The far greater part of them he must derive from the labor of other people, and he must be rich or poor according to the quantity of that labor which he can command, or which he can afford to purchase. The value of any commodity, therefore, to the person who possesses it, and who means not to use or consume it himself, but to exchange it for other commodities, is equal to the quantity of labor which it enables him to purchase or command. Labor, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities. (...) skills.”⁵⁴

Is this process fair for workers? The specialization of individual tasks can also lead workers to concentrate on certain subtasks and earn more. Smith understood the importance of matching worker skills with tasks in the manufacturing environment. For example, pin makers were organized in the pin factory with one making the head, another the body, each using different equipment. Thus, making a pin is divided by many distinct operations, which may produce more. Smith theorized if a factory was to produce 48,000 pins a day and ten people work in the manufacturing operation, each person might be said to have made 4,800 pins that day.⁵⁵ Smith wrote that if each worker had tried to make pins by themselves, they might not have

⁵⁴ Smith, “WN,” 36.

⁵⁵ Smith, “WN,” 12.

produced a single pin. Similarly, Smith emphasized that diverse skills, combined with suitable equipment, can also be applied to other industries. However, increasing specialization could also lead to workers having more mediocre overall skills and a lack of enthusiasm for their work. Smith recognized this potential problem and advocated for workforce education so that workers wouldn't be demoralized by their repetitive job.

On the other hand, Karl Marx described the division of the labor process as hostility to workers and argued that the process created less-skilled workers. He reasoned that as the work becomes more specialized, less training is needed for each specific job, and the workforce, overall, is less skilled than if one worker did one job entirely.⁵⁶ He stated that when workers become more and more specialized and work repetitious, this eventually leads to complete alienation. Marx continued, the worker is “depressed spiritually and physically to the condition of a machine and from being a man becomes an abstract activity and a belly, so he also becomes ever more dependent on every fluctuation in market price, on the application of capital, and on the whim of the rich.”⁵⁷ Further, he believed that production's fullness is essential to human liberation and accepted the idea of a strict division of labor only as a temporary necessary evil. In other words, some forms of labor division are purely technical (economic) necessary, but others are purely as social control functions related to a class and status hierarchy.

The division of labor helped economies grow during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Firms could employ fewer skilled workers instead of well-paid artisans, thus reducing production costs and increasing profits. However, this process does not necessarily lead to

⁵⁶ Karl Marx, *Wage-Labor and Capital*, trans. Harriet E. Lothrop (New York: New York Labor News Co., 1946).

⁵⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 24.

declining skills among the working population. The original division of labor objective was the human propensity to exchange goods and services with one another; this framework was the best way to maximize the satisfaction of that propensity. Furthermore, Smith recognized that higher wages for laborers would translate into a new taste for luxury and lead to dissatisfaction with previous conditions. What is more, the claim was that high wages would tend to sap industriousness and incentivize laziness. But Smith rejected such claims on the grounds of human flourishing. He wrote, what improves the more significant part's circumstances can never be regarded as inconvenient to the whole. Thus, “no society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable.”⁵⁸

Over the past twenty years, the United States income inequality has grown⁵⁹, and inequality is widely accepted as inevitable in today’s society. For the past two decades, most efforts to address poverty in our society are frequently derailed by misguided ideology, especially the notion that poverty is best understood through the lens of inequality and higher taxation for the top income earners. But why has income inequality been naturalized? From the 1970s, anti-tax narratives⁶⁰ have framed government intervention as violating free-market principles, linking this idea to the original text that defined market discourse in the *Wealth of Nations* publication. The default assumption that Smith accepted an inequality in our society as the necessary trade-off for a more prosperous economy is wrong. Smith’s system precluded

⁵⁸ Smith, “WN,” Book V, Chapter I, Part III, Article II, 764, para. 15.

⁵⁹ Ana Kent, Lowell R. Ricketts, and Ray Boshara, “Wealth Inequality in America: Key Facts & Figures: St. Louis Fed,” *Wealth Inequality in America: Key Facts & Figures - St. Louis Fed* (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, December 5, 2019), <https://www.stlouisfed.org/open-vault/2019/august/wealth-inequality-in-america-facts-figures>.

⁶⁰ Scott W. Rasmussen, *The People's Money: How Voters Would Balance the Budget and Eliminate the Federal Debt* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2012), 140.

steep inequalities not out of a normative concern with equality but by virtue of the design that aimed to maximize nations' wealth.⁶¹ Smith was sometimes ridiculed as someone who saw no role for government in economic life. He believed that ordinary citizens should manage most of their affairs, and governments should play a smaller role in their daily life. Smith wrote, the government had three crucial functions within our society, (1) national defense, (2) administration of justice (law and order), and (3) the provision of certain public goods (e.g., transportation infrastructure and basic and applied education).⁶²

In a 2018 World Bank study, the report indicated that extreme global poverty fell to a new low of 10% in 2015.⁶³ Some economists would argue that the government has redistributed wealth for stability and regulation to limit inequality. However, some believe it is unrealistic for the government in the twenty-first century to adhere to the limited government roles as envisioned by Smith. The market economic system has transformed our society into a more prosperous nation. I concur with Smith's assertion that profits should be low and labor wages high, legislation in favor of the worker is "always just and equitable," land should be distributed widely and evenly, inheritance laws should partition fortunes, taxation can be high if it is equitable.⁶⁴ In sum, labor division in a free market society will generate equitable compensation for honest and hardworking workers, regardless of the task being performed.

⁶¹ Smith, "WN," Book I, Chapter VIII.

⁶² Smith, "WN," Book V.

⁶³ "Decline of Global Extreme Poverty Continues but Has Slowed," World Bank, September 19, 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/09/19/decline-of-global-extreme-poverty-continues-but-has-slowed-world-bank>.

⁶⁴ Deborah Boucoyannis, "The Equalizing Hand: Why Adam Smith Thought the Market Should Produce Wealth Without Steep Inequality," *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 4 (2013): 1052.

The Globalization and Free Trade

In WN, Smith wrote, "In every country it always is and must be the interest of the great body of the people to buy whatever they want of those who sell it cheapest. (...) it is the interest of the merchants and manufacturers of every country to secure the home market's monopoly."⁶⁵ However, Smith continued "(...) in most other European countries, the extraordinary duties upon almost all goods imported by alien merchants. (...) the high duties and prohibitions upon all those foreign manufactures which can come into competition with our own. (...) the extraordinary restraints upon the importation of almost all sorts of goods from those countries with which the balance of trade is supposed to be disadvantageous."⁶⁶ I believe Smith made a case for free trade and warned against domestic producers that sought protectionism. For example, Jim Edwards reports that "In 1690, the UK imposed a 25% import tax on all goods coming from France to Britain. France responded likewise. For the next 200 years, until about 1860, British people who wanted to drink French wine paid 25% more per bottle than anyone else. Trade between the two countries almost vanished (except for brandy, which for some reason was exempt)."⁶⁷

Smith viewed globalization as another method of utilizing the international division of labor. Just as individuals gain from specialization, so do nations. He wrote, "The natural advantages which one country has over another in producing particular commodities are sometimes so great that it is acknowledged by all the world to be in vain to struggle with them.

⁶⁵ Smith, "WN," 307

⁶⁶ Smith, "WN," 307.

⁶⁷ Jim Edwards, "Adam Smith's Story About the Scottish Wine Industry 241 Years Ago Tells You Why Trump's Trade War Will Fail," Business Insider, July 2, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-free-trade-explained-trump-global-trade-war-2017-6>.

By means of glasses, hotbeds, and hotwalls, very good grapes can be raised in Scotland, and very good wine too can be made of them at about thirty times the expense for which at least equally good can be brought from foreign countries. Would it be a reasonable law to prohibit the importation of all foreign wines, merely to encourage the making of claret and burgundy in Scotland?"⁶⁸ In short, there is no need to grow grapes in Scotland when they are plentiful in France. Like dividing labor on a microeconomic scale, countries should also utilize their competencies to produce trade products. Therefore, restrictions on trade inevitably make both countries less prosperous. He continued, legislators think too much of themselves when they believe that they can direct production better than the market by intervening. Smith argued for giving an individual the freedom to produce and exchange goods as they pleased (free trade). Nations need to open their market to domestic and foreign competition; people's natural self-interest would promote greater prosperity than with the government's regulations. He believed the nation's specialization in production would also increase workers' income and nations' wealth. The more workers specialized in what they do, the better they become at doing it. Furthermore, larger scales of production are more efficient than smaller production, since it allows workers in the manufacturing process to get better and better at their specific task. Through these continuously improved manufacturing cycles, companies are able to improve production outputs, thus increasing national wealth.

The first wave of globalization started during Smith's era. The British government granted permission to individual companies and industries to trade internationally for specific goods.⁶⁹ Smith wrote, "the policy of Europe, by not leaving things at perfect liberty, occasions

⁶⁸ Smith, "WN," 294

⁶⁹ In WN, Smith discussed the irrationalities and injustices of companies operated in Scotland and home countries and abroad. Most of the international trade companies were state-granted monopolies in the slave trade

other inequalities of much greater importance. First by restraining the competition in some employments to a smaller number than would otherwise be disposed to enter into them; secondly, by increasing it in others beyond what it naturally would be; and, thirdly, by obstructing the free circulation of labor and stock, both from employment to employment and place to place. The exclusive privileges of corporations are the principal means by which it makes use of for this purpose."⁷⁰ However, in Smith's system of liberty and the parallel rising tide of opulence through the specialization of labor, there was no place for government in the market. Smith articulated that trade is conducted between peoples, not between nations. Whether or not people live in different nations is almost secondary. The only reason that political boundaries become essential is when the nation-state inhibits trade.

This principle remains the basis of free trade today. It is more efficient for a nation to specialize in one industry (trade) and export its surplus to others. Globalization brings the world together in nations' production and consumption of services, goods, brand names, as well as knowledge.⁷¹ Mercantilism holds that nation's prosperity depends on its supply of capital, and the nation's "capital can be increased mainly through a positive balance of trade with other nations."⁷² In WN, Smith argued that the nation's wealth was reflected by its production capacity, not in its holdings of precious metals. He further demonstrated that free trade benefits both

industry. During Smith's writing, the mercantile system served merchants and producers' interests, such as the British East India Company, whose activities were protected or encouraged by the state. Also see - Sankar Muthu, "Adam Smith's Critique of International Trading Companies," *Political Theory* 36, no. 2 (2008): 185-212.

⁷⁰ Smith, "WN," 117.

⁷¹ Wei-Bin Zhang, *International Trade Theory: Capital, Knowledge, Economic Structure, Money, and Prices Over Time* (Berlin: Springer, 2008), 2.

⁷² Zhang, "International Trade," 2. Note: From the 16th to 18th centuries, "capital" is represented by gold or silver held by the state. Today, our society measures the wealth of the nation through human, human-made, and natural resources.

parties (nations). Rather than a zero-sum game, Smith argued that international trade is a positive-sum game. He maintained the division of labor and specialization in production results in economies of scale, which improves efficacy and growth. This principle is the same when applied to individuals, families, cities, and nations. Even Marx recognized exchange was needed based on the nation's specializations and stated: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."⁷³

The Law of Competition

In WN, Smith observed that farmers, producers, and merchants are essential agents of economic growth. He wrote, "when by the improvement and cultivation of land the labour of one family can provide food for two, the labour of half the society becomes sufficient to provide food for the whole."⁷⁴ It was the free trade, enterprise, and competition that led farmers, producers, and merchants to expand the market and which, in turn, made the economic development inter-related. The development of the 18th-century agricultural activities led to an increase in construction works and commerce. When agricultural surplus arises as a result of economic development, the demand for trade, goods, services, and manufactured articles arises. Modern economists deem competition helps drive the labor forces forward to be more productive and increase firms' profit. Without competition, firms have little incentive to innovate and invest. The world bank survey reports that large firms in developing (poor) countries tend to be more productive and more likely to export than their smaller rivals.⁷⁵ Joachim Wagner's research

⁷³ John Cunningham Wood, ed., *Karl Marx's Economics: Critical Assessments* (London: Routledge, 1998), 164.

⁷⁴ WN, Ibid., 152.

⁷⁵ "Not Just a First-World Problem; Emerging Markets," *The Economist* 434 (January 2020): 71-73.

indicated that firms who export their products are more productive than non-exporters.⁷⁶ Such that knowledge flow from international buyers to competitors helps improve firms employees' expertise related to foreign markets that non-exporters do not have.⁷⁷ Chiara Criscuolo, Jonathan E. Haskel, and Matthew J. Slaughter's 2010 study concur with the above assertion.⁷⁸ More importantly, firms that are globally engaged generate more ideas than domestic-only firms since these firms have access to a more massive stock of ideas through sources, including their upstream and downstream interaction with suppliers and customers. Making markets more open to foreign competition will drive the labor forces to be more productive, in turn, increasing the wages of the manufacturing workers.

Smith believed that the competition would yield better quality and reasonably priced goods and services for consumers. He expressed that if there was no competition in the creation of a specific product, there would be no reason to focus on creating a quality product. Smith wrote, “the natural price, therefore, is, as it were, the central price, to which the prices of all commodities are continually gravitating. Different accidents may sometimes keep them suspended a good deal above it, and sometimes force them down even somewhat below it. But whatever may be the obstacles which hinder them from settling in this center of repose and continuance, they are constantly tending towards it.”⁷⁹ However, Smith argued against monopolies, and stated that, “the price of monopoly is upon every occasion the highest that can

⁷⁶ Joachim Wagner, “Exports and Productivity: A Survey of the Evidence from Firm-Level Data,” *The World Economy* 30, no. 1 (2007): 60-82.

⁷⁷ Bee Yan Aw, Sukkyun Chung, and Mark J. Roberts, “Productivity and Turnover in the Export Market: Micro-Level Evidence from the Republic of Korea and Taiwan (China),” *The World Bank Economic Review* 14, no. 1 (2000): 65-90.

⁷⁸ Chiara Criscuolo, Jonathan E. Haskel, and Matthew J. Slaughter, “Global Engagement and The Innovation Activities of Firms,” *International Journal of Industrial Organization* 28, no. 2 (2010): 191-202.

⁷⁹ Smith, “WN,” 56.

be got. The natural price, or the price of free competition, on the contrary, is the lowest which can be taken, not upon every occasion indeed, but for considerable time altogether. The one is upon every occasion the highest which can be squeezed out of the buyers, or which, it is supposed, they will consent to give: The other is the lowest which the sellers can commonly afford to take, and at the same time continue their business.”⁸⁰ Although a monopoly industry keeps the market price above the natural price, market competition inclines to maintain the natural price. However, prices could remain above the natural price if there are no competitors or substitutions. The monopoly can charge a higher price than if they were in a competitive environment. Thus, competition leads to an efficient organization of production and lower prices for consumers.

The Law of Supply and Demand

In WN, Smith wrote that wages were determined in the marketplace through the law of supply and demand. Workers and employers would naturally follow their self-interest and labor would be attracted to the jobs where labor was most needed, resulting in employment conditions that ultimately benefited society.

N. Gregory Mankiw states that supply and demand are relationships between the quantity of a commodity that producers wish to sell at different prices and the quantity that consumers wish to purchase.⁸¹ It is the essential pricing model in today’s economic theory. The supply and demand theory centers on the proposition that a free, competitive market does successfully generate forward fair market price for goods and services. This proposition is often seen as the most critical implication of Smith’s invisible hand. Although Smith discussed many elements

⁸⁰ Smith, “WN,” 60.

⁸¹ N. Gregory. Mankiw, *Principles of Economics* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2018), 63-69.

central to employment in WN, he gave no precise analysis of the supply of and demand for labor, nor did he weave them into a consistent theoretical pattern. However, he did argue the quality of worker skills was the central determinant of economic advancement.⁸²

In WN, Smith discussed the natural price of goods and services. He summarized several ways⁸³ in which the market price, the price governed by supply and demand, may vary from the natural price. He wrote, “when the price of any commodity is neither more nor less than what is sufficient to pay the rent of the land, the wages of the labor, and the profits of the stock employed in raising, preparing, and bringing it to market, according to their natural rates, the commodity is then sold for what may be called its natural price.”⁸⁴ Smith continued with two essential points regarding natural price, first that the natural price is “precisely . . . what it is worth, or . . . what [a commodity] really costs the person who brings it to market.” Second, it “is not always the lowest at which a dealer may sometimes sell his goods, it is the lowest at which he is likely to sell them for any considerable time.”⁸⁵ He imagined that the quantities of products influenced prices demanded and supplied in markets, not just by the ordinary (or average) rates of profit, wages, and rent. Smith expressed that these prices were natural. Still, they were not natural in the sense of what was needed for physical labor and production wages. He further argued that the natural rate of wages would tend to be sufficient for the self-preservation of individuals. Smith wrote, “there are certain circumstances, however, which sometimes give the laborers an advantage, and enable them to raise their wages considerably above this rate;

⁸² Smith, “WN,” Ibid.

⁸³ Smith, “WN,” Book 1, Chapter VIII.

⁸⁴ Smith, “WN,” 53.

⁸⁵ Smith, “WN,” 54.

evidently the lowest which is consistent with common humanity.”⁸⁶ This did not mean the minimum necessary for biological survival; he distinguished between a component of the wage that was necessary for physical survival with a societal component, which varied across countries. Smith stated, “By necessities I understand, not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without.”⁸⁷ Accordingly, wages may be called natural rates. Smith acknowledged that the natural rate of wages was not natural. In summary, the supply and demand theory may be applied to markets goods and services or markets for labor, capital, and other production factors. The theory can also apply to firms and industries, as well as the aggregate level for the entire economy.

Commercial society faces a profound dilemma. The modern calculus of economics that looks at material costs and benefits alone is flawed. Smith asserted that our relentless pursuit of wealth is a major obstacle to tranquility, contentment, and well-being. At first glance, the higher living standards one enjoys in commercial society seem to come only at the cost of our happiness.⁸⁸ He posited that happiness comes from exercising virtue, not from maximizing consumption. In other words, adequate consumption is necessary but not a sufficient condition of human happiness. Smith further viewed happiness as the final, most important goal for an individual's well-being.

⁸⁶ Smith, “WN,” 67.

⁸⁷ Smith, “WN,” V.ii.k.3, 451.

⁸⁸ Peter Singer, *How Are We to Live?: Ethics in An Age of Self-Interest* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1995), 52.

Hannah Arendt

In *the Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt divided life into three activities: labor, work, and action. According to Arendt, labor was alienating drudge work done to maintain material existence, and work was exemplified by the creative activity of artists, craftsmen, and intellectuals. Simultaneously, the action was exclusive to the political sphere, where people exercised their collective power through the process of debate and the enactment of laws. Arendt contended that the public forum was where one had the freedom to express one's ideas, thus uniting with others.⁸⁹ One must differentiate between the private and public realm.⁹⁰ Similar to Aristotle, the household was the private realm where man labored and worked. For the householder to achieve happiness, they must be free of servitude to provide for life necessities. Accordingly, slaves freed the householder from having to labor so that the householder could immerse himself in public affairs. For Arendt, this stands in stark opposition to the modern world. She provided insight into how human beings acted in the modern world, such that despite pluralism, human beings strived to look like and talk like one another. She wrote that socially acceptable and politically correct behavior replaced authentic action as the foremost mode of human relationships. Today, society is ruled by "an invisible hand," which assigns no personal responsibility to human beings, only to institutions that are "ruled by a bureaucracy of nobody."⁹¹ Moreover, Aristotle viewed our economic sphere and the political sphere as continuous such that the distinction between oligarchy and democracy was not whether rules and regulations were carried out by the few but rather whether the power laid in the hands of the

⁸⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 5.

⁹⁰ Arendt, "The Human," 199.

⁹¹ Arendt, "The Human," 58-67

affluent. Accordingly, the *polis* was an instrument for achieving human flourishing, not for the accumulation of wealth.

Citizens strive for happiness and comfortability; as a result, we work to produce "throw-away" products such as the iPhone and LCD TV. Arendt deemed modernity as the condition in which the world was lost, such that there was restriction on public space in terms of speech and action, which was given to the private world. Accordingly, the age of a society is modernity in which there is a rise of distinction between the private as well as the public parts of society. Interestingly, Aristotle did not consider political and social as having the same meaning. Therefore, the political realm was the public realm. This public realm included action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*).⁹² Conversely, a well-managed household satisfied the necessities of life, which then made men free to participate in the *polis*;⁹³ however, true freedom didn't exist within the household because one was either a master or a slave. It was only in public, a political realm where all were equal, and men could be truly free.

Arendt argued that "society always demands that its members act as though they were members of one enormous family which has only one opinion and one interest."⁹⁴ Additionally, society was defined as a collection of households and constituted the public sphere. Therefore, what was previously considered private was now public.⁹⁵ Today, there are social pressures for citizens within society to behave and normalize. This is the growth of conformity within our social structure,⁹⁶ and it is this conformity that fosters economic development. As a result of the

⁹² Arendt, "The Human," 25.

⁹³ Arendt, "The Human," 31.

⁹⁴ Arendt, "The Human," 39.

⁹⁵ Arendt, "The Human," 38-40.

⁹⁶ Arendt, "The Human," 40.

emphasis on economics, Arendt stated that speech and action capacity declined and have been relegated to the private sphere.

There are no public spaces made or activities carried out which build up the artifice for humans; these activities are merely dependent upon our survival. Humankind is involved in a quest to gain material capital and manufacture products which soon perish. Arendt stated that human life was recreated artificially through scientific processes and experimentation; the natural world and environment itself were prone to change because they eventually started depending on technology. Humans have created ways through which natural conditions can be overcome. We are no longer earthbound creatures, but we are now dependent on the instrumentation. We are fashioning the world according to our own will.

According to Aristotle, the goal of human life was a good life, a virtuous life, and a happy life. One needed to provide a balance between work, rest, and leisure. Work helped one become economically sound, rest allowed for sleep and repose, and leisure allowed one to pursue what was essential in life and ask and debate profound philosophical questions. However, Arendt did not relate wealth to leisure, a relationship that is important to our discussion. Given the extent that wealth is convertible to leisure, wealth enables individuals the possibility to participate in political life and become an active member in the political sphere. In telegraphical fashion, Aristotle indicated that work was undertaken toward the end of sustaining life; in contrast, play was undertaken toward the end of being able to work. In other words, within the *polis*, leisure was the basis of everything.⁹⁷

Nowadays, our society often equates wealth with happiness; so, let's pose a question; does money, or lack of it, impact how happy we are? Researchers and scholars have studied the

⁹⁷ Lord, "Aristotle's Politics," 1252a16-17.

influence of money on individual happiness over the past three decades. Many perceive income to be an accurate measure of happiness and well-being. However, Edward Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, highly-regarded researchers in the field of positive psychology, found that once a person's basic needs are met, additional income does little to increase one's happiness.⁹⁸ Additionally, many other cross-cultural and longitudinal studies have shown a minimal correlation between material wealth and happiness, except in extreme poverty cases where people were deprived of basic needs. A 2010 Princeton University study⁹⁹ reveals that the "happiness" income level is \$75,000 per year; this implies people with an annual salary higher than \$75,000 had no greater happiness than those who were earning \$75,000 a year. Globally, the study concluded that satiation occurs at \$95,000 for life evaluation and \$60,000 to \$75,000 for emotional well-being.¹⁰⁰ Seligman states that:

*“Another barrier to raising your level of happiness is the 'hedonic treadmill,' which causes you to rapidly and inevitably adapt to good things by taking them for granted. As you accumulate more material possessions and accomplishments, your expectations rise. The deeds and things you worked so hard for no longer make you happy; you need to get something even better to boost your level of happiness.”*¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, *Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

⁹⁹ Belinda Luscombe, “Do We Need \$75,000 a Year to Be Happy?,” *Time*, September 6, 2010, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2019628,00.html>.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew T. Jebb et al., “Happiness, Income Satiation and Turning Points around The World,” *Nature Human Behaviour* 2, no. 1 (2018): 33-38.

¹⁰¹ Martin Seligman. *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. (New York, NY: Free Press, 2002).

In other words, what makes us happy is more than our annual salary; instead, it is our attitude towards money. If we believe that money directly determines our happiness, life becomes a constant pursuit of material things and personal desires. Aristotle enshrined happiness as a central purpose of humanity and as a goal in itself. He contended that "*the happy person is one who expresses complete virtue in his activities, with an adequate supply of external goods, not just for any time but for a complete life.*" Thus, happiness is beyond feeling good; it is about doing good.¹⁰² Aristotle further discussed that happiness¹⁰³ comes from identifying one's virtues, cultivating them, and living life in harmony. While dated in its origin, Aristotle's notion supports the aforementioned studies concluding that wealth is not a happiness factor. Instead, happiness stems from inner virtue and desire.

This is not only perceived as a catalyst for change merely in humanity, but it may also mark a shift in the way we are living and how we interact with modern advancements. Today's technology affects our lives through not just accessibility and ease but also impacts our values and how we perceive happiness.

¹⁰² Rafael Di Tella and Robert Macculloch, "Some Uses of Happiness Data in Economics," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 1 (January 2006): 25-46.

¹⁰³ Eudaimonia is a Greek word commonly translated as happiness or welfare.

Chapter 5

Conclusion - Are We Happy Yet?

“Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.”

Aristotle

The United States’ Declaration of Independence states that “the right to pursue happiness is one of the unalienable rights that belong equally to all human beings.” Our founders believed that governments exist mainly to safeguard this right, along with the rights to life and liberty. Additionally, the government was responsible for monitoring those who tried to deny or suppress these unalienable rights. Life is a foundational good that makes liberty possible. Aristotle stated that liberty was good both in itself and as the prerequisite for pursuing happiness in ways that each of us may freely choose for ourselves.¹ Aristotle portrayed that the relationship between moral development and true happiness is essential; the validity of which chapter 2 of this dissertation also attempts to illustrate. Aristotle shared that there are many levels of happiness. *Eudaimonia*, an intrinsic aspect of morally good, meaningful, and virtuous activity, is considered the “true” happiness. All other kinds of happiness, Aristotle indicated, represent illusions of happiness. Seligman concurs with Aristotle’s conclusion that human beings are born with the capacity for good or bad morals and various characteristics. These abilities are developed through biological processes. Researchers reveal that humans begin moral development in the early stages of life and continue shaping these moral values as they mature.² Aristotle wrote

¹ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 17-20.

² Melanie Killen and Judith Smetana, “The Biology of Morality: Human Development and Moral Neuroscience,” *Human Development* 50, no. 5 (2007): 241-243; James J. Hughes, “Moral Enhancement Requires Multiple Virtues,” *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 24, no. 1 (April 2014): 86-95.

about the significant roles of family institutions, education, individual characteristics, and the *polis* for the development of morality, and how this developmental process can lead to happiness.

21st-century positive psychologists draw on an intellectual heritage of Plato's and Aristotle's virtue and good life doctrines. Abraham Maslow asserted that as long as basic needs necessary for survival were met, higher-level needs would begin to motivate one's behavior toward the self-actualization stage, a process by which we achieve full potential.³ Likewise, Carl Rogers emphasized that the potential for good exists within all people. Rogers used a client-centered therapeutic technique to help patients deal with problematic issues that caused them to seek psychotherapy. Rogers believed that a therapist needed to display three features to maximize this approach's effectiveness: unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and empathy.⁴ As individuals, we have a natural tendency both to look after our self-interest and empathize with others. Smith explained, "Sympathy, therefore, does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the situation which excites it."⁵ When we notice others happy or in distress, we often see their experiences reflected in our own emotions. Therefore, morality stems from our social nature; it is beneficial to the social order. By following our conscience, we promote the happiness of humankind.

³ Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Floyd: Sublime Books, 2014), 157-176.

⁴ Carl R. Rogers, *A Way of Being: The Founder of the Human Potential Movement Looks Back on a Distinguished Career* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 113-260.

⁵ Smith, "TMS,"⁶.

Are Most People Happy?

A 2019 Gallup poll survey reports that 86% of Americans convey they're "very (42%)" or "fairly happy (44%)."⁶ This statistic mirrors David Myers and Ed Diener's previous research findings that most of us are moderately happy.⁷ Further studies suggest that "very happy people have rich and satisfying social relationships and spend little time alone relative to an average person. In contrast, unhappy people have social relationships that are significantly worse than average."⁸ Happiness is subjective well-being that is comprised of three components: (1) frequent positive affect, (2) infrequent negative affect, and (3) high life satisfaction.⁹ These are independent factors that should be measured and studied separately.¹⁰ In other words, the presence of positive affect does not mean the absence of negative affect and vice versa.

Measuring well-being is typically accomplished through a self-reported construct process. Seligman states, "Well-being is a construct, and happiness is a thing. A 'real thing' is a directly measurable entity. Such an entity can be 'operationalized' – which means that a highly specific set of measures defines it. (...) Authentic happiness theory attempts to explain a real thing – happiness – as defined by life satisfaction with their lives. (...) Well-being theory denies

⁶ Justin McCarthy, "Happiness Not Quite as Widespread as Usual in the U.S.," Happiness Not Quite as Widespread as Usual in the U.S. (Gallup, January 10, 2020), <https://news.gallup.com/poll/276503/happiness-not-quite-widespread-usual.aspx>.

The Gallup poll survey was conducted on December 2 to 15, 2019, with a random sample size of 1,025 participants. Participants who are adults over the age of 18 and older, living in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error is $\pm 4\%$ with a 95% confidence level.

⁷ David G. Myers and Ed Diener, "Who Is Happy?" *Psychological Science*, 6, no. 1 (1995): 10-19.

⁸ Ed Diener and Martin E.P. Seligman, "Very Happy People," *Psychological Science* 13, no. 1 (2002): 81-84.

⁹ Susan A. David, Ilona Boniwell, and Amanda Conley Ayers, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 222.

¹⁰ Frank M. Andrews and Stephen B. Withey, *Social Indicators of Well-Being: Americans' Perceptions of Life Quality* (New York: Plenum Press, 1976).

Ed Diener and Richard E. Lucas, "Explaining Differences in Societal Levels of Happiness: Relative Standards, Need Fulfillment, Culture, and Evaluation Theory," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 1, no. 1 (2000): 41-78.

that the topic of positive psychology is a real thing; instead the topic is a construct - well-being - which in turn has several measurable elements, each a real thing, each contributing to well-being, but none defining well-being.”¹¹ In sum, well-being is a complex construct that revolves around optimal experience and functioning. The conceptual classification and description of well-being remain unclear and unfinished. There is considerable evidence that well-being is often referred to as hedonic well-being.¹² This classification fails to capture the complexity of the philosophical concept of the notion of happiness. The eudaemonic paradigm is another approach, where well-being is viewed as an ongoing, dynamic process, rather than a fixed state of joyful living by engaging in meaningful activities.¹³

Researchers attempt to determine whether happiness is possible by addressing two pertinent questions: (1) Do people report being happy? And (2) Is happiness an adaptive, evolutionarily feasible phenomenon? Worldwide surveys suggest that the answer to the first question is affirmative. A recent Pew Research Center opinion poll corroborates this account and reveals that 50% of Americans consider themselves “pretty happy” and 34% describe themselves as “very happy.”¹⁴ Likewise, 86% of the 43 nations reported average happiness levels above the happiness scale’s midpoint.¹⁵ Diener and Diener report that humans appear to be predisposed to mild happiness levels and question whether this is an adaptive function of happiness.

¹¹ Martin E. P. Seligman, *Flourish: A New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being and How to Achieve Them* (New York: The Free Press, 2011), 14-15.

¹² *HAPPINESS: Transforming the Development Landscape* (Thimphu: The Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH, 2017).

¹³ Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, “On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 52, no. 1 (2001): 141-166.

¹⁴ “Are We Happy Yet?,” Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project, December 31, 2019, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2006/02/13/are-we-happy-yet>.

¹⁵ Ed Diener and Carol Diener, “Most People Are Happy,” *Psychological Science* 7, no. 3 (1996): 181-185.

Psychologists have long recognized that negative emotions, such as fear, anger, and anxiety, cause an individual to focus on the immediate threat or problem, thereby contributing to evolutionary fitness. Recently, psychologists have begun to understand the adaptive advantages engendered by positive feelings.¹⁶ In 1998, Barbara Fredrickson proposed a theory known as the broaden-and-build theory, that suggests positive emotions broaden one's awareness and encourage novel, varied, and exploratory thoughts and actions.¹⁷ In sum, positive feelings allow individuals to broaden their thought-action repertoires and build intellectual, psychological, social, and physical resources over time. Happiness is adapted from an evolutionary point of view and brings about various benefits to an individual.

The Happiness Doctrine

What makes life worth living? Paul T.P Wong articulates, “this is probably the most important question ever asked in psychology because it is vitally related to human survival and flourishing. It is also a highly complex question with no simple answers to the extent that it touches all aspects of humanity—biological, psychological, social, and spiritual.”¹⁸ An individual has their ideas on what constitutes a good life. Many individuals believe that money is the answer; that is why money remains the most powerful motivator in today's consumer society. Others believe that reputation matters most. For those people living in poverty, heaven is being free from hunger. Wong concludes that only a holistic approach can provide a comprehensive

¹⁶ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” Ibid.

¹⁷ Barbara L. Fredrickson, “The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions,” *American Psychologist* 56, no. 3 (2001): 218-226.

¹⁸ Paul T. P. Wong, ed., *The Human Quest for Meaning: Theories, Research, and Clinical Applications* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3.

picture of meaningful living. Moreover, given such individual differences in values and beliefs, numerous psychological models have been proposed to account for meaning in life.

Jean-Paul Sartre¹⁹ and Irvin Yalom²⁰ focused their research on individual living with the dark side of the human condition, such as suffering, meaninglessness, loneliness, and death. For people with meaninglessness issues, Yalom suggests that the therapist helps patients look away from the question rather than directly grappling with it.²¹ Scholars argue that the experience of meaninglessness is rooted in the fact that meaning is not a given or ready-made event; it is waiting to be discovered. Meaning, as existential philosophy tells us, is something that humans confer upon the world. Yalom indicated that an individual who is too focused on the meaning of life risk thinking there is a potential answer to this question. This question is not on par with questions such as, “What is 1+1?” or “What is the definition of the word beautiful?” Yalom continues, this would be a delusion and inevitably leads to despair and disappointment. Both Sartre and Yalom show us how to create meaning through one’s courageous choices and creative solutions for our misery. In contrast, Seligman’s positive psychology emphasizes positive experiences and emotions as the pillars of a worthwhile life. In sum, Wong argues that we need to apply “the dual-systems model [which] provides a bridge between these two intellectual traditions and integrates various research streams relevant to the question of the meaning of life.”²²

¹⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1999).

²⁰ Irvin D. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1980).

²¹ Yalom, “Existential Psychotherapy,” 483.

²² Wong, “The Human,” 4.

The Money Factor – Happiness and Inequality

In October 2008, Ben Okri published an article titled “Our false oracles have failed. We need a new vision to live by” - In the article, he writes, “we must bring back into society a deeper sense of the purpose of living. The unhappiness in so many lives ought to tell us that success alone is not enough. Material success has brought us to a strange spiritual and moral bankruptcy.”²³ A 2020 Pew research reports that over the past 50 years, the highest-earning 20% of U.S. households have steadily brought in a larger share of the country’s total income. U.S. Census Bureau data further reveals that households in the top fifth of earners with incomes of \$130,001 or more produced 52% of all U.S. income and more than the lower four-fifths combined.²⁴ Thus, fixing economic inequality is only part of the problem; addressing happiness and well-being is another.

Previous studies have considered these factors that influence happiness and well-being: “(1) income; (2) personal characteristics; (3) socially developed characteristics; (4) how we spend our time; (5) attitudes and beliefs towards self/others/life; (6) relationships; and (7) the wider economic, social and political environment”²⁵. Today, more researchers study the determinants of people’s life satisfaction, happiness, and mental well-being than ever before. One study determined that the well-being topic is inevitably drawing closer to psychology and

²³ Ben Okri, “Our False Oracles Have Failed. We Need a New Vision to Live By,” *The Times*, October 30, 2008, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/our-false-oracles-have-failed-we-need-a-new-vision-to-live-by-nm6qdm6nzzp>

²⁴ Jessica Semega et al., “Income and Poverty in the United States: 2018,” The United States Census Bureau, September 2019, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2019/demo/p60-266.pdf>.

²⁵ Paul Dolan, Tessa Peasgood, and Mathew White, “Do We Really Know What Makes Us Happy? A Review of the Economic Literature on the Factors Associated with Subjective Well-Being,” *Journal of Economic Psychology* 29, no. 1 (2008): 97.

medicine than economics.²⁶ Of course, many of these factors may still interact with one another; our society believes that a living standard reflects one's income and consumption and is the primary explanation of happiness and life satisfaction. Although economic growth has long been considered an important goal for societies' prosperity and people's well-being, some research indicates that economic growth in itself does little to improve human happiness. Richard Easterlin,²⁷ an economist, showed that despite steady growth in the American economy over the past decades, the average happiness had remained almost unaltered. The Easterlin Paradox states that at a point in time, happiness varies directly with income both among and within nations, but over time happiness does not trend upward as income continues to grow. Although the Easterlin Paradox has been contested but highly significant on both the well-being research and social policy implications. Moreover, empirical evidence often demonstrates that happiness is not necessarily higher for wealthy people than for the underprivileged.²⁸ Some research finds a negative relationship between income inequality and happiness so that a high level of inequality decreases happiness.²⁹ However, Shigehiro Oishi, Selin Kesebir, and Ed Diener's United States time serial data sets study³⁰ concluded that, on average, Americans are happier during the years

²⁶ Nattavudh Powdthavee, "Would You Like to Know What Makes People Happy? An Overview of the Datasets on Subjective Well-Being," *Australian Economic Review* 48, no. 3 (2015): 314-320.

²⁷ Richard A Easterlin, Paul A. David, and Melvin W. Reder, "Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence," in *Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honor of Moses Abramovitz* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 89-126.

²⁸ T. Tavor et al., "The Effects of Income Levels and Income Inequalities on Happiness," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 19, no. 7 (2017): 2115-2137.

²⁹ Xiaogang Wu and Jun Li, "Income Inequality, Economic Growth, and Subjective Well-Being: Evidence from China," *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 52 (2017): 49-58.

Ioana Van Deurzen, Erik Van Ingen, and Wim J. H. Van Oorschot, "Income Inequality and Depression: The Role of Social Comparisons and Coping Resources," *European Sociological Review* 31, no. 4 (2015): 477-489.

³⁰ Shigehiro Oishi, Selin Kesebir, and Ed Diener, "Income Inequality and Happiness," *Psychological Science* 22, no. 9 (2011): 1095-1100.

in which national income inequality is lower than during the years in which it is higher. The study also found a negative association between income inequality and happiness among lower-income respondents due to the perceived unfairness and mistrust.

Harry Frankfurt argues that economic equality has no intrinsic value in his 2015 published book, *On inequality*.³¹ He suggests that if people take the time to reflect, they'll realize that inequality isn't really what's bothering them. Most of us are troubled by what we see as unjust causes of economic inequality, such as how much our wealth is pre-determined by where you were born, your parents' wealth, your sexual orientation, and the color of your skin. The potential of economic inequality in our society might erode democracy, increase crime, or diminish overall happiness. Frankfurt contends that we aren't bothered by inequality for its own sake, and few worries about inequalities between the very rich but inequalities between the moderately well-off and the poor. In sum, we often worry about poverty, not that some have little less, but those with less have a too little. That births a question, is it a good idea to reduce inequality by heavily taxing those at the top of 1%? David Henderson of the Hoover institute states that "tax high incomes or wealth heavily and you will have fewer people trying to make high incomes and get wealthy..., high taxes on highly productive people take wealth out of their hands, ..., and put it in the hands of government bureaucracies."³² In other words, a simple transfer of wealth will make society worse off.

³¹ Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Inequality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 65.

³² David R. Henderson, "Income Inequality Isn't the Problem," Hoover Institution, February 20, 2018, <https://www.hoover.org/research/income-inequality-isnt-problem>.

In 2019 Vladimir Popov³³ utilized databases from the Forbes billionaires list, the Global Wealth Report, the World Happiness Report, and the World Database on Happiness. He examined the relationship between income inequality and happiness for over 200 countries from 2000 to 2018. Popov concluded that in relatively poor countries with a per capita income below \$20,000-\$30,000, inequality increases happiness rather than lowers it.³⁴ In sum, a certain degree of wealth inequality and income distribution positively impact happiness feelings, especially in countries with low-income levels; furthermore, inequality also harms rich countries' happiness. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett³⁵ concur that inequalities indeed have an array of negative social consequences, from an increase in crime, decline in educational attainment, and an increase in psychological disorders.

Similarly, inequalities undermine social mobility and lead to the conservation of social stratification. Hence, the social structure and the political structure of society become less flexible as well. However, our society's disagreements about the optimal level of wealth inequality underlie policy debates ranging from taxation to welfare. Michael Norton and Dan Ariely followed John Rawls' theory of justice framework and asked Americans to construct wealth distribution they deem just. They also showed sample wealth distributions to study participants and found that Americans are very misguided about how unequal the wealth distribution is. Participants believed that the bottom 40 percent had 9 percent of the wealth, and

³³ Vladimir Popov, "Billionaires, Millionaires, Inequality, and Happiness," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2019, 1-35.

³⁴ Popov, "Billionaires, Millionaires," 30.

³⁵ Richard G. Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011).

the top 20 percent had 59 percent, while the actual proportions were 0.3 percent and 84 percent.³⁶ Norton and Ariely conclude that Americans prefer to live in a country more like Sweden than the United States. Moreover, study participants also construct ideal distributions that are far more equal than they estimated. When participants were asked to imagine a perfect society, the study finds that respondents choose one in which those in the top fifth have about three times more wealth than those in the bottom fifth. In sum, our society worries too much about relative differences and not enough about fairness and, above all, the poor's suffering.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Nowadays, significant classical economists acknowledge that individual happiness is influenced by a higher standard of living, sufficient income, and other human well-being factors. Many macroeconomists question whether the same conclusions can be reached regarding the nations' happiness. Over the past decade, new research has given us a much deeper understanding of the relationship between what we earn and how we feel. Economists have scrutinized the links between income and happiness across nations, and psychologists have investigated how individuals perceive well-being and economic conditions. Many studies have illustrated the connection between money and happiness. Some argue that wealth is an indicator of happiness. While others conclude that you might not be necessarily happier by accumulating a certain amount of wealth. Bryan Stevenson, an author of *Just Mercy*, concluded that "the opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice. (...) our commitment to the rule of law, fairness, and equality cannot be measured by how we treat the rich, the powerful, the privileged, and the respected among us. The true measure of our character is how we treat the

³⁶ Michael I. Norton and Dan Ariely, "Building a Better America - One Wealth Quintile at a Time," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, no. 1 (2011): 9-12.

poor, the disfavored.”³⁷ In short, things that bring you happiness can be said to have intrinsic value, but this doesn’t necessarily make others happy. For example, Aristotle revealed that friends, honor, pleasure, and moral virtue might be worth choosing for their intrinsic value since these choices contribute to our happiness.³⁸

Money, on the other hand, has extrinsic value. James Harold states that “the reasons for valuing extrinsically good things depend on reasons for valuing intrinsically good things. This means that extrinsic value is derivative in a way that intrinsic value is not. The justification of extrinsic goods depends on the justification for intrinsic values.”³⁹ This means that others can value your wealth based on the amount of money you possess. Our society often associates money with happiness, even though you can’t literally buy happiness at a department store or grocery market. But money can be used to purchase goods and services that bring happiness and add intrinsic value to life.

The relationship between income and happiness has been at the center of a vibrant debate, emphasizing intrinsic and extrinsic values. Nevertheless, emotions are also a crucial determinant of health and social behavior. In 2018, the UNICEF office of research conducted an experiment to investigate whether a government-run unconditional cash transfer paid directly to women in poor households impacted Zambia’s self-reported happiness across 90 Zambia

³⁷ Bryan Stevenson is a New York University law professor and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative based in Montgomery, Alabama. In 2014, Stevenson wrote a critically acclaimed memoir *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, that challenged society’s bias against the poor and minorities in the criminal justice system.

Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 17-18.

³⁸ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” *Ibid*

³⁹ James Harold, “Between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Value,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 36, no. 1 (2005): 85-105.

communities.⁴⁰ Luisa Natali et al. state that the objective is to understand public policies' effects on subjective well-being and go beyond human monetary or economic dimensions. After 36 and 46 months of study, the study resulted in a 7.5 and 10 percentage points higher on women's happiness, respectively. Moreover, women developed overall satisfaction regarding their young children's well-being, health, and positive outlook on their children's future. Further analysis also indicates that "self-assessed relative poverty (households measured by comparison with others in the community) is a more important mediator of program effects on happiness than absolute poverty (measured by household consumption expenditures). Although typically not the focus of such evaluations, impacts on psychosocial indicators, including happiness, should not be discounted as important outcomes, as they capture different, non-material, holistic aspects of an individual's overall level of well-being."⁴¹ Overall, these findings suggest that the Easterlin paradox does not hold within the study's money (a cash transfer) experiment which did result in greater happiness.

We often spend money on acquiring material possessions to make us happier. However, research indicated that materialism doesn't equate to lasting happiness.⁴² Moreover, Sonja Lyubomirsky reports that "there's a burst of joy at first, but quickly, it levels off. Even people who win the lottery have been found in scientific studies to be no happier than the rest of us."⁴³ This phenomenon is known as hedonic shifts, such as marriages and job changes that make you

⁴⁰ Luisa Natali et al., "Does Money Buy Happiness? Evidence from an Unconditional Cash Transfer in Zambia," *SSM - Population Health* 4 (2018): 225-235.

⁴¹ Luisa Natali et al., "Does Money Buy Happiness? Evidence from an Unconditional Cash Transfer in Zambia," *SSM - Population Health* 4 (2018): 225-235.

⁴² James Harold, "Between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Value," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 36, no. 1 (2005): 85-105.

⁴³ Sonja Lyubomirsky, "Why Money Can't Buy You Happiness (According to Science)," Ten Percent Happier, August 29, 2019, <https://www.tenpercent.com/meditationweeklyblog/why-money-cant-buy-you-happiness>.

happier for a time, but only a short time. Human beings adapt to favorable changes in wealth, possessions, and soon, their temporary happiness-boost disappears. Furthermore, Elizabeth W. Dunn, Daniel T. Gilbert, and Timothy D. Wilson suggested that this occurs when people use their money wrongly or purchase the wrong things.⁴⁴ In a 2014 study, Paulina Pchelin and Ryan T. Howell compared material purchases and experiences to determine how they affected happiness.⁴⁵ The study reports that while people are more likely to think of material purchases as offering better value, it was experiences that proved to have a lasting happy effect when people re-examined their choices. People think that experiences only provide temporary happiness, but they truly provide more happiness and lasting value. Seligman states, “another barrier to raising your level of happiness is the ‘hedonic treadmill,’ which causes you to rapidly and inevitably adapt to good things by taking them for granted. As you accumulate more material possessions and accomplishments, your expectations rise. The deeds and things you worked so hard for no longer make you happy; you need to get something even better to boost your level of happiness.”⁴⁶ In other words, what makes us happy is more than our annual salary; rather it is our attitude toward money. If we believe that money directly determines happiness, life becomes a constant pursuit of material accumulation. I argue that while money can’t “buy” happiness, happiness can certainly be augmented with money. Happiness does not come from the physical dollar or wealth; it comes from how we spend our money.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth W. Dunn, Daniel T. Gilbert, and Timothy D. Wilson, “If Money Doesn't Make You Happy, Then You Probably Aren't Spending It Right,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2011): 115-125.

⁴⁵ Paulina Pchelin and Ryan T. Howell, “The Hidden Cost of Value-Seeking: People Do Not Accurately Forecast the Economic Benefits of Experiential Purchases,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 9, no. 4 (2014): 322-334.

⁴⁶ Seligman, “Authentic Happiness,” 49.

Aristotle enshrines happiness as a central purpose of humanity and as a goal in itself. He contended that “*the happy person is one who expresses complete virtue in his activities, with an adequate supply of external goods, not just for any time but for a complete life.*” Thus, happiness is beyond feeling good; it is about doing good.⁴⁷ Aristotle further maintained that happiness comes from identifying one’s virtues, cultivating them, and living life in harmony. While dated in its origin, Aristotle’s notion supports the aforementioned studies concluding that wealth is not a happiness factor; rather, happiness stems from an inner virtue and desire.

Individuals make ethical choices based on their right and wrong concepts and act according to their value system. Our character is the foundation that enables us to make the right choices by prevailing against the external pressures to make the wrong choices. As far back as ancient Greece, the argument was made that education and learning strength came from direct human interaction. Aristotle advocated for the centrality of shaping an individual’s character beginning in their youth. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle stated all virtues fall into two types: virtues of thinking and character virtues (moral virtues). Virtues of thinking are things like wisdom, virtues which need time and experience to cultivate and can be developed through education. Virtues of character are things such as temperance and courage; these virtues are developed through habit. Aristotle believed that each individual could receive these virtues from one another. Good conduct arises from habits that can only be acquired by repeated action and correction, thus allowing the individual to appropriate virtues to their greatest efficiency. This expectation worked well when society wasn’t a global entity. As civilizations spread across lands and self-sufficiency grew, direct human interactions were often fewer and far between. Jonathan Haidt states that Aristotle’s concern with cultivating virtue and happiness puts happiness in its

⁴⁷ Tella, "Some Uses," 25-46.

proper place at the heart of our quest to live well and connects morality with our everyday concerns.⁴⁸ From Aristotle's perspective, happiness, throughout one's lifetime, consists of health, wealth, knowledge, friends, etc. Thus requiring us to make choices, some of which may be very difficult. In our society, often the lesser good promises immediate pleasure and is more tempting, while the greater good is painful and requires some sort of sacrifice. For example, it may be easier and more enjoyable to spend the night watching television, but you know that you will be better off if you spend it researching your paper. The path to instant gratification, frequently craved by society, is often fueled by technology and innovation. Have we confused gratification and happiness? Or have we forgotten Aristotle's stance that our happiness is more likely linked to our character and not to tools and the tangible?

Developing a good character requires a strong will to do the right thing, even in difficult situations. In other words, we must have the courage to make the right decision. Courage, as Aristotle states, is itself attended by pain; it is justly praised since it is more difficult to endure painful things than to abstain from pleasure.⁴⁹ If we accept that money has a negligible influence on happiness, and if our ethics determine our paths to goodness, where does that leave modern technology? Is our happiness dependent on technology? Society and cultures have developed variations of belief and judgment about what is best for humankind and how to profit from ethical inquiry and create happiness. According to Aristotle, the purpose of humanity is to achieve good. An individual may choose to act because this action is good and can make us happy. It is easy enough to see that we desire money, pleasure, and honor because we believe

⁴⁸ Matthew Pianalto, "Happiness, Virtue and Tyranny," *Philosophy Now* 68 (2008): 6-9.

Jonathan Haidt. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. (New York, NY: Random House, 2012).

⁴⁹ Bartlett, "Aristotle's NE," 1117a34-36.

that these “goods” make us happy. He contended that if goodness was seen as happiness or pleasure, then the action is performed for the sake of honor, benevolence, and justice. Thus, virtues may be judged as good because they bring pleasure and happiness. Aristotle concluded that the nature of happiness is, in a sense, uniquely one’s own; happiness is a virtue, and living well consists of doing something, not just being in a certain state. It consists of lifelong activities that actualize the virtues of the rational part of the human soul.⁵⁰ Aristotle asserted that happiness is an activity that makes appropriate use of our capacities. He also pointed out that happiness typically requires some external goods, such as reasonable amounts of wealth, power, health, friendship, and longevity.⁵¹ Haidt concurs that “cultivating virtue will make you happy.”⁵²

The definitions of happiness fall into two categories, moral-laden and morally-neutral. Moral-laden definitions build in moral values such as Aristotle’s definition of happiness centered on exercising virtue. However, morally-neutral does not build in moral values, such as the definitions of happiness as subjective well-being in the form of overall satisfaction with our lives or high average levels of enjoyment. On the other hand, Seligman positive psychology focuses on well-being, positivity, goal setting, achieving flow, optimism to enhance happiness. Positive psychology has come full circle to its existential roots. It is intrinsically existential and focuses on questions such as What is the good life? What makes life worth living? How can one find happiness? However, these existential questions cannot be fully addressed through a positivistic approach because human life cannot be reduced to a set of test scores since there are many

⁵⁰ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” 1159a25-30.

⁵¹ Bartlett, “Aristotle’s NE,” Ibid.

⁵² Haidt, “Happiness Hypothesis,” 158.

pathways to living a meaningful life.⁵³ In other words, existential psychology is about human existence, survival, and flourishing. It is inherently positive because it emphasizes the courage and responsibility of confronting existential anxieties and living an authentic life.⁵⁴

If happiness is the ultimate goal of human beings, society's attitude toward the well-being paradigm needs to be rethought. Well-being should not only be about economic prosperity - a material means of happiness, but it involves other aspects than economic such as physical, mental, social, spiritual, and practicing positive psychology as illustrated in chapter three of this dissertation. Seligman suggests that one can develop unprecedented happiness levels by nurturing existing strengths and humor. Positive psychology focuses on our character strengths and behaviors that allow us to move beyond "just surviving" to build a meaningful and happy life. Seligman argues that happiness occurs when a person identifies a signature strength and uses it towards something more significant than the self. In sum, "positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living."⁵⁵

Individuals make ethical choices based on their concepts of right and wrong and act according to their value system. Our moral character is the foundation that enables us to make the right choices by prevailing against the external pressures to make the wrong choices. When sitting in a room alone surfing the internet, where are the external pressures? Social interactions and personal relationships as we know them will cease to exist. Face time becomes screen time.

⁵³ Paul T. P. Wong and Prem S. Fry, *The Human Quest for Meaning: a Handbook of Psychological Research and Clinical Applications* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁵⁴ Paul T. P. Wong, "What is Existential Positive Psychology?," *International Journal of Existential Psychology & Psychotherapy* 3, no. 1 (2010): 1-10.

⁵⁵ Christopher Peterson and Nansook Park, "Meaning and Positive Psychology," *International Journal of Existential Psychology & Psychotherapy* 5, no. 1 (July 2014): 1-7.

Consequently, how do our social norms, morals, ethics, and society's laws compete or complement laws or unwritten rules of the internet? They aren't the same. Cyber-bullying and cyber-stalking are prime examples.

Aristotle and Seligman believed that each individual had the capacity to receive the moral virtues from one another. Habit allows the individual to appropriate virtues to their greatest efficiency. The argument can then be made that the internet can diminish our ability to develop our own character and intellectual growth as it limits our interaction with others. The challenge is how to utilize technology without impeding our moral and social interactions. In some manner, technology will constantly be shaping our society and history. At first, humans obeyed God and kings, but with gained access to technology, people started to develop their own ideas, and technological innovations made possible economic and political expansion. Today, most of us live in cities and towns that are essentially "unnatural" environments, and the rate of our cultural change has accelerated dramatically. As a result, technological innovations have changed our society's natural characteristics and altered the relationships between human beings, morals, technology, and the environment. These innovations will inevitably continue to do so.

Technology is changing the way we live, the way we communicate, and the way we interact. It enables us to understand the world better and broadens our horizons. Determining whether the effects of technology are good or bad is dependent on the choices that we as humans make. Technology will be in constant development, yet creating an effective, moral, and beneficial technology requires a clear understanding of our past, present, and future. Go ahead and enjoy what technology has to offer, learn about the world we live in; our lives are more comfortable because of technology. The key is vigilance and respect for the converse application of each innovation. Technology is not only the artifacts we use but also the processes that

produce it. Modern psychologists can tell us what leads to subjective well-being; Aristotle and other philosophers might be able to present and outline certain objective moral constraints that limit how we should pursue our happiness. Yet, isn't it really about the balancing of all the components? Income, personal characteristics, and societal values play a role in affecting happiness. Technology impacts our interactions and formation of character as well as our ethics. It isn't reasonable in our current climate to examine the factors individually as it is the sum of their parts that creates our happiness.

What can Aristotle teach us about 21st-century happiness?

In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, he revealed that there is only one right plan for achieving happiness; it involves us seeking and acquiring virtue. This is morality that we need to live and live well, as illustrated in chapter two of this dissertation. Aristotle pointed out the necessity and values of living a virtuous life; pursuing happiness is not the same as pursuing pleasure. We need to value the material goods we possess, be empathetic to others, and spend more time contemplating and learning.

If happiness is the ultimate goal for human beings, society's attitude toward the well-being paradigm needs to be rethought. Happiness and well-being should not only be about economic prosperity, a material means of happiness. Happiness involves other aspects than economic such as physical, mental, social, spiritual, and practicing positive psychology, as illustrated in chapter three of this dissertation. Seligman suggests that one can develop unprecedented levels of happiness by nurturing existing strengths and humor. The fundamental tenet of life's goal is to maximize happiness by living virtuously, fulfilling our potential as humans, and engaging with others, such as family, friends and fellow citizens in mutually beneficial activities. In conclusion, happiness is attainable by using Seligman's positive

psychology formula that focuses on our character strengths and behaviors, thus enabling us to move beyond "just surviving" to build a meaningful and happy life.

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