Happiness Lecture Notes - Complete Collection

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1: Plato

1. Plato's Tripartite Structure of the Soul

1.1 The Basic Claim

Plato holds that the human soul has three distinct parts:

1. Rational part (Reason)
2. Spirited part (Spirit)
3. Appetitive part (Appetite / Desire)

Each part: - Has its own characteristic aims and loves - Can conflict with the others - Has a proper role in a well-ordered soul

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1.2 Argument for Different Parts of the Soul

Key principle:
The same thing cannot at the same time, in the same respect, and in relation to the same object both do and suffer opposites.

Example:
- A spinning top is both moving and at rest only in different respects (axis vs circumference), not in the same part in the same way.

Plato applies this to the soul:

(a) Thirst example – Reason vs Appetite

- Suppose someone is thirsty but refuses to drink.
- As such, thirst is simply a desire for drink as such, not "for good drink."

- In this case:
  - One element in the soul pulls toward drinking.
  - Another forbids drinking (e.g., because the water is polluted, or drinking is bad for health).
- Since the soul is simultaneously pulled to drink and pulled back from drinking,
  - These must be two different parts of the soul.
- Plato identifies:
  - The appetitive part: source of the urge to drink.
  - The rational part: source of calculation and restraint.

Conclusion: There must be at least two parts: rational and appetitive.

(b) Leontius example – Spirit vs Appetite

Story: - Leontius walks by corpses, feels a strong desire to look (a shameful appetite), but is disgusted. - He fights with himself, covers his eyes, then angrily forces himself to look and curses his own eyes.

This shows: - One element in the soul wants to give in to a base appetite. - Another becomes angry with that appetite, siding with what reason says is better.

Plato identifies: - The element that gets angry and feels shame as spirit. - Spirit can oppose appetite and ally with reason.

(c) Children and animals example – Spirit distinct from Reason

- Children show strong anger and indignation before they have developed mature rational thought.
- Animals also clearly have spirit (anger, courage) without full rationality.

So: - Spirit is not the same as reason, nor the same as appetite. - It is a third, distinct part.

1.3 The Three Parts: What Each Loves and Seeks

1. Rational part
    - Loves: truth, wisdom, understanding, what is genuinely good.
    - Seeks: to know, to judge what is best for the whole person, to rule wisely.
    - Proper role: ruler / guide.
2. Spirited part
    - Loves: honor, recognition, victory, being in the right.
    - Seeks: to defend what it sees as just, to support reason's decisions, to resist insult and injustice.
    - Proper role: ally and enforcer for reason, like soldiers enforcing the laws of a ruler.
3. Appetitive part
    - Loves: bodily pleasures and material goods (food, drink, sex, money, comfort).
    - Seeks: immediate satisfaction of many different desires.
    - Proper role: to obey reason and spirit; not to rule.

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2. The Ideal Condition for a Human Being

Plato's central idea: a just, well-ordered soul = the ideal condition for a human being.

2.1 Justice as Inner Harmony

In the city: - Justice = each class (rulers, auxiliaries, producers) doing its own work and not meddling in others' roles.

In the individual soul: - Justice = each part doing its proper work and not meddling: - Reason rules, using knowledge of what is best for the whole person. - Spirit supports reason, enforcing its decisions (courage, indignation at injustice). - Appetite obeys, restricted to its proper role, not trying to take over.

Ideal condition:
The just person is someone who: - Has inner order and unity. - Is “in tune” with himself, like a well-tuned musical chord. - Is “his own friend,” not at war with himself.

2.2 The Virtues in the Soul

Plato connects the four cardinal virtues to the three parts of the soul:

1. Wisdom
    - Located in: rational part.
    - Consists in: knowledge of what is truly good for each part and for the whole person.
    - When reason has this knowledge and rules, the person is wise.
2. Courage
    - Located in: spirited part.
    - Consists in: steadfastly preserving reason’s judgments about what is truly to be feared and not feared, despite pains, pleasures, pressures.
3. Moderation (self-control)
    - Located in: the relation between parts.
    - Consists in: agreement among all three parts that reason should rule; the appetites and spirit willingly accept reason’s authority.
4. Justice
    - Located in: the overall structure of the soul.
    - Consists in: each part doing its own work and not interfering; full harmony and inner order.

In this ideal inner condition: - The person’s actions in all areas (money, body, politics, relationships) are guided by preserving this harmony. - He calls those actions just and fine which preserve inner order, and unjust those that destroy it.

2.3 Virtue as Health of the Soul

Plato draws an analogy:

- In the body:
    - Health = natural relation of ruling and being ruled among the body’s elements.
    - Disease = disordered relations (wrong parts ruling).
- In the soul:
    - Virtue (wisdom, courage, moderation, justice) = a kind of health, fine condition, and well-being of the soul.
    - Vice = a kind of disease, shameful condition, and weakness of the soul.

Ideal human condition: - To have a virtuous, just, and harmonious soul, which is: - Internally ordered, - Ruled by knowledge and wisdom, - Supported by well-directed spirit, - With appetites in their proper place.

This, for Plato, is what it is to be truly happy and flourishing, regardless of external wealth, power, or reputation.

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3. Disharmony Between Parts of the Soul as Ill-Being

Plato contrasts the just soul with the unjust, disordered soul.

3.1 Injustice as Inner Civil War

Injustice in the soul: - A “civil war” among the parts: - A part that should be ruled (often appetite) attempts to rule. - The proper ruler (reason) is overthrown or ignored. - Each part “does another’s work”: - Appetite or spirit tries to take over the role of ruling. - They refuse to obey reason’s guidance.

This leads to: - Internal conflict, turmoil, lack of peace. - Contradictory impulses and actions.

3.2 Forms of Disorder

Typical patterns of disharmony:

1. Appetite dominating
    - The pursuit of pleasure, money, or comfort overrides rational judgment.
    - Example: someone who knows something is bad (addiction, reckless behavior) but can’t stop; appetite rules.
2. Spirit misdirected or ruling
    - Spirit pursues honor, anger, revenge without being guided by reason.
    - Example: someone who is easily offended and acts rashly, even when they know better.

In each case: - The proper order (reason → spirit → appetite) is reversed or scrambled.

3.3 Ill-Being of the Soul

Since: - Virtue = health of the soul, - Vice = disease of the soul,

then: - An unjust, disordered soul is ill. - Even with: - wealth, power, physical pleasures, social success, - the person’s life is not truly worth living, because the soul itself (the thing by which we live) is ruined and in turmoil.

So, for Plato: - Real well-being is inner, not mainly about external conditions. - Disharmony between parts of the soul is itself a form of ill-being, irrespective of external success.

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4. Two Scenarios to Illustrate True Love of Wisdom

Plato wants to show what it is to be a true lover of wisdom (philosopher) rather than a lover of money or honor. These thought-experiments illustrate this.

Scenario 1: Three Kinds of People and the Best Life

Plato distinguishes three kinds of people, corresponding to the three parts of the soul:

1. Appetite-lover (money/pleasure-lover)

- Dominant part: appetite.
- Values most: bodily pleasures, wealth, material comfort.

2. Honor-lover (victory/status-lover)
    - Dominant part: spirit.
    - Values most: honor, reputation, being esteemed and victorious.
3. Wisdom-lover (philosopher)
    - Dominant part: reason.
    - Values most: truth, understanding, knowledge of what is really good.

Thought-experiment:
Ask each type of person: “Which kind of life is best and happiest?”

- Each will say: their own life is best.
- The question: Who is the best judge?

Plato’s argument: - The wisdom-lover is the best judge because: - He has experienced pleasures of learning, but can also understand and to some extent experience pleasures of honor and bodily enjoyment. - He can reflect, compare, and give reasons. - The appetite-lover and honor-lover: - Usually have little or no experience of the highest intellectual pleasures. - Lack the knowledge and perspective to fairly judge the philosopher’s life.

What this shows about true love of wisdom: - The true lover of wisdom seeks knowledge for its own sake, not as a tool for money or status. - He is willing to evaluate and sacrifice other kinds of pleasure if they conflict with the pursuit of truth. - Wisdom is seen as the highest and most authoritative good, organizing all other pursuits.

Scenario 2: Choosing Truth Over Comfort (The “Cave-like” Contrast)

Consider two possible lives:

1. Comfortable Ignorance
    - One lives in a familiar, pleasant world of appearances:
        - Accepted social beliefs,
        - Entertaining but shallow activities,
        - Little critical thinking.
    - Life is easier: no painful questioning, no intellectual struggle.
2. Painful Pursuit of Truth
    - One questions common opinions, examines oneself, and pursues deep understanding.
    - This involves:
        - Discomfort (mental effort, confusion, doubt),
        - Social friction (others may not like your questions),
        - Possible loss of status or advantage.
    - But it offers:
        - Genuine contact with what is real,
        - Understanding of what is truly good, which can then guide life.

Plato’s thought: - A true lover of wisdom will choose the second life: - Even if it is personally costly, - Even if it is less pleasant in bodily or social terms, - Because he values truth and insight above comfort, reputation, or wealth.

What this shows about true love of wisdom: - To love wisdom is to prefer truth to illusion, even when illusion is easier or more pleasant. - It means: - Letting reason rule, - Allowing spirit to endure hardship on behalf of reason's pursuit of truth, - Keeping appetites in check when they conflict with understanding.

Summary Connection

- Tripartite soul: reason, spirit, appetite.
- Ideal condition: reason rules, spirit supports, appetite obeys → inner harmony, justice, virtue, and true well-being.
- Disharmony: lower parts ruling or rebelling → inner civil war, vice, and ill-being.
- True love of wisdom:
  - Shown by preferring a life ruled by knowledge over lives ruled by pleasure or honor.
  - Shown by choosing truth over comfort, even at personal cost.
  - Expresses itself in a soul where reason genuinely governs and values wisdom as the highest good.

2: Aristotle

Aristotle on Happiness (Eudaimonia) and Virtue

Exam-focused notes

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1. What is Eudaimonia?

1.1 Basic Idea

- Eudaimonia is usually translated as happiness or flourishing.
- For Aristotle, it is:
  - The highest human good – the ultimate aim of all our actions.
  - Complete – chosen entirely for its own sake, never as a means to something else.
  - Self-sufficient – if you have it, your life is lacking in nothing important.

1.2 Not a Feeling or Passing Mood

- Eudaimonia is not:
  - A temporary feeling of pleasure,
  - A mood like joy or contentment.
- It is an overall condition of living well over a whole life – a life that is going as a human life ought to go.

1.3 Why Not Pleasure, Wealth, or Honor?

Aristotle considers popular views and rejects them as the highest good:

- Pleasure:
  - Resembles the life of “grazing animals.”
  - Can be base, bodily, and not uniquely human.
  - Can be had by a thoroughly bad person.
- Wealth:
  - Clearly a means to other things, not an end in itself.
  - Therefore cannot be the ultimate end.
- Honor:
  - Depends on other people’s opinions, not on your actual state.
  - People seek honor as a sign that they are already good; so virtue seems more fundamental than honor.

Conclusion:
Eudaimonia is not any one of these things. It is a life of excellent human activity – a life in which your distinctively human capacities are fulfilled in the best way.

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2. Why Eudaimonia for a Person is Living in Accordance with Reason

2.1 The Function Argument (Core of Aristotle’s Reasoning)

Aristotle's key move:
The good for a thing = excellent performance of its characteristic function.

1. Every function-thing has a "good":
    - For a flute-player, good = playing the flute well.
    - For a doctor, good = healing well.
    - For an eye, good = seeing well.
    - In general: the good of X is doing its proper function excellently.
2. Human beings must also have a characteristic function:
    - Like the eye or the flute-player, a human is a kind of thing with a role or function.
    - The function of the human cannot just be:
        - Life/nutrition/growth – plants have that too.
        - Perception/sensation – animals share that as well.
    - So the distinctively human function must involve what is special to humans.
3. What is distinctively human? Reason.
    - Humans uniquely:
        - Have the capacity for rational thought (theoretical and practical),
        - Can organize their lives by reasons rather than by mere impulse.
    - Therefore the human function is: > Activity of the soul that involves reason or requires reason.
4. The human good = performing the human function excellently:
    - Just as the good harpist plays well, the good human:
        - Engages in rational activity,
        - Does so in accordance with virtue (excellence).
    - So the human good (eudaimonia) is: > Activity of the soul in accordance with the best and most complete virtue, over a complete life.

2.2 Two Aspects of "Living in Accordance with Reason"

The lecture outline helpfully breaks this into two parts:

1. Excelling in the activity of reasoning itself
    - Using reason well:
        - Thinking clearly,
        - Judging well about what is true (theoretical reasoning),
        - Judging well about what to do (practical reasoning).
    - This includes intellectual excellences like:
        - Wisdom, understanding, practical wisdom (phronesis).
2. Performing the actions that reason recommends
    - Not enough to think well; you must act on good reasons.
    - Your actions and feelings should be:
        - In the right way,
        - At the right time,
        - For the right reasons,
        - As good reason dictates.

Result:
For a person, eudaimonia = living a life of rational activity in accordance with virtue – both: - exercising reason excellently, and

- shaping one's whole pattern of actions according to sound reason.

This is the greatest good (the summum bonum) for a human being.

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3. Excellence (Virtue) as the Mean Between Deficiency and Excess

3.1 What is Arete (Excellence/Virtue)?

- Arete means excellence or virtue – being good at being the kind of thing you are.
- For humans, virtues are:
  - Stable character traits (e.g., courage, generosity),
  - That dispose us to feel and act in the right way,
  - In line with reason.

3.2 The Doctrine of the Mean

- Moral virtue is a mean between two vices:
  - One of excess,
  - One of deficiency.
- This "mean" is:
  - Relative to us – depends on the situation and person,
  - Not a simple arithmetic middle ("exactly halfway"),
  - Determined by good judgment (practical wisdom).

Structure:

- For each virtue, we can identify:
  - A relevant sphere (e.g., danger, money, honor, pleasure, anger),
  - The deficiency (too little),
  - The excess (too much),
  - The virtue (right amount in the right way).

Examples (very important to be able to produce):

- Courage (sphere: fear and confidence about danger):
  - Deficiency: cowardice (too much fear, too little confidence),
  - Excess: rashness (too little fear, too much confidence),
  - Virtue: courage (fears the right things, at the right times, to the right degree, for good reasons).
- Generosity (sphere: giving and taking money):
  - Deficiency: stinginess/meanness (gives too little),
  - Excess: wastefulness (gives too much, carelessly),
  - Virtue: generosity (gives the right amounts, to the right people, in the right way).
- Temperance (sphere: bodily pleasures, especially food, drink, sex):
  - Deficiency: insensibility (too little responsiveness even to appropriate pleasures),
  - Excess: self-indulgence (too much pursuit of pleasure),
  - Virtue: temperance (moderate enjoyment under the guidance of reason).

3.3 Role of Reason in the Mean

- The virtuous person:
  - Hits the mean as reason would determine it,
  - Given the circumstances.
- That is why we need:
  - Practical wisdom (phronesis) to see where the mean lies,
  - Not just a formula like “always choose the middle option.”

Connection to eudaimonia:
Since eudaimonia is activity in accordance with virtue, and virtue = rationally finding and hitting the mean, living well is consistently choosing the reasonable mean in actions and feelings.

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4. The Importance of Practice in Developing Excellence (Virtue)

4.1 Virtue is Not Inborn or Merely Theoretical

- We are not born virtuous or vicious.
- We are born with the capacity to become virtuous.
- Moral virtue is not:
  - Simply a matter of knowing rules or theories,
  - Automatically produced by intellectual instruction alone.

Virtue is a settled character state formed by habit.

4.2 Habituation: How We Become Virtuous

Key idea:
> We become just by doing just actions; we become brave by doing brave actions; we become temperate by doing temperate actions.

- Habituation = forming habits through repeated actions:
  - Repeatedly acting in the right way,
  - Under the guidance of reason (or of those who have it),
  - Gradually shapes our character and emotional responses.

Analogy used in the lecture outline:

- Like learning to play the lyre (a musical instrument):
  - You don’t become a good musician by reading about music,
  - You must practice, practice, practice the right moves.
- Similarly:
  - You don’t become courageous merely by admiring courage,
  - You must face fears in the right way repeatedly.

4.3 Role of Upbringing and Exemplars

- Good upbringing is crucial:
  - Children must be trained to:
    - Take pleasure in good actions,

        * Feel pain or shame at bad actions.
    - This early training supplies the starting points from which ethical reasoning later develops.
- Emulating exemplars:
    - To know how the virtuous person acts, we:
        * Look at wise and virtuous exemplars,
        * Use their lives as models.
    - Imitating those who already have good character helps us:
        * Learn what the "mean" looks like in real situations,
        * Form similar habits ourselves.

4.4 Why Practice is Essential for Eudaimonia

- Eudaimonia = excellent rational activity over a life.
- But:
    - Without practiced virtues, our emotions and desires resist reason.
    - We may know what is right but fail to do it.
- Practice:
    - Aligns our feelings, desires, and actions with reason,
    - Makes acting virtuously easier, more stable, and more pleasant.

Therefore:
To reach eudaimonia, it is not enough to ask, "What is my purpose?" or to see that it involves reason. You must train yourself, through repeated practice and guided upbringing, to live in accordance with reason, consistently hitting the mean that constitutes virtue.

Quick Summary for Exam Recall

- Eudaimonia: objective flourishing; the highest human good; not mere feeling; complete and self-sufficient.
- Why "in accordance with reason"?
    - Human function = rational activity (distinctively human).
    - Human good = excellent performance of that function → activity of soul in accordance with virtue (rational excellence) over a complete life.
- Virtue as mean:
    - Virtue = excellence in character.
    - Each moral virtue is a mean between excess and deficiency, relative to us, found by right reason.
    - Examples: courage (between cowardice and rashness), generosity (between stinginess and wastefulness), temperance (between insensibility and self-indulgence).
- Practice and habituation:
    - We acquire virtues by repeatedly performing virtuous actions.
    - Good upbringing and role models are vital.
    - Practice aligns feelings and actions with reason, enabling a life of eudaimonia.

3: Epictetus

1. Epictetus on How to Live Well: Two Parts

Epictetus thinks living well has TWO main components:

1. (1) Use your rational faculty correctly (virtue).
    - Train your judgments, choices, desires, and aversions so they line up with what is truly good (virtue) and truly bad (vice).
    - This is about your inner life: how you see things, what you care about, and how you respond.
2. (2) Restrict concern to what is "up to you" and accept the rest.
    - Direct genuine desire/aversion only at what is within your control (your own mind and choices).
    - Regarding everything else (body, wealth, reputation, other people, outcomes), don't treat them as true goods/bads; accept whatever happens as part of nature's plan.

These two parts are tightly linked:

- (1) is the goal: becoming virtuous, wise, and rational.
- (2) is the method: by caring only about what's up to you, you protect and perfect your rational faculty and avoid disturbance.

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2. What Is Up to You, and What Is Not

2.1 Epictetus's Distinction

Up to us (truly ours, free, unhindered):
All aspects of our rational faculty:

- Judgments/opinions about what things are and what they mean
- Choices / decisions (the "faculty of choice")
- Desires and aversions, insofar as we can decide what to value
- Our inner attitude toward events (e.g., resentment vs acceptance)

Not up to us (enslaved, hindered, not truly ours):

- Our body (health, illness, looks, strength, disability)
- Possessions (money, property, clothes, tech, etc.)
- Reputation (what others think or say about you)
- Social position (offices, honors, jobs, promotions, admissions)

- Other people's actions and characters

- Events and outcomes in the world (weather, accidents, political events, whether you win the race, etc.)

- Even family members and loved ones, because they can be taken away

Key claim:
- Only the inner things are by nature "free, unhindered, and unimpeded."
- Everything else is inherently insecure and can be taken away at any time.

2.2 Is Epictetus Right?

Problems / criticisms:

1. Our mind is not fully up to us in practice.
    - Our beliefs, desires, and emotions are heavily shaped by genes, upbringing, trauma, social pressures.

    - Changing deep-seated attitudes often takes long therapy, habits, and luck; it's not a simple "choice."
2. We have some control over some externals.
    - Through effort, we can usually influence health, friendships, grades, career, reputation.

    - It seems too extreme to say none of this is "up to us" at all.
3. Moral responsibility seems to need some external control.
    - If circumstances are totally outside our concern, it's unclear why we should take responsibility for helping others, or for shaping institutions.

What can be salvaged?

A weakened, but plausible version:

- Treat as primarily up to you:
    - Your deliberate judgments, long-term values, and how you choose to respond to events.
- Treat as partly but not fully up to you:
    - Health, grades, career, relationships (you can influence them, but not guarantee outcomes).
- Treat as not ultimately under your control:
    - The final outcomes of efforts, other people's reactions, accidents, death.

So the practical Stoic lesson still works:

- Shift your main focus from outcomes to your own efforts, attitudes, and character.

- Accept uncertainty about everything else.

- This can reduce anxiety and resentment, even if Epictetus's strict metaphysical claim is too strong.

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3. Four Justifications for Focusing Only on What Is Up to You

Epictetus offers multiple overlapping reasons for part (2):

3.1 Psychological Freedom and Happiness

- If you treat externals as if they were truly yours, you will be:
  - "Thwarted, miserable, and upset"
  - Blaming gods, fate, and other people
- If you treat only your inner life as yours:
  - "No one will ever coerce you or hinder you"
  - You will have no enemies, and "no one will harm you," because true harm would require corrupting your mind, which is under your control.

Argument form:

1. Being thwarted happens when you desire what you can't control.

2. If you only desire what you can control (your own rational action), you can never be thwarted.

3. Therefore, you become psychologically invulnerable.

3.2 Moral Responsibility and Self-Respect

- Your virtue—how you judge and act—is the only thing that is truly your achievement.

- Wealth, beauty, status can come from luck, inheritance, or corruption.
- So:
  - Pride in externals is misguided ("You are not your horse; you have a good horse").
  - You should base self-respect on how you handle appearances and choices, not on external success.

3.3 Piety and Agreement with Nature / God

- The world is governed by a rational order (god/nature) which assigns each event.
- Our role:
  - Treat events as the "play" assigned by the playwright.
  - Our task is not to choose the part (beggar, official, sick, healthy), but to play whatever part we get well.
- To fight externals is to fight nature; to accept them is to cooperate with the divine order.

3.4 Logical Coherence about Good and Bad

- If things truly good or bad could be taken from you by others, then your moral state would partly depend on others' choices.
- Then:
  - Your goodness could be destroyed by someone else's decision.
  - This makes virtue too fragile.
- So:

- True goods and bads must be confined to what no one else can control: your own rational choices.

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4. Managing Desire and Unsatisfied Wants

4.1 The Problem: You Want Something You Don't Have

When a desire is unsatisfied, possible responses:

1. Try to get what you want.
2. Change the world so that the object becomes available.
3. Change your desire instead of the world.
4. Change what you count as truly good or bad.

Epictetus says: (3) and (4) are often better.

4.2 Why Satisfying Desire Is Not Always Best

- If you aim at externals (wealth, status, praise), you:
  - Depend on other people and luck.
  - Risk anxiety, envy, bitterness, and fear of loss.
- Also, many pleasures bring regret or new dependencies:
  - Overindulgence, addictions, vanity about looks or social media, etc.

So:
- Trying to satisfy every desire can make you less free and less happy.

4.3 The Stoic Solution to Desire

Core strategy:

1. For now, suspend desire for externals.
   - Epictetus even suggests temporarily eliminating desire, and using only:
     - Impulse (toward what seems appropriate)
     - Rejection (away from what seems against nature)
   - This is like going on a mental "desire diet."
2. Detach aversion from externals.
   - Don't be averse to illness, death, poverty. Those are not truly bad.
   - Be averse only to:
     - Acting unjustly
     - Failing to live rationally and in accord with nature
3. Eventually, redirect desire toward what is up to you.
   - Desire to:
     - Be just, brave, and self-controlled

        - Hold correct judgments

        - Accept events as they occur
4. Align your will with reality.
    - "Do not seek to have events happen as you want them to, but want them to happen as they do happen."

4.4 The Bath Example

Scenario: You go to a public bath.

- What you would like:
    - A quiet, pleasant, clean experience.
- What usually happens:
    - People splash, jostle, insult, steal, etc.

Stoic practice:

1. Before acting, remind yourself what the situation is like.
    - "At baths there are people who splash, jostle, insult, steal."
2. Set a double aim:
    - "I want to bathe"

    - "and to keep my mind/choices in accord with nature."
3. When things go wrong, remind yourself:
    - "I did not want just a bath, but a bath while remaining rational and calm. I cannot keep my choices in accord with nature if I get angry."

Lesson: - You change the kind of desire: not "I must have a perfect bath" but "I must keep my mind in order whatever happens at the bath."

4.5 The Olympics Example

Wanting an Olympic victory:

- Epictetus: if you want to compete, you must accept:
    - Strict diet, painful training, injuries, heat and cold, risk of public defeat.
- If you only want the glory but not the full package, you're childish.

Applied to Stoic practice:

- If you want the "gold medal" of inner freedom:
    - You must accept giving up:
        * Some worldly ambitions (wealth, office, status)

        * Some pleasures and comforts

    - You cannot have complete Stoic freedom and also chase externals in the usual way.

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5. Freedom of the Mind as True Freedom

5.1 Who Is the True Slave? Who Is the True Master?

Epictetus's definitions:

- A person's master:
  - Anyone who has power over what that person wants or fears—can grant it or take it away.
- Slave (in the philosophical sense):
  - Someone whose happiness depends on things controlled by others or by luck:
    - Needs others' approval
    - Craves money, status, sex, comfort
    - Fears poverty, illness, death, disgrace
  - Such a person must "obey" those who control these externals.
- True master / truly free person:
  - Desires and fears only what is up to them:
    - Their own judgments and choices
  - Since no one can force them to think or value wrongly, no one can enslave them.
  - Even if they are literally in chains or beaten, their mind remains free.

Epictetus:
> Whoever wants to be free, let him not want or avoid anything that is up to others. Otherwise he will necessarily be a slave.

5.2 Freedom as Invulnerability

- If you only care about what you control:
  - No one can make you lie, flatter, or do wrong; they can only hurt your body or externals.
  - You can lose everything external and still retain what matters most: a good will.
- Epictetus claims:
  - You become "invincible" by refusing to enter contests whose outcome isn't up to you.
  - You stop competing for status, praise, and material success—things others can take.

5.3 Is This Freedom Really Possible?

Challenges:

- Human psychology:
  - Emotions and attachments arise spontaneously; hard to limit caring only to inner states.
- Social reality:
  - Institutions and others can seriously constrain your options and shape your character.

Stoic reply:

- The perfect sage is extremely rare, but:
  - We can make progress by:
    - Constant practice (anticipating difficulties; reflecting on what's up to us)

        * Gradually loosening the grip of externals on our minds

- So treat it as an ideal and a direction, not an all-or-nothing fact about you now.

5.4 Is This Ideal Desirable?

Worry: It sounds cold or inhuman.

- If I am invulnerable:
  - Do I stop caring about my family, friends, or social justice?
  - Do I just shrug at terrible events and say “it’s just an appearance”?

Epictetus’s response:

1. Appropriate action based on relationships.
   - You still have duties as:
     - Parent, child, sibling, citizen, friend.
   - Being rational includes:
     - Taking care of your father
     - Treating your brother as a brother even if he behaves badly
     - Helping your city in ways consistent with virtue
2. Differentiating inner disturbance from outer concern.
   - You may still help others, comfort them, act to improve the world.
   - You just don’t let your inner peace depend on success in these aims.
3. Compassion for others’ vulnerability.
   - Most people are not Stoics, and even Stoics are far from ideal:
     - They are vulnerable to external harm and emotional pain.
   - Therefore:
     - You must treat them well, avoid cruelty, and not use Stoicism to justify harming them.

5.5 Is It Cruel and Uncaring When Applied to Others?

Worry: - If I think only judgments harm us, I might say to a suffering person: - “Your problem is just your opinion” — which is dismissive and unkind.

Epictetus’s guidance:

- When seeing someone grieving:
  - Recognize philosophically: the real problem is their judgment.
  - But in practice:
    * “Do not hesitate to sympathize with him verbally, and even to moan with him,”
    * Just don’t let yourself internally believe that the external event is a genuine evil.
- With others:

- You treat them as genuinely affected, because they are vulnerable at their current stage.

- Stoicism is not a tool for blaming victims; it's primarily for working on your own mind.

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6. The Insufficiency of Purely Intellectual Work

Epictetus stresses that merely understanding arguments is not enough:

1. Distinction:
   - Theoretical work:
     - Learning definitions, distinctions (e.g., what is a demonstration, truth, conflict).
   - Practical work:
     - Actually changing desires, handling insults, facing illness or death calmly.
2. Critique of armchair philosophy:
   - Many people:
     - Can explain Stoic logic and ethics in detail.
     - But their lives are still driven by fear, anger, vanity, and attachment to externals.
   - This is like:
     - Praising a trainer's manual but never working out.
3. What is required beyond intellect:
   - Habitual exercises:
     - Pre-rehearsing difficulties (bath example, death of loved ones, failure, insult).
     - Monitoring your judgments when upset ("What belief is making this feel terrible?").
     - Starting with "little losses" (spilled oil, stolen wine) as training opportunities.
   - Constant self-watchfulness:
     - Treat yourself like an invalid who must protect healing parts (your developing rational faculty).
4. Evidence of real progress:
   - You blame no one else, praise yourself less, aren't thrown off by praise or blame, and care less about externals.
   - You are more cautious with desires and aversions, and you are on guard against yourself "as an enemy lying in wait."

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7. How to Love Your Family (Stoically)

Epictetus's challenge:
- How to love deeply without becoming enslaved by fear of loss.

7.1 Seeing Loved Ones as Mortal and "On Loan"

Key practices:

1. Remember what they are: mortal human beings.

    - When you kiss your child or spouse, remind yourself:
        - "I am kissing a mortal human being."
    - This is not to love them less, but to:
        - Avoid reacting with total collapse if they die.
2. Think of them as temporarily entrusted to you.
    - A child, spouse, or property is "given" by nature or god.
    - When they die or are lost, say:
        - "I have given it back," not "I've lost it."
    - Your role:
        - Care for them well while they are with you, as travelers care for things in an inn.
3. Banquet metaphor:
    - Life is like a banquet:
        - When a dish (child, partner, office, wealth) is placed before you, take it politely.
        - When it passes on or doesn't arrive, don't grab or strain after it.
    - You enjoy them while present, but you do not cling.

7.2 Duties from Relationships

- Being someone's:
    - Father, mother, child, sibling, spouse, friend
- Entails specific appropriate actions:
    - Care, patience, forgiveness, support.
- Even if:
    - Your father is bad, you still owe him fatherly respect and care.
    - Your brother wrongs you, you still act as a brother should, focusing on your role.

7.3 Loving Without Enslavement

Epictetus's model:

- Do:
    - Love your family, care for them, fulfill your role, suffer with them in a measured way when they suffer.
- Don't:
    - Make your own happiness depend on their survival, success, or perfect behavior.
    - Demand that they live forever or be flawless — that's wanting what is not up to you.

This gives a distinctive ideal:

- Deep engagement in action, measured detachment in judgment.
    - Act as a devoted parent / child / partner.
    - Internally remember:
        * They are mortal, and your ultimate good lies in your own character, not in their fate.

Quick Summary for Exam Recall

- Two parts to living well:

  (1) Perfect your rational faculty (virtue).

  (2) Care only about what is up to you; accept the rest as fate.

- Up to you: judgments, choices, desires/aversions as guided by reason.
  Not up to you: body, possessions, reputation, office, others' actions, outcomes.
- Why focus only on what's up to you?
  Psychological invulnerability; genuine self-respect; piety toward rational nature; logical coherence about what counts as a true good/bad.
- Managing desire:
  Don't always try to satisfy desires; often better to change desires.
  Bath example: set higher aim of keeping mind in accord with nature.
  Olympics example: you must accept full costs of the goal; can't mix full Stoic freedom with ordinary ambition.
- Freedom vs slavery:
  True slave: person ruled by desires for externals other people control.
  True master: person whose desires are confined to their own rational choices.
  Ideal: mental invulnerability; controversial but defensible as an aspirational ideal.
- Insufficiency of intellectual work:
  Knowing doctrines is useless without practice.
  Need daily exercises, habit-change, and self-watchfulness.
- Loving family:
  Fulfill relational duties with real care.
  Remember they are mortal and "on loan."
  Love them, but don't make your ultimate happiness depend on their remaining safe or perfect.

4: Epicurus

Epicurus (Epicureanism) – Exam Notes

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1. Three Theses of the Epicureans

1.1 Physicalism

- Claim: Everything that exists is physical (bodies and void).
- Human soul/mind is made of fine atoms and dies with the body.
- No immortal soul, no afterlife, no consciousness after death.
- Importance:
  - Removes fear of post-mortem punishment or reward.
  - Supports the idea that death is the end of experience, so cannot be a felt harm.

1.2 Atheism (in the Epicurean sense)

- Epicurus rejects traditional religious views of gods as:
  - World-rulers,
  - Rewarding the virtuous,
  - Punishing the wicked,
  - Interfering in human affairs.
- If gods exist at all, they are perfectly blessed and unconcerned with us.
- So:
  - No need to fear gods.
  - Religious fear of divine punishment is a major source of mental disturbance; Epicurus aims to eliminate it.

1.3 Hedonism

- Only pleasure is intrinsically good, and only pain is intrinsically bad.
- But "pleasure" is understood in a specific way:
  - Not constant partying, luxury, or intense stimulation.
  - The highest pleasure = absence of bodily pain and absence of mental disturbance.
    - Bodily: no illness, hunger, extreme discomfort (aponia).
    - Mental: no fear, anxiety, or turmoil (ataraxia).
- We should:
  - Choose actions by calculating overall pleasure vs pain.
  - Sometimes endure a pain now for greater pleasure later.
  - Sometimes forgo a pleasure now to avoid greater pain later.

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2. How Best to Pursue Pleasure and the Absence of Pain

2.1 The Goal: Ataraxia and Aponia

- Ataraxia: calm, tranquil, deeply peaceful state of mind.

- Aponia: absence of bodily pain.
- Living well = achieving and maintaining this stable condition, not chasing highs.

2.2 Basic Strategy: Satisfy Basic Needs, Not Luxuries

Epicurus divides desires:

1. Natural and Necessary Desires
    - Needed for:
        - Life itself (food, water, shelter).
        - Freedom from bodily distress (basic health).
        - Happiness (friendship, security, freedom from fear).
    - Features:
        - Few and simple.
        - Easy to satisfy (in principle).
        - Once met, they bring lasting contentment and remove pain.
    - Examples: simple food and drink, safe shelter, close friends, peace of mind.
2. Natural but Not Necessary Desires
    - Have a natural basis but are not required for happiness or survival.
    - Examples: fancy foods, sexual variety, comfort upgrades.
    - They add extra pleasure but can increase dependence and vulnerability.
    - Should be treated as optional bonuses, not as needs.
3. Vain or Groundless Desires
    - Have no natural limit; often socially constructed.
    - Examples: unlimited wealth, fame, high status, luxury lifestyles, immortality.
    - Hard or impossible to fully satisfy; typically create anxiety and dissatisfaction.
    - Epicurus: these are harmful and should be eliminated as far as possible.

Key recommendation:
Concentrate on natural and necessary desires; be cautious about natural-but-not-necessary; reject vain desires.

2.3 Why Simple Living Promotes Pleasure

- Self-sufficiency: If you can be content with little, you are:
    - Less dependent on luck and social approval.
    - Less vulnerable to loss.
- Simple, modest living:
    - Keeps the body healthy.
    - Makes one more resilient in hard times.
    - Lets you enjoy occasional luxuries more when they happen.
- Epicurus insists hedonism is not about constant luxury but about removing pain and disturbance.

2.4 Is It Really Easy to Meet Basic Needs?

- Epicurus claims basic bodily and mental needs are:
    - Few,
    - Simple,

  - Easy to meet.
- Potential criticism (important to note):
  - How easy it is to secure food, shelter, safety, and friendship depends on your society:
    * In unjust or impoverished conditions, meeting basic needs may be very hard.
  - This raises questions about how realistic Epicurean advice is in oppressive or unequal contexts.

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3. Why Not Pursue Fame, Power, and Wealth?

Epicurus explicitly advises: do not organize your life around fame, political power, or great wealth.

3.1 Reasons Against Pursuing These Goals

1. The pursuit itself is stressful
   - Climbing social or political hierarchies demands:
     - Flattery, competition, deception, constant vigilance.
   - This creates ongoing anxiety and conflict, undermining ataraxia.
2. Low chance of success, and fear if you succeed
   - Most people won't achieve great fame, power, or wealth → frustration and disappointment.
   - If you do succeed:
     - You become anxious about losing what you gained.
     - You must constantly defend and maintain your position.
   - Result: mental disturbance, fear, and instability.
3. You get "spoiled"
   - Becoming used to luxury and status raises your "baseline":
     - Ordinary experiences no longer satisfy you.
     - You need ever more to feel the same level of pleasure.
   - This makes you less self-sufficient, more fragile, and easier to disturb.

3.2 Connection to Hedonism

- Epicurus is not anti-pleasure; he thinks fame, power, wealth:
  - Do not reliably increase net pleasure.
  - Typically introduce more anxiety, fear, and disturbance than they are worth.
- True Epicurean calculation:
  - Ask: "Will this pursuit, overall, reduce pain and disturbance?"
  - For fame/power/wealth, Epicurus answers: No.

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4. The Role of Friendship in Epicureanism

4.1 Why "Friendship is Golden"

Epicurus sees friendship as one of the greatest sources of stable pleasure.

Main benefits:

1. Security and support
    - Friends provide:
        - Material help in need (food, shelter, care).
        - Protection in a dangerous world.
    - This reduces fear about the future (a major mental disturbance).
2. Emotional well-being
    - Companionship, affection, mutual concern → ongoing mild pleasures.
    - Shared joy and reduced suffering:
        - Happiness is enhanced when shared.
        - Burdens are lighter when others help carry them.
3. Philosophical and moral support
    - Like-minded friends help each other:
        - Maintain Epicurean attitudes (e.g., not fearing death, not chasing vain desires).
        - Practise prudence and virtue.
    - This stabilizes ataraxia over time.

4.2 Friendship vs Material Wealth

- Epicurus: friends offer more real security than wealth.
    - Wealth can be stolen, lost, taxed.
    - True friends are more reliable in crisis and maintain your mental peace.
- Instead of chasing public recognition and riches, Epicurus advises:
    - Invest your time and energy in close, supportive friendships.

4.3 Cultural Dependence

- How well friendship can provide security depends partly on:
    - Social structures and norms (e.g., legal systems, safety nets, persecution).
- In some cultures:
    - Tight-knit communities may make Epicurean friendship especially effective.
- In harsher contexts:
    - Friendships may be more fragile under external pressure.
- The core idea: whatever the culture, strong friendships are a central, relatively reliable route to long-term pleasure and security.

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5. Epicurus' Argument that "Death is Nothing to Us"

5.1 Core Argument

Epicurus's key claims:

1. All good and bad consist in pleasure and pain.
    - Something is bad for you only if it involves, or leads to, your suffering (physical or mental).
    - Something is good for you only if it involves pleasure or removes pain.
2. Pleasure and pain require sense-experience.
    - You feel pleasure and pain only while you are conscious.

    - No awareness → no pleasure, no pain.
3. Death is the complete absence of sense-experience.
    - At death, the soul/mental atoms disperse.
    - There is no subject left to feel anything.
    - Therefore, there is no pleasure and no pain after death.
4. Therefore, death is nothing to us.
    - “When we exist, death is not present; when death is present, we do not exist.”
    - There is never a time when both you and your state of being dead coexist.
    - So death cannot be experienced as a harm by you.

Conclusion:
We should not fear being dead, because being dead is not an experience and thus cannot be bad for us.

5.2 The “You’ll Miss Out” Objection

Objection: Even if you don’t feel anything when dead, death is bad because: - It deprives you of future pleasures you could have had.

Epicurean reply:

1. Harm requires a subject.
    - To be harmed, you must exist at the time you are harmed.
    - After death, there is no “you” to be deprived.
    - So deprivation by death cannot be bad for you.
2. Anticipatory fear is irrational.
    - People suffer now from fear of a future state (non-existence) that:
        - Will never be experienced.
    - Epicurus: This is unnecessary mental pain based on confusion.
    - Once you grasp that death is nothing, the fear dissolves, making life more pleasant.
3. Focus on quality, not length, of life.
    - The wise person:
        - Does not cling to life at any cost or fear non-existence.
        - Seeks the most pleasant life, not the longest.
    - Once you have lived pleasantly (with ataraxia), there is no rational need to crave more and more time.

5.3 The Four-Part Cure (Tetrapharmakos)

Epicurus offers a “four-part cure” for human anxiety. It targets the main sources of mental disturbance:

1. Don’t fear the gods.
    - Gods, if they exist, are blissful and non-interfering.
    - No divine punishment or reward to fear → reduces religious anxiety.
2. Don’t fear death.
    - Death is the end of sensation.
    - No possible experience of pain after death.
    - Understanding this removes the fear of being dead and much of the fear of dying.
3. What is good is easy to obtain.

- True goods are:
  - Basic bodily needs (simple food, water, shelter).
  - Basic mental needs (friendship, freedom from fear).
- These are few and simple, at least in principle, so a happy life is within reach.

4. What is bad is easy to endure.
   - Intense pains tend to be short; long-lasting pains are often mild enough to be bearable.
   - With the right mindset, most suffering can be tolerated without destroying happiness.

Connection to death: - Parts (1) and (2) directly remove fear of supernatural punishment and non-existence. - Parts (3) and (4) reassure us about life's hardships, making our finite life sufficient and acceptable. - Altogether, the Four-Part Cure aims to secure ataraxia, showing why death and the finiteness of life are not threats to happiness.

Summary for Exam

- Three theses: Physicalism (no immortal soul), Atheism (no interventionist gods), Hedonism (pleasure = good, pain = bad; highest pleasure = absence of pain/disturbance).
- Best pursuit of pleasure: Satisfy natural and necessary desires; simple life; avoid vain desires (fame, wealth, power) which create stress and anxiety.
- Friendship: Central to security and stable pleasure; superior to wealth; crucial for long-term ataraxia.
- Death is nothing: No sensation after death → no pain → no harm; fear of death is based on confusion; Four-Part Cure removes fears (gods, death, poverty, suffering) and secures tranquility.

5: Upanishads

1. Atman = Brahman

1.1 Key Terms

- Atman
  - Your true Self.
  - Not your body, personality, thoughts, or emotions.
  - The deepest “I” that remains the same through all changes (waking, dreaming, deep sleep; childhood, adulthood, old age).
- Brahman
  - Ultimate reality; the Infinite.
  - The unchanging source, support, and inner essence of everything.
  - Not a personal god in a mythological sense, but the deepest reality of the universe.
- Central claim of the Upanishads:
  Atman = Brahman
  - Your deepest Self is identical with ultimate reality.
  - The same reality that is the “inmost Self” of everything is also your true Self.
  - Famous formula: “You are that.”

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2. Ultimate vs Superficial Reality

2.1 Names and Forms vs Underlying “Stuff”

Upanishadic teaching uses everyday examples:

- Clay / Gold / Iron metaphors
  - If you know what clay is, you in a sense know all clay pots, bowls, statues:
    - They differ only in name and form.
    - The underlying stuff is clay.
  - Similarly for gold jewelry or iron tools:
    - Superficial reality: ring vs necklace vs bracelet (different shapes, purposes, social meanings).
    - Ultimate reality: all are just gold (same substance).

Lesson:
Most differences we focus on (shape, role, label, function) are superficial.
What really matters metaphysically is the underlying reality.

2.2 Applying This to Ourselves and the World

- Superficial reality (appearance):

  - Individual persons, animals, trees, rivers, planets.
  - Social roles: student, parent, boss, stranger.
  - Psychological features: likes, dislikes, memories, moods.
  - All these are “names and forms,” constantly changing.
- Ultimate reality (what they really are):
  - All beings share a single inner essence: Brahman, the Self of all.
  - Our apparent separateness is like:
    * Different clay pots made of one clay.
    * Many rivers that merge into one sea.
    * Drops of honey from many flowers blended into one.

Claim:
If you see only names and forms, you see the world superficially.
To see ultimately is to recognize that the same Self, Brahman, is present in all.

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3. Two Metaphors for Atman = Brahman: Ocean vs Actor

The same equality “Atman = Brahman” can be understood in two different ways, using two metaphors. These correspond to two kinds of identity.

3.1 Two Kinds of Identity

- Quantitative (numerical) identity
  - “A = B” means they are literally one and the same thing, just under different descriptions.
  - Example: “Clark Kent = Superman” – there is only one person.
- Qualitative identity
  - Two things are exactly alike in qualities but are still two things.
  - Example: two identical phones from the same factory.

3.2 The Ocean Metaphor (Quantitative Identity)

- Picture:
  - Many waves on the surface of the ocean.
  - Each wave looks separate and has its own size, shape, “life story.”
  - But every wave is just the ocean in a temporary form.
- Applied to Atman = Brahman:
  - Each individual self (Atman) is like a wave.
  - Brahman is like the ocean itself.
  - Deep truth: there is only one reality (ocean); the many selves are not truly separate.
  - When you realize this, you stop thinking of yourself as a separate “little self” and identify with the whole.
- Type of identity: quantitative
  - There is only one Self, appearing as many.

3.3 The Actor Metaphor (Qualitative Identity)

- Picture:
  - One actor plays many roles: doctor, villain, lover, king.
  - The characters are really distinct from each other (different backstories, personalities).
  - But they are all expressions of the same underlying actor.
- Applied to Atman = Brahman:
  - Brahman is like the actor.
  - Individual persons are like the roles.
  - Each person is a genuinely distinct center of consciousness, but:
    - They all share the same fundamental nature or essence.
    - Each Atman is of the same kind as Brahman, even if not numerically the same "individual."
- Type of identity: qualitative
  - Each Atman shares the same fundamental properties as Brahman (infinite, pure consciousness, etc.), but there may be many such centers.

3.4 Why This Matters

- Ocean view:
  - Strong monism: only one real Self.
  - Individuality is an illusion or a superficial appearance.
  - Ethics: can support radical compassion—harming others is harming "yourself" (the same Self).
- Actor view:
  - Many real individuals, all with a divine nature.
  - You and others are different, but all equally manifestations of the same infinite reality.
  - Ethics: respect every person as a "role" of the same ultimate actor.

On an exam, be ready to:

- Define qualitative vs quantitative identity.
- Explain how ocean = quantitative, actor = qualitative.
- Connect these to different ways of understanding "Atman = Brahman."

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4. Experiencing the Atman = Brahman Worldview

4.1 "Trying on" the Worldview

If you move through your day as if Atman = Brahman were true:

- Self-perception:
  - You are not just "this body, this ego, this resume."
  - You identify with the deeper consciousness witnessing all your experiences.
- View of others:
  - Every person (even enemies, strangers, annoying people) shares the same inner Self.
  - Treat others as "you in another form" (ocean) or as fellow roles played by the same ultimate actor.
- Emotions and fears:

  - Less fear of death: the body dies, but the Self is like the “life of the tree” that leaves the branch yet does not die.
  - Less anxiety about status, praise, blame: these affect only the “role,” not the underlying actor.
- Connection with the world:
  - You see continuity between yourself and nature: trees, rivers, animals are expressions of the same reality.
  - Everyday changes become like different waves on one ocean.

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5. Why Believe Atman = Brahman?

5.1 Testimony of the Enlightened

- Upanishads appeal to the testimony of people who claim to have:
  - Deep realization of the Self through meditation and spiritual discipline.
  - Direct experience that the individual self and the universal Self are one or of the same nature.
- Pattern:
  - Like someone who has visited a distant country telling you what it’s like.
  - You haven’t been there; you rely on credible witnesses.
  - Similarly, enlightenment reports are treated as “expert testimony” about a kind of experience most people lack.

5.2 Empirical Testability

- In principle, the claim is empirical in a broad sense:
  - It’s about what can be directly experienced in a transformed state of consciousness.
  - It’s not just a logical truth or a mere definition.
- But:
  - Not testable with current standard scientific methods (e.g., lab experiments, surveys).
  - Access seems to require special inner practices (meditation, ethical discipline, etc.).

5.3 Practical Epistemic Situation

- You must decide how to live under ignorance and uncertainty:
  - You cannot prove the Atman = Brahman doctrine in advance.
  - But you also cannot conclusively disprove it.
- Upanishadic suggestion:
  - Consider the possible benefits if it is true (deep joy, freedom from fear).
  - Try practices like meditation on a small scale to see whether they:
    * Reduce suffering,
    * Increase peace and insight, even short term.
  - Use these “trial results” as partial evidence when deciding how much to commit.

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6. The Path of Pleasure vs The Path of Joy

6.1 Two Ways of Living

- Path of Pleasure:
  - Main aim: maximize pleasant experiences and minimize unpleasant ones.
  - Focus on external goods:
    - Sense pleasures (food, sex, comfort).
    - Social pleasures (praise, admiration, status).
    - Material pleasures (money, possessions).
- Path of Joy:
  - Main aim: realize the Self and attain abiding inner joy.
  - Focus on:
    - Knowledge of the Infinite (Brahman).
    - Inner transformation through meditation, reflection, and discipline.
    - Detachment from dependence on external conditions.

The Upanishadic message:
To chase pleasure is, unavoidably, to chase pain.
Joy offers a fundamentally different alternative.

6.2 Why Pleasure and Pain Go Together (Two Reasons)

1. Dependence on External, Changing Things
   - Pleasure depends on specific objects and circumstances:
     - Tasty food, a comfortable body, friendly treatment, success.
   - These are:
     - Unstable (aging, loss, illness, failure, others' choices).
     - Outside your full control.
   - When:
     - You don't get what you want → frustration, disappointment.
     - You lose what you enjoy → grief, anxiety.
   - Result: building your life on pleasure is like building on shifting sand.
2. Craving, Habituation, and Contrast
   - Pleasure tends to:
     - Create craving for more: what was once enough stops satisfying.
     - Lead to habituation: over time, the same stimulus produces less pleasure.
     - Change your baseline: after intense pleasures, ordinary life feels dull or painful by comparison.
   - Thus:
     - You need ever-greater stimulation just to feel "okay."
     - Neutral or mildly pleasant states can feel like deprivation.

Conclusion:
Pursuing more pleasure usually increases instability, craving, and vulnerability to pain.

6.3 Nature of Joy

- Source:
  - Internal: arises from realizing your true Self and its relation to Brahman.

  - Not tied to specific external outcomes; it can persist through success and failure.
- Direction:
  - Undirected:
    * Not “I’m joyful about getting X.”
    * More like a background radiance or peace that doesn’t need a particular reason or object.
- Feel:
  - Intense and peaceful at the same time:
    * Not frantic excitement or adrenaline rush.
    * Deep fulfillment and stillness.
- Value comparison:
  - Joy is “billions to the pennies of pleasure”:
    * Even small amounts of true joy vastly outweigh large amounts of ordinary pleasure.
    * The quality of experience is categorically different, not just a bit better.

6.4 Lasting Joy: How to Move Toward It

Upanishadic strategy involves at least two central components:

1. Shift Your Aim from Pleasure to Joy
   - Intellectually:
     - Recognize the built-in link between pleasure and pain.
     - See that chasing pleasure cannot deliver what you ultimately want: secure, lasting fulfillment.
   - Practically:
     - Loosen attachment to pleasure as your main life goal.
     - Accept some short-term discomfort (e.g., discipline, restraint) for deeper long-term well-being.
2. Cultivate Knowledge of the Self (Atman) and the Infinite (Brahman)
   - Practices:
     - Meditation and inward attention: learning to rest in awareness itself, not in passing thoughts and sensations.
     - Ethical discipline: reducing greed, hatred, and selfishness, which cloud perception of the Self.
     - Reflective inquiry: “Who or what am I really?”, distinguishing the witnessing Self from body and mind.
   - Aim:
     - To move from merely hearing about Atman = Brahman to directly realizing it.
     - This realization is said to be the source of abiding joy.

6.5 Infinite vs Finite: Why Joy Outlasts Pleasure

From the Nārada story:

- All ordinary knowledge and accomplishments concern the finite (limited, changing things).
- The sage teaches:
  - Only the Infinite is the source of abiding joy.
  - Finite things cannot provide lasting happiness because they always change.

Thus, according to the Upanishads:

- Path of Pleasure = dedication to the finite: always unstable, ultimately unsatisfying.
- Path of Joy = dedication to the Infinite (Brahman): the only secure foundation for lasting happiness.

Summary for Exams

Be able to:

- Define Atman and Brahman, and explain the claim Atman = Brahman.
- Contrast ultimate vs superficial reality using the clay/gold/iron and related metaphors.
- Explain qualitative vs quantitative identity, and link:
  - Ocean metaphor → quantitative identity (one Self, many apparent forms).
  - Actor metaphor → qualitative identity (many individuals sharing the same divine nature).
- Describe the path of pleasure vs the path of joy, including:
  - Two reasons pleasure is tied to pain.
  - Key features of joy (internal, undirected, intense and peaceful).
  - Why joy is “billions to the pennies of pleasure.”
  - The main elements in moving from pleasure-seeking to joy (shift of aim + realization of the Self).

6: Bhagavad Gita

1. The Bhagavad Gita on Identity: What Is (and Isn't) Ultimately Valuable

A. Two "selves": superficial self vs. Atman

1. Superficial self (not ultimately valuable)
    - Body: appearance, health, strength
    - Personality traits: shyness, extroversion, preferences
    - Social roles: student, worker, friend, parent
    - Social markers: wealth, status, reputation, success/failure
    - Passing mental states: emotions, worries, ambitions, fears
    - The Gita treats these as changeable, temporary, and ultimately not what you most truly are.
2. Atman (true self) (ultimately valuable)
    - The inner, unchanging self or consciousness.
    - Deeper than body and personality; not affected by success/failure, praise/blame.
    - Ultimately identical with, or deeply connected to, the divine or universal reality.
    - Enlightenment = realizing and identifying with this deeper self, not with the superficial layers.

B. Loss of self: what is lost and what is preserved

- The Gita advocates "loss of self" in the sense of:
    - Letting go of attachment to the superficial self (ego, image, status, personal story).
    - Letting go of self-centeredness: concern only with one's own advantage.
- It does not mean:
    - Destroying awareness or becoming nothing.
    - It means shifting identity toward the Atman and away from ego and selfishness.

C. Implications for identity and self-worth

- Common view: "Who I am" = talents, career, accomplishments, social image.
- Gita's view:
    - These are not ultimately what gives you worth.
    - Your true worth comes from your deeper nature (Atman), which is:
        * Equal in everyone
        * Unharmed by external success/failure
    - Therefore:
        * Your exam results, job status, looks, and popularity do not touch the core value of who you are.
        * You can act vigorously in the world, but without tying your identity and self-worth to outcomes.

For the exam: be ready to explain - The difference between superficial self and Atman. - Why external features (status, success, etc.) are not ultimately valuable. - How "loss of self" can be compatible with a deep, valuable self (Atman).

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2. Work as Meditation

A. What is “work as meditation”?

Central idea: Whatever you are doing, do it with full, undivided attention, as a kind of meditation.

- Give one task your full focus.
- Avoid multi-tasking; avoid mental drifting.
- Each action is done with complete awareness and presence.
- This applies to:
  - “Spiritual” activities (prayer, formal meditation)
  - Ordinary tasks (studying, washing dishes, answering emails)

So “work as meditation” = turn your daily activities into a spiritual practice of focused attention and loss of ego.

B. Two main obstacles: split attention and monkey mind

1. Split attention
   - Your attention is divided between:
     - The task itself
     - Other things: phone, music, side conversations, background worries
   - Results:
     - Superficial involvement
     - Lower effectiveness
     - Less satisfaction/enjoyment
2. Monkey mind
   - The mind jumps restlessly from thought to thought, like a monkey from branch to branch:
     - “What if I fail?”
     - “What’s next on my to-do list?”
     - “I’m bored, I want something else.”
   - Even when your body stays with the task, your mind is elsewhere.
   - Blocks the deep absorption needed for “work as meditation”.

C. Two common sources of distraction

The lecture highlights two especially important causes of distraction:

1. Worrying about the outcome
   - Thoughts like:
     - “Will I get an A?”
     - “Will my boss be impressed?”
     - “Will this make me look smart/successful?”
   - This leads to:
     - Anxiety and stress
     - Constant mental checking of future scenarios
     - Loss of full attention to what you’re actually doing now

- Connects directly to attachment to results (discussed more below).

2. Rushing
   - Mindset: “I have to get this over with as fast as possible to move on to the next thing.”
   - Effects:
     - You never really “arrive” in the present task; you’re always mentally in the future.
     - Increased errors, shallow work.
     - No space for the calm, steady attention required for meditative work.

Key point: Worrying about outcomes and rushing both: - Create split attention and monkey mind. - Prevent the deep, unified attention that turns work into meditation.

D. Why work this way? Three main reasons

The course emphasizes three reasons to approach work as meditation:

1. Step toward enlightenment / loss of self
   - Focusing fully on the task dissolves the ego temporarily:
     - Less time thinking “How am I doing?” “What does this say about me?”
     - More time just doing the action itself.
   - This supports:
     - Loss of attachment to superficial self.
     - Experiencing a more spacious, less self-centered awareness.
   - Over time, this is seen as a path toward spiritual realization (of the Atman).
2. More enjoyable
   - Deep absorption can make even simple tasks satisfying:
     - Cooking, cleaning, studying become more pleasant when fully attended to.
   - The Gita-friendly idea: How you attend to an activity matters more for happiness than what the activity is.
     - A boring task with deep attention can be more fulfilling than an exciting task done with distraction.
   - Enjoyment comes from:
     - Flow-like states
     - Calm, stable mind rather than restless monkey mind.
3. More effective
   - Focused attention:
     - Reduces mistakes.
     - Increases quality and speed of learning.
     - Improves performance at work or study.
   - Non-attachment to results can reduce anxiety, freeing cognitive resources to do the task well.
   - So work-as-meditation is not only spiritually valuable, but also practically efficient.

For the exam: be ready to - Define “work as meditation.” - Explain split attention and monkey mind. - Identify the two common sources of distraction (worrying about outcome; rushing) and how they interfere. - State and briefly explain the three reasons for working this way (enlightenment, enjoyment, effectiveness).

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3. Detachment from Outcome and Reward

A. Core idea: act without attachment to results

The Gita strongly recommends:

- Do your work / fulfill your duties, but do not be attached to the fruits (results) of your actions.
  - Perform the action with care and attention.
  - Let go of:
    - Craving for success, praise, money, status.
    - Fear of failure, criticism, loss.

Key elements:

1. Work without expectation of reward
   - Do not make reward (grades, money, status) your main motive.
   - Instead:
     - Act out of duty, conscience, love, or commitment to what is right.
   - The Gita claims: those who work without expecting reward reach the true goal of meditation.
2. Not upset by failure
   - If things go badly:
     - You recognize that outcomes are not fully under your control.
     - You do not let failure damage your sense of self-worth.
   - Emotional stability:
     - No wild swings between elation at success and despair at failure.
3. Security unaffected by results
   - The wise are inwardly secure because their identity rests on the Atman, not on external outcomes.
   - So they can keep acting energetically without being psychologically enslaved to results.

B. How this relates to “loss of self”

Detachment from results = another aspect of loss of self:

1. Loss of selfishness
   - If you are not focused on what you personally gain or lose, you can:
     - Care more about others’ well-being.
     - Serve a larger good (family, community, humanity, the divine).
   - Actions become less self-centered and more oriented toward duty and compassion.
2. Less ego-involvement
   - You are less concerned with:
     - “What does this say about me?”
     - “Am I winning or losing compared to others?”
   - More focus on the quality of action itself rather than on what it does for “me”.

C. Detachment vs. laziness or inaction

Important clarification:

- Detachment from outcome does NOT mean:
  - Doing nothing.
  - Doing things carelessly.
  - Being indifferent about whether others are harmed or helped.
- The Gita's ideal:
  - Energetic, responsible action + inner detachment from results.
  - You still:
    - Study hard.
    - Do your job.
    - Fulfill your role obligations (e.g., as student, worker, friend, citizen).
  - But:
    - You do not rest your identity or happiness on how the results turn out.

The text even suggests that those who act without attachment to reward achieve the true goal of meditation, more than those who simply withdraw from action.

D. Role obligations and right action

- Everyone has role obligations: duties linked to one's position (student, child, employee, etc.).
- In the Gita's framework:
  - You should perform your role duties sincerely and competently.
  - The focus is on doing the right thing in your role, not on maximizing personal gain.

So the ideal person: - Acts according to duty (dharma) and compassion. - Works with full, meditative attention. - Is not driven by reward or paralyzed by fear of failure.

E. Connection to work as meditation

Detachment from outcome supports work as meditation in several ways:

1. Reduces worry about the outcome
   - Less mental energy spent on "What will happen?"
   - More mental space for calm, focused attention on the task.
2. Reduces rushing
   - If you are less fixated on finishing and "getting" the reward, you can:
     - Be fully present with the current step of the work.
     - Move at a steady, thoughtful pace.
3. Deepens loss of self
   - When you are not working for "my reward," you:
     - Identify less with the ego.
     - Experience work as something done through you, rather than for you as a separate, grasping self.

For the exam: be ready to - Explain what it means to be detached from outcome/reward. - Describe how this differs from laziness or indifference. - Connect detachment from results to: - Loss of

selfishness - Work as meditation - The Gita’s view of role obligations and spiritual progress.

7: Buddha

1. The Four Noble Truths (Pali Canon)

Buddha presents human life using a medical model: disease, cause, cure, treatment.

1.1 The First Noble Truth: There is Suffering (Dukkha)

- Claim: Life inevitably involves dukkha.
- Dukkha includes:
  - Obvious suffering: pain, grief, illness, aging, death.
  - Dissatisfaction: frustration, restlessness, anxiety.
  - The fact that everything we enjoy is fragile, changing, and cannot be held onto.

Not saying “everything is awful all the time.”
Instead: recurring forms of suffering are inevitable as long as we live in the ordinary way.

Why internalizing this can reduce suffering: - Lowers unrealistic expectations that life “should” be smooth. - Reduces shock/resentment when difficulties arise. - Creates a sense of shared human condition (“not just me”), which can soften self-pity and isolation. - Encourages acceptance instead of constant inner protest (“this must not be happening”).

Exam skill: Be able to explain how accepting that life contains suffering can paradoxically make it easier to bear.

1.2 The Second Noble Truth: Suffering is Caused by Desire (Craving / Clinging)

- Central claim: The main mental source of suffering is desire understood as craving or attachment (clinging), not just wanting in a neutral sense.
- We suffer when:
  - We want something we don’t have (status, relationship, object, success).
  - We have something but cling to it and fear losing it.
  - We crave certain feelings (pleasure, admiration) and resist their ending.

Objection: “It’s not the wanting, it’s the not having.”

Response (Buddhist-style): - Getting what you want often: - Produces only short-lived satisfaction. - Leads quickly to new desires and new dissatisfaction. - Generates anxiety about losing the thing gained. - So the structure of craving itself (never being satisfied, always needing more) is the deeper problem, not just “not having” right now.

You are encouraged (in this course) to: - Treat this as an empirical hypothesis. - Run your own experiments: Notice what happens after a desire is fulfilled. Does deep contentment last, or does the mind quickly move on to the next craving?

Objection: “Not all suffering comes from desire – what about physical pain?”

Buddhist reply: The Two Darts

- First dart:

  - The raw, unavoidable physical or emotional pain (e.g., illness, injury, loss).
  - This is part of human life; Buddhism does not deny it.
- Second dart:
  - The extra suffering we add through our mental reactions:
    * "This is unbearable, this shouldn't be happening to me."
    * Fear, resentment, self-blame, catastrophizing.
    * Clinging to how things should have been.
  - This second dart is largely driven by craving and aversion.

Key idea:
We may not control the first dart, but we can greatly reduce the second dart by working with our desires, expectations, and reactions.

1.3 The Third Noble Truth: To Eliminate Suffering, Eliminate Desire

- Claim: If craving/attachment is the main cause of our suffering, then weakening and finally ending craving is the way to end that suffering.
- This is about ending clinging, not ending all forms of motivation or interest.

Objection: "If I eliminate desire, I'll just sit and do nothing and die."

Response using a key distinction:

- Attachment / Craving (clinging):
  - "I MUST have X; I can't be okay without it."
  - Tightly bound to identity, self-worth, and fear.
  - Produces anxiety, anger, jealousy, desperation.
- Mere Preference / Project:
  - "I would like X; I care about X; I'll work for X."
  - But: "If X doesn't happen, I can still be fundamentally okay."
  - Motivates action and care without obsession or despair.

Ending suffering means ending attachment (craving), not ending all preferences, values, or projects.

1.4 The Fourth Noble Truth: The Eightfold Path as the Way to Eliminate Desire

- Very brief for this exam:
  The Eightfold Path is the practical training (in wisdom, ethics, and mental discipline) designed to weaken and eventually uproot craving.
- For this course, the most relevant part is the mental discipline component: mindfulness and meditation practices that train non-clinging awareness.

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2. Preference vs Attachment (Clinging/Craving)

This distinction is crucial for understanding how to live an active life without generating unnecessary suffering.

2.1 Preference (Healthy Wanting)

- A preference is:
  - A calm inclination toward certain outcomes.
  - Compatible with flexibility and acceptance.
- Examples:
  - "I want to do well on this exam, so I'll study hard. If I don't get the grade I hope for, I'll be disappointed, but I'll be okay."
  - "I'd like people to like me, but I can survive and still be basically content if some don't."

Signs you are operating from preference: - You take action, but your sense of worth doesn't collapse if things go badly. - You can adjust plans when circumstances change. - Emotional reactions are present but not overwhelming or long-lasting.

2.2 Attachment / Clinging / Craving

- An attachment or craving is:
  - A rigid, emotionally charged "must."
  - Often tied to identity ("If I don't get this, I am a failure / unlovable / meaningless").
- Examples:
  - "I MUST get into this specific program; otherwise life is ruined."
  - "My partner MUST never leave me; I couldn't live without them."
  - "People MUST respect me; any criticism is unbearable."

Signs of attachment: - Obsessive thinking and rumination. - Strong fear, anxiety, or anger when the desired object is threatened. - Inability to let go even when the pursuit is clearly harmful.

2.3 Why the Distinction Matters

- Attachment is the kind of desire identified in the Second Noble Truth as the main cause of dukkha.
- Preference allows:
  - Energetic action,
  - Compassion,
  - Commitment to projects,
  - Without the heavy burden of constant anxiety and despair.

Exam skill: Be able to: - Define preference vs attachment. - Explain why eliminating attachment does not equal apathy or death. - Give a concrete example showing you can care deeply about something from a place of preference rather than clinging.

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3. Practicing Letting Go (Non-Clinging) and the Lake Metaphor

The third noble truth is made practical through non-clinging: learning to "hold lightly" all experiences, thoughts, and emotions.

3.1 Basic Practice: Letting Go

Two core steps:

1. Notice
   - Become aware of what is happening in your mind and body right now:
     - Thoughts ("He insulted me," "I'm going to fail").
     - Emotions (anger, fear, envy).
     - Bodily sensations (tight chest, clenched jaw).
   - You can silently label: "worrying," "anger," "planning," "remembering."
2. Release (Let Go)
   - Instead of feeding the thought with more stories, gently drop it.
   - You don't push it away with force; you simply stop holding on.
   - It's like relaxing a tight grip on an object and letting it fall from your hand.
   - You allow the emotion to move through without acting it out or amplifying it.

Key point:
Letting go is not suppression. You aren't pretending the feeling isn't there; you are just not clinging to it or building elaborate narratives around it.

You are encouraged to experiment: - Start with small annoyances (a slow line, minor criticism). - Notice the urge to replay the story ("He wronged me!"). - Practice releasing the thoughts and see whether the suffering decreases.

3.2 Resistance and Aversion

- Non-clinging includes not only releasing craving but also releasing resistance:
  - Craving: grasping what is pleasant.
  - Aversion: pushing away what is unpleasant with anger, fear, or hatred.
- Both are forms of attachment:
  - Clinging to pleasure.
  - Clinging to the idea that pain or difficulty "must not exist."

Practice: - When unpleasant experiences arise (pain, embarrassment, sadness): - Notice the impulse to fight, tense up, or mentally scream "No!" - Soften around the experience instead. - Let it be present without either feeding it or suppressing it.

3.3 The Lake Metaphor

Ideal: The mind like a calm, still lake.

- When the mind is calm:
  - Thoughts and emotions are like ripples or waves.

  - They arise and pass without disturbing the depth of the lake.
  - The lake doesn't cling to pleasant ripples or try to push away unpleasant ones.

Applied: - Hatred, injustice, fear, and anxiety will still arise. - But the calm mind: - Sees them clearly, - Doesn't dwell on them unnecessarily, - Doesn't keep re-stirring the water with repetitive stories.

Connection to the Dhammapada: - Continually thinking "He abused me, he struck me, he wronged me" keeps hatred alive. - Letting go of those thoughts allows hatred to settle, like waves dying down on a lake.

Exam skill: Be able to: - Describe the lake metaphor. - Explain how it illustrates non-clinging and the reduction of suffering.

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4. Awareness without Resistance:

"Don't Cling, Don't Push Away, Don't Ignore"

This is a meditation instruction for cultivating a particular kind of awareness.

4.1 Awareness without Resistance

- Awareness: Clearly noticing what is happening in your mind and body right now.
- Without resistance: Not fighting, grasping, or turning away from what you notice.

This involves training three attitudes:

4.2 Don't Cling (No Grasping of Pleasant Experiences)

- When something feels good (pleasure, praise, success), notice:
  - The urge to hold on: "This must last," "I need more of this," "I can't lose this."
- Practice:
  - Enjoy the pleasant experience fully while it is present.
  - At the same time, recognize its impermanent nature.
  - Let it pass without chasing it or mentally replaying it over and over.

Why this helps: - Reduces anxiety about losing good things. - Weakens craving and dependency on specific conditions for happiness.

4.3 Don't Push Away (No Aversion to Unpleasant Experiences)

- When something is painful or uncomfortable, notice:
  - Tension, resistance, and mental protest ("This is awful; it must stop now").
- Practice:
  - Allow the discomfort to be there in your awareness.
  - Stay with the raw sensation (tightness, heat, heaviness) without adding extra commentary.

  - This directly reduces the “second dart” of suffering.

Example: - Physical pain: Notice the pure sensations (pressure, throbbing) and breathe with them, instead of adding “This is unbearable, I’ll never cope.” - Emotional pain: Allow sadness or fear to be felt in the body without rejecting it.

4.4 Don’t Ignore (No Numbing or Distraction)

- A third common strategy is to ignore discomfort:
  - Constant distraction (scrolling, noise, overwork).
  - Numbing (overuse of substances, compulsive entertainment).
- This may give short-term relief but:
  - Leaves underlying patterns untouched.
  - Allows craving and fear to continue shaping your life unconsciously.

Practice: - When you notice the impulse to distract yourself immediately: - Pause. - Turn toward the experience for a moment: - “What am I actually feeling right now?” - “Where do I feel this in my body?” - Give it some gentle, non-judging attention.

4.5 Meditation Experiments: Applying “Don’t Cling, Don’t Push Away, Don’t Ignore”

In formal meditation (e.g., sitting quietly focusing on the breath):

- When pleasant experiences arise (relaxation, calm):
  - Notice them.
  - Don’t cling: enjoy them but allow them to change or fade.
- When unpleasant experiences arise (restlessness, boredom, pain):
  - Notice them.
  - Don’t push away: stay with them gently; let them come and go.
- When you feel like spacing out or distracting yourself:
  - Notice the urge to “check out.”
  - Don’t ignore: stay present with what is happening, even if subtle or dull.

Over time: - This trains the mind to be like the calm lake. - It undermines the habits of craving, aversion, and ignorance that fuel suffering.

What You Should Be Able to Do for the Exam

1. Four Noble Truths
   - State and briefly explain each.
   - Explain how internalizing “there is suffering” can reduce suffering.
   - Explain “suffering is caused by desire” and the “two darts” idea.
2. Preference vs Attachment
   - Define each clearly.
   - Explain why eliminating attachment is not apathy.

- Give your own example of acting from preference rather than clinging.

3. Practicing Letting Go & Lake Metaphor
    - Describe the two-step practice: notice, release.
    - Explain the role of resistance and how letting go addresses it.
    - Explain the lake metaphor and how it illustrates non-clinging.
4. Awareness without Resistance
    - Explain the instruction: “Don’t cling, don’t push away, don’t ignore.”
    - Show how each of the three (clinging, pushing away, ignoring) contributes to suffering.
    - Describe how meditation experiments embody this approach.

8: Mengzi

1. Mencius' Central Thesis: Human Nature Is Good

Claim

- Human nature is good: every human has an innate tendency toward goodness.
- Specifically, we all have at least a "sprout" of benevolence (compassion).

"Sprout" Metaphor

- Virtue begins as a small, fragile tendency, like a plant sprout:
  - It is natural (comes from within us).
  - It requires nurturing (education, practice, good conditions).
  - It can be damaged or destroyed if treated badly.
- Benevolence is not a fully developed virtue in everyone, but the capacity and inclination are universal.

Four Sprouts (only benevolence is crucial for this exam, but context helps)

Mencius says all humans have four innate "minds": 1. Pity/compassion → sprout of humaneness (benevolence). 2. Shame/dislike → sprout of rightness. 3. Respect/reverence → sprout of propriety. 4. Sense of right/wrong → sprout of wisdom.

For the exam: focus on (1) pity/compassion as the sprout of benevolence and as evidence that human nature is good.

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2. Mencius' Arguments for Innate Goodness

Mencius' strategy: look at how people actually react in certain situations, and argue that the best explanation is that humans have innate benevolence.

Argument 1: The Child and the Well

Thought experiment: - Imagine you suddenly see a small child about to fall into a well. - Mencius: any normal observer will feel alarm and distress.

Key points about this reaction: - It is immediate and spontaneous, not calculated. - It is directed at the child's danger, not at your own benefit.

Mencius: what explains this reaction? - Not: - Desire for reward. - Fear of punishment. - Worry about reputation. - Instead: - A natural "unbearable" heart: you cannot bear to see another suffer. - This is the sprout of benevolence.

Conclusion from the child-at-the-well case: 1. We all have this immediate, non-calculated concern. 2. This concern is best understood as concern for the child's welfare for its own sake. 3. So we all possess at least a sprout of benevolence. 4. Therefore, human nature is good in the sense of having an innate tendency toward benevolence.

Argument 2: The King and the Ox

Story: - A king sees an ox being dragged to sacrifice, terrified and trembling. - He spares the ox, ordering it replaced with a sheep. - People say he is being “stingy,” unwilling to sacrifice an ox. - The king says: it was not stinginess; he just could not bear the ox’s suffering.

Mencius’ interpretation: - The king clearly felt compassion for the ox. - This shows he has the sprout of benevolence. - The problem is not that he lacks benevolence, but that he fails to extend it: - He pities the ox he sees. - But he does not yet extend the same compassion to his own suffering people.

Key lesson: - Even rulers who seem cruel may show moments of compassion. - These moments reveal an underlying good nature. - Morality consists in developing and extending these sprouts, not creating them from scratch.

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3. The Alternative Egoist View & Their Objections

The Egoist’s Basic Position

Egoist thesis: - Human beings are fundamentally self-interested. - Every action is ultimately motivated by self-benefit: - Pleasure, safety, comfort. - Avoiding guilt or inner discomfort. - Reputation, praise, social approval. - Apparent benevolence is instrumental: we help others only because it benefits us.

This directly conflicts with Mencius: - Mencius: humans have genuinely other-regarding motives. - Egoist: apparently altruistic actions are actually covert self-interest.

Egoist’s Objection to the Child-and-the-Well Case

Egoist reinterpretation of motivation: - When you see the child, your reaction can be explained egoistically: - You imagine the disturbing scene and want to avoid your own emotional pain. - You fear that others would blame you if you did nothing. - You feel discomfort at not living up to your self-image as a decent person. - So, they argue, your real motive is: - Avoiding your own emotional distress. - Protecting your reputation. - Therefore, the egoist claims: - Mencius has not shown any genuinely altruistic motive. - He has merely described a complex form of self-interest.

Egoist’s Objection to the King-and-the-Ox Case

Egoist reinterpretation: - The king spares the ox not because he cares about the ox. - Rather: - He cannot stand his own feeling of discomfort at seeing the ox’s fear. - Sparing the ox is simply a way to stop his own unpleasant feelings. - If he really cared about animals or people, he would be consistently benevolent. - His selective compassion indicates that this is about managing his own feelings, not a stable other-regarding concern.

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4. How Mencius Might Reply to the Egoist (Focus on Motivation)

Mencius' core reply: the egoist misdescribes the structure and timing of our motivations.

Reply 1: The Phenomenology of the Reaction

- Our first reaction to the child-at-the-well or the ox is:
  - Immediate alarm and pity aimed at the other's danger or suffering.
- Thoughts about:
  - Reputation,
  - Guilt,
  - Self-image, come later, if at all.

So: - The primary motive is concern for the child/ox. - Self-interested thoughts are, at most, secondary and derivative. - This supports Mencius' view that we have a basic benevolent motivation.

Reply 2: Best Explanation of Sacrifice

- In many cases, people help others at real cost to themselves:
  - Risking safety to save a child.
  - Giving up resources with no audience watching.
- If they were purely egoistic, it would be irrational to incur real cost when:
  - No one is watching.
  - They get no compensation.

Mencius' point: - The best explanation is that people sometimes: - Value others' good for its own sake. - Are moved by the "unbearable" heart of compassion.

Reply 3: The King-and-the-Ox — What He Could Have Done

Mencius' interpretation emphasizes what the king could have done if he were only self-interested:

- If the king's sole aim were to avoid his discomfort, he might:
  - Look away.
  - Stay away from sacrifices.
  - Delegate everything and never see the suffering animal.
- Instead, he:
  - Acts to protect the ox itself, even at some cost (must find another animal, risk criticism).
- This suggests:
  - His ultimate concern is not just "I don't want to feel bad," but "I don't want it to suffer."
  - That looks like a genuinely other-directed motive.

Reply 4: Having Mixed Motives

Mencius can allow: - People often have mixed motives: - Compassion + concern for reputation + desire to avoid guilt. - But: - The existence of any genuine other-regarding component is enough

to show that: - Human nature is not purely egoistic. - There is at least a sprout of benevolence operating alongside self-interest.

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5. Objection: If Nature Is Good, Why So Much Bad Behavior?

Objection

- If human nature is innately benevolent:
  - Why do people frequently lie, cheat, harm, and kill?
  - Why are there cruel rulers, criminals, and indifferent bystanders?

Reply #1: Good Nature Can Be Overwhelmed (Water & Barley Analogies)

Water analogy: - Water naturally flows downhill. - You can make it splash upward or flow uphill by force (dams, channels). - But: - That doesn't change its nature; its tendency is still downward.

Similarly: - Human nature tends toward goodness (benevolence). - People can be forced or conditioned into bad behavior by: - Poverty, social chaos, bad role models, corrupt leaders, trauma, etc. - This is like forcing water uphill: against its natural tendency.

Barley analogy: - Plant barley in the same field, same time: - With good soil, rain, and care → healthy crop. - With poor conditions → stunted or withered. - The seeds still have the same natural capacity.

Applied to humans: - All have the same basic moral capacities, but: - Environment + upbringing affect how far they develop. - So bad behavior reflects corrupted, blocked, or stunted sprouts, not a bad nature.

Reply #2: Multiple Motivations in Human Nature

- Mencius can accept that we also have:
  - Desires for food, sex, survival, comfort, power.
- Human nature contains competing tendencies:
  - Benevolence vs. self-interest vs. fear, etc.
- Saying "human nature is good" means:
  - Our distinctively moral core (the heart-mind) has an inclination toward goodness.
  - But this can be overridden by other drives if not cultivated.

So: - Failure to act benevolently does not show that the benevolent sprout is absent. - It shows that it is too weak, ignored, or overpowered.

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6. Objection: What About People Who Seem to Have No Benevolence at All?

Objection

- Some people appear utterly cruel or indifferent:
  - Tyrants, violent criminals, cold manipulators.
- Do they disprove Mencius' claim that everyone has the sprout of benevolence?

Mencius' Reply: Ox Mountain Analogy

Ox Mountain story: - Ox Mountain was once covered in beautiful trees. - But: - Constant cutting by woodcutters stripped the trees. - New shoots tried to grow with the help of rain and dew. - Then cattle and sheep ate the shoots. - Eventually the mountain looked barren, and people assumed: - "This mountain has always been bare."

Mencius' lesson: - The mountain's nature was never to be barren; it was made barren. - Human beings are similar: - Everyone starts with sprouts of benevolence and rightness. - Bad upbringing, trauma, constant vice, lack of rest and reflection: - "Hack away" at the moral sprouts. - Over time: - A person can look morally "barren," like Ox Mountain. - Observers may wrongly think: "they were always like that." - But in Mencius' view: - Their original nature was not bad. - Their sprouts were destroyed or buried, not absent from birth.

This maintains: - Universality of good human nature. - While explaining how some people come to appear completely vicious.

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7. Extending Benevolence: The Work of a Lifetime

Starting Point: Partial and Local Benevolence

- Most people naturally feel stronger compassion for:
  - Family, close friends, those nearby, beings they can directly see.
- Many examples (like the king and the ox) show:
  - Compassion is triggered by vivid, close-up suffering.
- Moral growth involves extending this natural compassion more widely.

What "Extending Benevolence" Means

- Recognizing that:
  - The suffering of distant or unfamiliar people/animals is morally like the suffering of those near you.
- Deliberately cultivating:
  - Concern for strangers, subjects, foreigners, etc.
- For rulers:
  - Extending the same compassion felt for an ox or a family member to the entire populace.
- For individuals:
  - Treating the suffering of unknown people as genuinely important, not negligible.

This is not creating a new motive from scratch, but: - Taking the existing sprout (e.g., compassion for a child at a well, or for one's own family), - And broadening its scope through: - Reflection (seeing similarities), - Habit, - Education and ritual.

The Farmer Who Pulled Up the Sprouts (Warning Against Forcing Development)

Mencius' parable: - A farmer is impatient for his plants to grow. - He goes out and pulls them upward to "help" them grow. - Result: the crops wither and die.

Moral: - Virtue cannot be forced unnaturally. - Proper cultivation of benevolence involves: - Providing the right nourishing conditions: - Good education, moral reflection, decent material conditions, good examples. - Avoiding: - Ignoring the sprouts (neglect). - Forcing them in an artificial or harsh way (self-torturing, showy moralism). - The development of benevolence is: - A gradual, lifelong process. - Like carefully watering and protecting a plant, not violently transforming it.

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8. Benevolence and Happiness

Mencius' implied view on the relation:

- Because:
  - Our true nature is benevolent,
  - Acting in accordance with benevolence is:
    - Deeply satisfying,
    - Central to a flourishing life.
- A life of cruelty or pure egoism:
  - Conflicts with our innate moral tendencies.
  - Likely leads to inner disturbance, not true happiness.
- So:
  - Pursuing benevolence and pursuing genuine happiness are ultimately aligned.
  - Developing and extending the sprout of benevolence is not a sacrifice of happiness, but a way of fulfilling our nature.

Summary of Key Exam Points

- Human nature is good: everyone has innate moral tendencies, especially a sprout of benevolence.
- Child at the well: shows spontaneous, non-calculated compassion → evidence of innate benevolence.
- King and the ox: king's pity shows benevolent sprout; problem is failure to extend it to his people.
- Egoist view: all actions are ultimately self-interested; reinterpret Mencius' cases as about avoiding personal discomfort or reputational harm.
- Mencius' replies: timing and focus of our reactions, willingness to sacrifice, and better explanatory power of genuine altruism.
- Bad behavior: explained by good nature being overwhelmed (water forced uphill, barley in poor conditions) and competing motivations.
- Apparently vicious people: like Ox Mountain; original sprouts destroyed or buried, not absent from birth.

- Extending benevolence: main task of moral life; broaden natural compassion, but do not “pull up the sprouts” by forcing; proper, gradual cultivation leads to both virtue and happiness.

9: Tao Te Ching

1. Freedom vs. Precise Rules

Central Taoist Idea

- Good living and governing should emphasize freedom and flexibility, not rigid, detailed rules.
- Key concept: wu wei – “non-forcing” or “effortless action.”
  - Not literal inaction.
  - Acting in a way that fits smoothly with natural tendencies and circumstances.

Why prefer freedom to rules?

- Reality is complex, always changing. Fixed rules are too crude and simplistic.
- Over-specific rules:
  - Ignore context.
  - Encourage people to game the system rather than do what’s genuinely best.
- Taoist ideal:
  - Simple, broad principles (e.g., be like water: helpful, non-contentious).
  - Let people respond flexibly to situations.

Political / personal freedom

- The text suggests that:
  - Over-regulated societies create resentment and clever rule-breaking.
  - Over-regulated lives (personal schedules, self-rules) create stress and rigidity.
- Instead, cultivate inner understanding and character so detailed external rules are less necessary.

2. How “Pushing” via Precise Rules Can Backfire

What is “pushing”?

- Trying to get results through:
  - Direct pressure, confrontation, force.
  - Rigid plans and strict rules.
  - Aggressive control of self, others, or the world.

Taoist diagnosis of backfiring

1. Act and you ruin it; grasp and you lose it.
   - Interfering too much can disrupt natural processes that would have gone well on their own.
   - Example: micromanaging a competent team; constant “fixing” makes things worse.
2. People ruin work when near success.
   - Over-pushing near the end:
     - Adds pressure and anxiety.
     - Leads to mistakes and burnout.
   - Implication: keep the same calm, patient attitude throughout.
3. The world is a ‘spiritual vessel’ that cannot be controlled.
   - The world (and people) are too subtle to be mastered by force.
   - Attempts at tight control:

    - Often provoke resistance.
    - Create new problems (unintended consequences).
4. Hard vs. soft, strong vs. weak.
    - What is stiff and hard is vulnerable; what is soft and flexible endures.
    - Forceful “pushing” is like a rigid tree: impressive but easy to break.

Overall lesson

- Pushing and rigid rule-following often overshoot, misread the situation, and generate the very problems they aim to solve.
- Taoism doesn’t say “never act” but urges less brute forcing, more subtle steering.

3. How (If at All) Should We Try to Influence Events?

Not total passivity

- Taoism is not pure fatalism.
- Ideal is responsive, low-friction influence, not domination.

a. Steering Rather Than Forcing

- Analogy: steering a boat with the current, not rowing furiously against it.
- Approach:
    - Notice existing tendencies and directions.
    - Make small, well-timed adjustments instead of grand, heroic interventions.
    - Work with people’s motivations and habits instead of against them.

b. Influence Through Understanding and Timing

- Attend to what is easy to influence early:
    - It’s easier to guide a small plant than a giant tree.
    - Easier to shape habits early rather than correct entrenched behavior.
- Influence by:
    - Anticipating problems before they become severe.
    - Acting early, gently, and quietly.

c. Influence in an Inconspicuous Way (“Hide”)

- Ideal sage:
    - Does not boast, show off, or seek credit.
    - Influences in a way that minimizes tension and conflict.
    - Is like water: helpful, but not competing for status or praise.
- This “hidden” influence:
    - Avoids triggering ego, defensiveness, and rivalry.
    - Lets others feel ownership of decisions.

Objection: Is this manipulative?

- Worry: If you influence others without them noticing, are you secretly controlling them?
- Taoist reply (as reconstructed in class):
    - The sage does not impose selfish agendas; instead:

        * Helps others “find their nature.”
        * Tries to remove obstacles, fear, and anger.
    - The aim is harmony, not domination:
        * Influence is light-touch and reversible.
        * Listens and responds, rather than secretly plotting.

d. Casting off extremes, excess, extravagance

- Influence should avoid:
    - Extreme policies.
    - Overreaction.
    - Unnecessary showiness.
- Moderate, simple actions are more stable and less likely to provoke backlash.

Summary

- We should try to influence events—but:
    - Indirectly, gently, and early.
    - With humility and willingness to adapt.
    - Seeking alignment with others’ good and with natural tendencies.

4. Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

Definitions

- Intrinsic motivation: Doing something for its own sake (interest, meaning, joy, care).
- Extrinsic motivation: Doing something for external rewards or to avoid punishment (grades, status, money, praise, fear).

Taoist emphasis

- Taoist practice leans strongly toward intrinsic motivation:
    - Do what fits the tao (the natural way of things) because it is right and harmonious, not for reward.
    - The sage “desires no desires, prizes no prizes”:
        * Not driven by external prizes or recognition.
        * Finds contentment in simple, natural living.

Dangers of extrinsic motivation

- External rewards:
    - Intensify competition and contention.
    - Encourage showing off rather than genuine virtue or insight.
    - Lead to attachment – never “enough,” always wanting more.
- When rules are tied to rewards/punishments:
    - People follow the letter, not the spirit.
    - They may obey when watched, cheat when unsupervised.

Intrinsic motivation and wu wei

- When intrinsically motivated:
    - Action feels effortless and enjoyable (wu wei).

    - One “flows” through life instead of struggling for external markers.
- Taoist happiness:
    - Found in the activity itself (e.g., helping, creating, living simply), not in its payoffs.

Exam angle

- Be ready to explain:
    - How Taoism criticizes over-reliance on external incentives.
    - Why cultivating intrinsic motivation fits better with freedom, non-pushing, and effortless action.

5. The Contrarian Impulse

What is the contrarian impulse here?

- Many Taoist claims sound paradoxical or opposite to commonsense:
    - “Crippled becomes whole.”
    - “Weak overcomes strong.”
    - “The bright road seems dark.”
- This is not just wordplay; it’s a deliberate challenge to standard assumptions.

Targets of Taoist contrarianism

1. Strength and hardness
    - Ordinary view: strong, tough, assertive is best.
    - Taoist view: soft, yielding, and flexible actually survive and prevail.
        - Water wears down rock.
        - The soft newborn is alive; the stiff corpse is dead.
2. Visibility and self-promotion
    - Ordinary view: to succeed, one must stand out, advertise, compete.
    - Taoist view:
        - “Do not display yourself, and you shine.”
        - Hidden, unpretentious virtue is more stable and effective.
3. Straightforward progress
    - Ordinary view: the right path is obvious, linear, and clear.
    - Taoist view:
        - The true path seems dark, backward, or strange at first.
        - Wisdom looks foolish to those who only respect conventional success.

Philosophical function

- The contrarian style:
    - Breaks habitual thinking.
    - Forces re-examination of what “success,” “power,” and “control” really are.
- It supports the Taoist claim:
    - Our intuitive preference for pushing, strict rules, obvious strength is often misguided.
    - We need to reverse some values: prize softness, subtlety, and hidden influence.

Exam tip

- Be ready to:

  - Give examples where weakness beats strength (e.g., flexibility in negotiation vs rigid demands).
  - Explain how this contrarian stance supports wu wei and skepticism about control.

6. Understanding Before Action

Core slogan

- Understanding must precede meaningful, effective action.
- Taoism calls for caution, observation, and responsiveness before doing anything significant.

a. Cautious, observant attitude

- The wise person is:
  - Careful, like crossing an icy river.
  - Respectful, like a considerate neighbor or a polite guest.
  - Open and receptive, like a valley or uncarved wood.
- These images stress:
  - Humility – you don't already know everything.
  - Attentiveness – you pay close attention before acting.

b. "Calm the muddy water; it becomes clear"

- The mind is often like muddy water:
  - Agitated by fear, anger, desire, preconceived theories.
- If you stop thrashing:
  - The mud settles.
  - You can see what's actually there.
- Application:
  - Before acting, quiet strong emotions and biases.
  - Let understanding arise from clear perception, not from theory alone.

c. "The way is gained by daily loss"

- To understand better, we must let go of:
  - Unhelpful intense emotions (fear, rage, greed).
  - Rigid assumptions and ideologies.
  - Overcomplicated, ego-driven plans.
- "Daily loss":
  - Not losing important values, but dropping what blocks clear seeing.

d. Planning early, but not over-acting

- It is wise to:
  - Notice things when they are small and easy to guide.
  - Plan before situations become entrenched.
- But:
  - Excessive, fussy action ("act and you ruin it") undermines the very project.
- Balance:

  - Understand the tendencies early, act lightly and precisely.
  - Maintain the same care at the end as at the beginning.

e. Steering vs. preconceived schemes

- Taoism warns against:
  - Clinging rigidly to pre-made plans and “systems” about how the world must work.
- Instead:
  - Watch how things actually unfold.
  - Adjust – “mix freely” like muddy water stirred, then allowed to settle.
- Understanding is interactive:
  - You test small moves, see responses, and learn.
  - Big, irreversible actions taken without understanding are dangerous.

Exam summary

- “Understanding before action” connects all other themes:
  - Without understanding, precise rules are blind and crude.
  - Without understanding, pushing backfires.
  - True influence comes from seeing clearly and timing well.
  - Intrinsic motivation and contrarian insight both arise from deep reflection, not shallow imitation of conventional ideas.

10: Zhuangzi

Zhuangzi: Virtues and Vices in Daoism

General picture

- Dao (the Way): the natural, ever-changing flow of the world.
- Human problem: we cling to fixed views, roles, and plans; this makes us rigid, anxious, and out of sync with the Dao.
- Solution: cultivate certain virtues (dispositions or skills) that let us move with the Dao, and avoid certain vices that block us.

The Wheelwright story (key background)

- An old wheelwright sees a ruler reading “the books of the sages”.
- He says:
  - His own craft (making wheels) depends on a knack:
    - If he carves too slowly → wheel is brittle.
    - Too fast → wheel is spongy.
    - Just right → “it fits hand and heart”.
  - This knack:
    - Cannot be fully put into words.
    - Cannot be transmitted just by explanation.
    - Exists as a lived, embodied skill.
- His punchline about the classics:
  - What the sages really knew died with them.
  - Their books are just “dregs” of that living understanding.
- Lesson:
  - Words and rules alone can’t teach you how to live well.
  - You must practice living in harmony with the Dao until you develop a flexible, responsive knack.

This same idea underlies Daoist virtues and genuine pretending: the point is not to follow explicit rules, but to cultivate fluid, skillful responsiveness.

Virtues in Zhuangzi

These are traits that help you attune to the Dao.

1. Openness

- What it is:
  - Willingness to see from multiple perspectives; not locking into one “this is absolutely right” standpoint.
- Textual support:
  - “Illumination of the Obvious”: the sage recognizes that “this” and “that” (right/wrong, mine/yours) arise from particular standpoints.

  - The sage “lets them all bask in the broad daylight of Heaven” instead of clinging to one side.
- Function:
  - Makes you receptive to how things actually are now, rather than forcing reality into your preconceptions.
  - Basis for tolerance: “each thing is just so, each thing is right” from its own perspective.

2. Adaptability

- What it is:
  - Ability to shift views, plans, and roles as situations change.
- Examples:
  - Monkey/Chestnut story (“three in the morning”):
    - Trainer: “3 chestnuts in the morning, 4 at night.”
    - Monkeys angry.
    - Trainer: “Fine: 4 in the morning, 3 at night.”
    - Monkeys delighted.
    - Nothing really changed, but he flexibly adjusted to their current standpoint (“the rightness of their present ‘this’ ”).
  - Sage “walking two roads”:
    - Uses varying “rights and wrongs” to harmonize with people.
    - Yet stays “at rest in the middle of Heaven’s potter’s wheel” (keeps an inner center while adapting outwardly).
- Function:
  - Lets you live effectively in a world where values and perspectives constantly shift.
  - Opposite of stubbornness about one correct way.

3. Spontaneity

- What it is:
  - Natural, unforced responsiveness; acting from a deeply trained knack rather than from tight, self-conscious control.
- Connection to Wheelwright:
  - The wheelwright’s cutting is not calculated step-by-step; it flows from “hand and heart”.
  - This is trained spontaneity: practice + letting go of rigidity.
- Connection to Ziqi “losing me”:
  - Ziqi says he has “lost me”:
    - He no longer clings to a fixed, controlling ego.
    - He is moved by the “piping of Heaven” (the natural processes that blow through “the ten thousand differences”).
- Function:
  - Prevents overthinking.
  - Allows alignment with the Dao as it manifests right now.

4. Attentiveness

- What it is:
  - Sharp awareness of subtle changes in self, others, and environment.

- Examples:
  - Listening to the “piping of Heaven”:
    - The wind blows through different hollows; each hollow gives a distinct sound.
    - Attentiveness = hearing the specific situation rather than imposing one sound on all.
  - Stories about dream/awakening:
    - Recognizing how different states (dreaming/waking, life/death, joy/sorrow) arise and pass.
- Function:
  - Makes you responsive instead of automatic.
  - Enables openness and adaptability: you can’t adjust well if you don’t perceive what’s actually happening.

Vices in Zhuangzi

These are patterns that block harmony with the Dao.

1. Rigidity

- What it is:
  - Insisting on one fixed doctrine, one identity, one way of life, or one “true” right/wrong.
- Examples:
  - Debaters (Confucians vs Mohists) each claim to own “right” and “wrong”.
  - Zhuangzi shows any position can be affirmed or denied from some standpoint.
- Why it’s a vice:
  - The world is constantly changing; rigid stances soon conflict with reality.
  - Leads to dogmatism, conflict, and inner tension.

2. Being Stuck or Blocked

- What it is:
  - Getting trapped in one role, mood, or self-conception; inability to move on.
- Examples:
  - People “continue along the same ruts… held fast as if bound by cords.”
  - Zhao Wen’s son endlessly grappling with his father’s zither strings, never moving beyond that narrow skill.
- Why it’s a vice:
  - Blocks transformation of self and perspective.
  - Makes you brittle and unable to cope with new situations.

3. Inattentiveness

- What it is:
  - Moving through life on autopilot; not noticing how all things and evaluations are constantly shifting.
- Examples:

  - People spend life “drowning in their own activities,” never asking what any of it amounts to.
  - Fools assume they are “already awake” to reality, not seeing they’re in a “vast dream”.
- Why it’s a vice:
  - You miss chances to adapt.
  - You cling to illusions about yourself, others, and what really matters.

Embracing Uncertainty, Change, and Transformation

1. Uncertainty

Basic claim

- Uncertainty about the future and our place in the world is built into human life.
- Zhuangzi does not try to remove this uncertainty; instead, he teaches how to live well within it.

Relativity of right and wrong

- “This” and “that”, “right” and “wrong”:
  - Are generated together from particular standpoints.
  - From one perspective, X is right; from another, X is wrong.
- Examples:
  - Different animals “know” different right foods, right habitats, right beauty.
  - Humans prefer certain foods, homes, lovers; fish, birds, deer have totally different standards.
- Conclusion:
  - There is no single, final, objective standard accessible to us that settles all disputes.
  - Our words and arguments are inherently limited and “obscured”.

Zhuangzi’s response: “Radiance of Drift and Doubt”

- The sage’s only “map” is the Radiance of Drift and Doubt:
  - Drift: letting viewpoints and situations flow, not freezing them.
  - Doubt: not clinging dogmatically to any single fixed judgment.
- The sage:
  - “Goes by the rightness of the present ‘this’.”
  - Entrusts judgments to the “everyday function of each thing”:
    - What works for this being in this context.
- This is not nihilism:
  - He still acts, speaks, and cares.
  - But he does so with humility about his own standpoint.

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2. Change and Transformation

Fundamental idea

- The world, our circumstances, and we ourselves are in constant transformation.
- Zhuangzi urges us to embrace this, including:
  - Changes in fortune.
  - Aging and disease.
  - Death.

Key stories and arguments

1. Ziqi “losing me”
   - Ziqi says he has “lost me”:
     - His rigid, ego-centered self has dissolved.
     - He is like a hollow that wind passes through: the “piping of Heaven” produces many sounds.
   - Suggests:
     - The self is not a fixed substance but part of a larger process (“Great Clump” of qi).
     - Openness to transformation of self.
2. Life as dream; dream as life
   - You can dream you drink wine and wake up weeping; or dream weeping and wake up joyful.
   - “While dreaming, you don’t know it’s a dream.”
   - Zhuangzi:
     - Asks if a “great awakening” would make our whole present life look like a dream.
     - Claims that Confucius and the questioner are dreaming; even his own statement is within the dream.
   - Lesson:
     - Our current certainties about what is real, important, or tragic may later look as mistaken as dream-fears.
     - This undercuts obsessive clinging to particular states of life.
3. Butterfly dream
   - Zhuang Zhou dreams he is a butterfly, carefree.
   - Wakes as Zhuang Zhou again.
   - He doesn’t know:
     - Whether he was Zhuang Zhou dreaming a butterfly,
     - or a butterfly now dreaming he is Zhuang Zhou.
   - Calls this the “transformation of one thing into another.”
   - Lesson:
     - Identity is fluid; the boundary between “me” and “not me” is not as strict as we think.
     - We should not cling to one fixed self as ultimately real.
4. Lady Li
   - Lady Li wept when taken from her old life to Qin.
   - When she later enjoyed palace luxury, she regretted her earlier tears.
   - Zhuangzi:
     - Asks whether the dead may similarly regret how tightly they clung to life.
   - Lesson:
     - Our present judgments about what is good/bad (life/death, place/status) are unstable and may be overturned by later transformations.

How to embrace transformation

- "Harmonize with them by means of their Heavenly Transitions":
  - Recognize that every "so" is also "not-so," every "right" also "not-right," in some context.
  - Don't try to force all things into one permanent pattern.
- "Forget what year it is, forget what should or should not be":
  - Drop obsessive calendar- and duty-fixation.
  - Live in the present flow, rather than in abstract schemes.
- Sage's posture:
  - "Standing shoulder to shoulder with the sun and moon, scooping up time and space."
  - Participates in many different "harvests", yet tastes the same underlying "maturation" in all.
  - Even death/life cannot fundamentally disturb him.

Sincerity, Authenticity, Genuine Pretending – and Zhuangzi's Recommendation

This section is about how to understand the self and its roles.

1. Definitions

Sincerity

(Think roughly: inner consistency and earnestness about accepted norms or roles.)

- You:
  - Deeply internalize certain values/roles (e.g., "dutiful son," "loyal minister", "moral person").
  - Strive to align your thoughts, feelings, and actions with those norms.
  - Avoid hypocrisy: you want your inner and outer to match.
- Ideal in many Confucian texts:
  - One should truly embody one's role, not just go through the motions.

Authenticity

(Think roughly: being true to an inner, unique, "real self" that is prior to roles.)

- You:
  - Believe you have a deep, stable core self with its own desires, values, identity.
  - Try to express this inner self outwardly, even if it conflicts with social expectations.
  - Often involves suspicion of social roles as "masks" that distort your real essence.
- Ideal in much modern Western thought:
  - "Be yourself," "find your true self," "don't just conform."

Genuine Pretending

(Concept used by some interpreters to capture Zhuangzi's view.)

- You:

  - Fully and skillfully play your social roles (child, student, friend, worker, etc.).
  - Do so with wholehearted engagement, but with an important awareness:
    * You know that no role or self-description is ultimately, absolutely "you".
    * Roles are tools or costumes that you can change as circumstances change.
- "Pretending":
  - Because roles are not your fixed essence.
- "Genuine":
  - Because you are not deceptive or half-hearted; you throw yourself into the role for now, while knowing it's not ultimate.
- Fits Zhuangzi's idea of:
  - "Walking two roads" (both engaging and stepping back).
  - Letting each "this" be right in its context, without freezing it as absolute.

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2. Zhuangzi's critique of sincerity and authenticity

Problems with rigid sincerity

- When sincerity is tied to one fixed set of norms or one dao:
  - You cling to one moral scheme as the truth (e.g., only one way of being filial, loyal, just).
  - You become rigid and unable to adapt to different situations or people.
- Zhuangzi's targets:
  - Confucians and Mohists who insist on their own "right" and denounce others' as "wrong."
  - People who "follow whatever has so far taken shape in their minds, making that their teacher."
- Consequences:
  - "Continue along the same ruts," exhausted and bewildered.
  - Constant disputes over right/wrong with no final resolution.
- From a Daoist standpoint:
  - Such sincerity is a vice because it opposes openness and adaptability.
  - It ties your identity tightly to one pattern, making change and uncertainty terrifying.

Problems with authenticity (in the Western sense)

- Authenticity assumes:
  - There is a stable, deep "true self" you should discover and express.
  - Social roles are often false impositions that hide this true self.
- Zhuangzi's view of self clashes with this:
  - The self is fluid and interdependent, not a fixed core:
    * Ziqi "loses me".
    * Butterfly dream blurs boundary between "Zhuang Zhou" and "butterfly".
    * Body and mind are just configurations of qi that transform.
  - Our identities and preferences themselves are products of changing circumstances:
    * Lady Li's reversal of feelings about her life situation.
- Thus, a project of "finding and expressing the one, final true self":
  - Misunderstands what a self is.
  - Risks making you cling to yet another rigid story about who you "really" are.

  - Conflict with Daoist embrace of constant transformation.

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3. Why Genuine Pretending fits Zhuangzi

How it works

- You accept that:
  - Roles and identities are necessary: we can't live without them.
  - But they are also contingent and changing: none is ultimately "who you are" forever.
- So you:
  - Take on roles as they arise (student, friend, child, worker).
  - Perform them skilfully and wholeheartedly (like the wheelwright's practiced knack).
  - Stay internally light and flexible:
    - You don't absolutize any role.
    - You let roles transform as situations change.
- This matches:
  - The sage "harmonizing with others" through varying rights/wrongs while remaining at rest in the middle.
  - "Harmonizing with Heavenly Transitions" and "being jostled and shaken by the boundlessness, yet lodged securely in it."
  - Going by "the rightness of the present 'this' " instead of defending one constant identity.

Connection to the virtues

- Openness:
  - Genuine pretending recognizes many legitimate ways of being; you can seriously inhabit different roles without claiming any as the only true one.
- Adaptability:
  - You can step into and out of roles as the context changes (like the monkey-trainer's chestnut counts).
- Spontaneity:
  - Once you have practiced roles and skills, you can perform them effortlessly, without overthinking.
- Attentiveness:
  - You watch for what this situation calls for, rather than mechanically replaying a role-script.

Why Zhuangzi recommends genuine pretending

- It:
  - Respects the inescapable reality of roles (you still act, talk, form relationships).
  - Avoids the rigidity of sincerity (no single fixed dao or identity is treated as absolute).
  - Avoids the illusion of a fixed authentic core (self is recognized as transformable).
  - Allows you to live happily and skillfully within uncertainty and change.
- In short:
  - Zhuangzi's ideal is not "be absolutely sincere" or "express a true inner self,"

– But to play your changing roles genuinely, while knowing they are only roles—this is genuine pretending.

11: Sartre

1. Existence Precedes Essence

Traditional view (essence precedes existence)

- For made objects (e.g., a paperknife):
  - The maker has a plan or concept (its essence) before it exists.
  - Its essence: what it is for, what it should be like, its proper function.
- In many religious / traditional philosophies:
  - God designs a fixed human nature and purpose.
  - Each person is an instance of this pre-given "human essence."
  - Morality, meaning, and life-plans can be read off from this essence.

Sartre's existentialist view

- "Existence precedes essence" for human beings.
  - There is no God who has a plan or "blueprint" for humans.
  - Therefore, there is no fixed human nature that dictates what we should be.
  - A human being first exists (is "thrown into the world") and only later, through their life, becomes something.
- For Sartre:
  - At the beginning, you are "nothing" in the sense of having no fixed essence.
  - Your essence = what kind of person you are, what you value, the meaning of your life.
  - This is not given in advance; it is created over time.

Key exam point:
For humans, unlike tools or artefacts, there is no pre-established essence. We first exist, encounter ourselves in the world, and only then define ourselves by what we do.

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2. Freedom: "Condemned to Be Free"

Determinism vs libertarianism (about free will)

Determinism - Thesis: Every event (including every human choice and action) is fully determined by: - prior events + laws of nature. - Given the total state of the world at time T and the laws of nature, only one future is possible. - Implication for persons: - Your actions are ultimately the result of prior causes (genes, upbringing, environment, brain states). - You could not have done otherwise in the exact same situation. - Human beings are treated like complex objects, comparable to tables or chairs whose behavior is fully predictable from their physical constitution and circumstances.

Libertarianism (about free will) - Thesis: Some human actions are not determined by prior causes and laws of nature. - When you act freely: - You genuinely could have done otherwise, even if everything before that moment had been the same. - You are a source of your actions, not simply a "result" of past events. - This is a metaphysical (philosophical) view about free will, not about politics.

Sartre's position

- Sartre is a libertarian about free will and rejects determinism.
  - Determinism, he says, "makes a person into an object" like a table or chair.
- "Man is freedom." There is no fixed human nature and no external plan; thus:
  - There are no given values or scripts that dictate your choices.
  - Every time you act, you choose, and you could have chosen otherwise.
- "Man is condemned to be free."
  - You did not choose to exist, or to be in this situation, but:
  - Once you exist, you cannot avoid choosing; even not choosing is a choice.
  - There is no external authority or deterministic cause you can legitimately appeal to as an excuse.
  - From the moment you are "thrown into the world," you are responsible for everything you do.

"No excuses" and responsibility

- Because determinism is false (on Sartre's view), you cannot truly say:
  - "I couldn't help it; it was my upbringing / my temperament / my passions / society / fate."
- Sartre:
  - "There is no determinism — man is free, man is freedom."
  - "The first effect of existentialism is that it places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely on his own shoulders."
- You can try to hide behind excuses (passions, character, deterministic theories), but then you are in self-deception (bad faith).

Key exam point:
"Condemned to be free" means:
1) you did not choose to exist,
2) there is no external script or nature that determines you, and
3) you are therefore inescapably responsible for your choices and who you become.

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3. Essence Created Only by Actions

What is "essence" for Sartre?

- Your essence = what kind of person you are:
  - your character (cowardly, courageous, generous, selfish, etc.),
  - your real values and priorities,
  - the meaning and purpose of your life.
- Traditional view: essence is given (by God, nature, biology, or a fixed human nature).
- Sartre's view: essence is made, not given.

"There is no reality except in action"

- According to Sartre, what creates your essence is only your actions, not:
  - your intentions,
  - your plans and promises,

  - your “potential” or talents,
  - your feelings or inner states,
  - your personality traits or temperament,
  - your self-image or identity labels.
- He insists:
  - “Man is not what he conceives himself to be, but what he wills.”
  - “There is no love apart from the deeds of love; no potentiality of love other than that which is manifested in loving.”

Implication:
If something never shows up in your actions, it is not part of your real essence. At most, it is an unrealized possibility.

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4. Coward vs Hero: Actions Define You

How Sartre defines cowardice and heroism

- Coward:
  - A person who performs cowardly actions (e.g. repeatedly fleeing danger unfairly, betraying others out of fear, failing to take responsibilities one recognizes).
- Hero:
  - A person who performs heroic actions (e.g. courageously facing risk or sacrifice for worthy ends, persistently acting in the face of danger or difficulty).

Central point:
There is no such thing as a cowardly (or heroic) “nature” that fixes you independently of action.

- You are not a coward because:
  - you have “cowardly genes,”
  - you have a fearful personality,
  - you feel scared,
  - you imagine yourself as weak.
- You are a coward if, when actual situations arise, you choose cowardly conduct.
- Likewise, you are a hero only if you do heroic things.

Always free to change

- Because you are always free, Sartre says:
  - There is always a possibility for a coward to stop being cowardly by choosing courageous acts.
  - There is also a possibility for a hero to stop being heroic by ceasing those actions.
- Your past actions define who you have been so far, but:
  - Your present and future choices can re-create your essence.
  - You are never permanently locked into “coward,” “hero,” or any other label.

Key exam point:
On Sartre’s view, whether you are a coward or a hero is determined solely by what you in fact do, and this is up to you to change at any time by choosing different actions.

5. Commitment (e.g. to a Monogamous Marriage)

What is commitment for Sartre?

- A commitment is not just:
  - an internal feeling,
  - a one-time verbal promise,
  - a self-image ("I'm a faithful spouse").
- Rather, a commitment is:
  - a pattern of actions over time that expresses and sustains a chosen project or value.
  - your ongoing choice to structure your life in a particular way.

Example: commitment to a monogamous marriage

- To be genuinely committed to a monogamous marriage, on Sartre's view, means:
  - You regularly act in ways that honor that commitment:
    - you remain sexually faithful,
    - you say no to other romantic/sexual opportunities,
    - you invest time, care, and energy into your spouse and shared life,
    - you make long-term decisions (where to live, financial choices, etc.) with the marriage as a central priority.
- If you say:
  - "I'm deeply committed to my marriage"
    but:
  - repeatedly cheat, lie, or neglect your spouse,
- then, for Sartre, your actions show that you are not committed, whatever you may claim internally.

Choosing for yourself and "for all humanity"

- Sartre also argues that when you choose for yourself, you implicitly:
  - endorse a value: you take what you choose to be better than the alternative.
  - You thereby "legislate" for all humans the value you express.
- Example: choosing monogamy
  - If you choose monogamous marriage for yourself (and actually act monogamously), you are:
    - implicitly affirming: "A life of faithful monogamy is better than its alternatives."
    - thus, in Sartre's terms, you are committing not only yourself but also "humanity as a whole" to the value of monogamy.
- This reinforces how serious commitment is:
  - you are not just picking a lifestyle; you are creating and affirming values through your actions.

Key exam point:
Commitment = not what you say or feel you are committed to, but the actions you consistently take in support of a project (like monogamous marriage). Your commitment is only as real as your behavior.

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6. Love (e.g. Love of Your Mother)

Love as deeds, not just feelings

- Sartre: “There is no love apart from the deeds of love.”
- Love is not primarily:
  - a feeling in your heart,
  - a romantic ideal,
  - a private conviction (“deep down, I really care”).
- For Sartre:
  - Your love is what you do.
  - It is expressed and made real in concrete actions.

Example: love of your mother

- To love your mother (on Sartre’s view) is to:
  - choose to care for her in actual situations:
    - visiting her,
    - listening to her,
    - helping her when she is sick or in need,
    - sacrificing time or opportunities to support her.
- In his famous example:
  - A student must choose between:
    - staying with his distressed mother, or
    - leaving to fight in the war.
  - Sartre’s key point: the strength or reality of his love for his mother cannot be known independently of what he does.
    - If he stays, he shows that love for her is decisive.
    - If he leaves, he shows that his commitment to the war effort takes precedence.
- Feelings or “inner love” that are never acted on do not count, for Sartre, as real love.

Love, freedom, and responsibility

- Because you are always free:
  - You are always responsible for whether you act in loving ways.
  - You cannot say: “I truly love her, but circumstances made it impossible to act” as a full excuse.
- Love is thus a freely chosen project, sustained (or not) by your day-to-day actions.

Key exam point:
On Sartre’s view, you love your mother (or anyone) only insofar as you actually choose and act to care for them. Love is defined by deeds, not by intentions or feelings alone.

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7. Quick Summary for Revision

- Existence precedes essence:

  - No God, no fixed human nature.
  - Humans first exist, then create their nature/essence through what they do.
- Libertarianism vs determinism:
  - Determinism: every action fixed by prior causes + laws → no real alternatives.
  - Libertarianism: some actions are not determined; you genuinely could have done otherwise.
  - Sartre: rejects determinism, holds libertarian free will.
- "Condemned to be free":
  - You did not choose to exist, but you cannot escape choosing.
  - No external authority or nature determines your choices.
  - You are fully responsible; excuses (fate, character, passions) are bad faith.
- Essence created only by actions:
  - What kind of person you are = the pattern of your actions.
  - Not your intentions, plans, potential, feelings, or self-image.
- Coward vs hero:
  - Coward = one who performs cowardly actions.
  - Hero = one who performs heroic actions.
  - Always free to change by choosing different acts; labels are never final.
- Commitment (e.g. monogamous marriage):
  - Commitment is made real only by a sustained pattern of actions.
  - To be committed to monogamy is to consistently act faithfully and shape your life accordingly.
  - Choosing such a life also expresses a value you implicitly hold up for all humans.
- Love (e.g. of your mother):
  - "No love apart from the deeds of love."
  - To love your mother is to actually care for her through concrete actions.
  - Feelings without action do not count as real love for Sartre.

12: Bentham Mill Darwin

Jeremy Bentham

1. Bentham's Hedonism (What is the Good?)

Core thesis (hedonism):
- Pleasure is the only intrinsic good.
- Pain is the only intrinsic bad.
- Everything else (money, health, friendship, knowledge, etc.) is good or bad only instrumentally, depending on how much pleasure or pain it produces.

Quantitative view of pleasure: - All pleasures are the same kind of thing; they differ only in amount, not in kind. - For Bentham, the key dimensions of a pleasure are: - Intensity – how strong the pleasure is. - Duration – how long it lasts. - When deciding which pleasure is better, we look only at these quantitative features: - A more intense pleasure is better than a weaker one. - A longer-lasting pleasure is better than a shorter one. - No pleasure is inherently "higher" or "lower" in quality; any pleasure can be outweighed by enough of another.

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2. Bentham's View of Human Motivation (What Actually Moves Us?)

Psychological claim:
Humans are ruled by "two sovereign masters," pleasure and pain.

- Every action we perform is ultimately motivated by:
  - The prospect of obtaining pleasure, or
  - The prospect of avoiding pain.
- This is meant as a descriptive theory (how people in fact behave), not yet a moral claim.
- On this picture, people are fundamentally psychological hedonists:
  - Even seemingly self-sacrificial actions are, on closer inspection, done because they bring the agent some expected pleasure (e.g., pride, satisfaction) or avoid some pain (e.g., guilt, social disapproval).

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3. Bentham's Moral Theory (How Ought We to Act?)

Principle of Utility / Greatest Happiness Principle:

- An action is morally right if and only if it maximizes total happiness (pleasure minus pain) for everyone affected.
- We should aim to produce:
  - "The greatest happiness for the greatest number."
- Key features:
  - Impartiality: Each person's pleasure and pain counts equally.
  - Consequentialism: Only the results (amount of pleasure/pain produced) matter for rightness, not motives or rules by themselves.
  - Act utilitarianism: For each possible act, we must ask which option produces the most overall happiness.

So Bentham accepts: - A hedonistic theory of value (only pleasure is good). - A utilitarian theory of right action (right acts maximize total pleasure).

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4. The Tension in Bentham's View

We now compare:

- Psychological hedonism (motivation):
  People are always moved by what they think will bring their own pleasure or reduce their own pain.
- Utilitarianism (morality):
  People ought to act so as to maximize overall happiness, giving equal weight to everyone's pleasures and pains, not just their own.

Nature of the tension:

1. Self-regarding motivation vs. impartial morality
   - If we are in fact motivated only by our own expected pleasure/pain, morality's demand to sacrifice our own happiness for others can look psychologically unrealistic.
   - Example:
     – Morality may require me to donate a large part of my income to the poor.
     – But if I am only ever motivated by my own pleasure, I will not choose that action when it significantly decreases my personal enjoyment.
2. "Ought implies can" problem
   - Many philosophers accept: if you ought to do something, then you can do it.
   - But if Bentham's psychological theory says I cannot be motivated except by my own self-interested pleasure/pain, then:
     – How can I be morally obliged to act impartially for the greatest happiness of all, when this might significantly reduce my own happiness?
   - This creates a tension between:
     – The descriptive claim about what we can be motivated by, and
     – The normative claim about what we morally must do.
3. Bentham's possible move (not fully resolving the tension)
   - He can say: legal punishment, social disapproval, and internal guilt are pains, and social praise and self-respect are pleasures.
   - These can align one's self-interest with general happiness—acting for others may in fact bring the most pleasure to oneself.
   - But:
     – This depends on circumstances.
     – It doesn't fully remove the basic conceptual tension between a self-focused psychology and an impartial moral standard.

John Stuart Mill

1. Agreement and Disagreement with Bentham

Mill broadly agrees with Bentham that:

- Happiness is pleasure and the absence of pain.
- Morally right actions are those that promote the greatest happiness overall.

So Mill accepts:

- A hedonistic theory of value, and
- A utilitarian theory of morality.

But he disagrees strongly with Bentham about the nature of pleasure.

Bentham:
- All pleasures are the same in kind; differ only in quantity (intensity, duration).

Mill:
- There are qualitatively different kinds of pleasure. - Some pleasures are “higher” and more valuable than others, even when they have the same intensity and duration.

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2. Mill’s Higher and Lower Pleasures

Lower pleasures (“pleasures of the body”):

- Largely bodily or sensory:
  - Eating, drinking, sex, physical comfort, rest, pleasant bodily sensations.
- Mill does not say these are bad or unimportant; they are genuine pleasures and part of a good life.
- But he thinks they are of a lower quality.

Higher pleasures (“pleasures of the mind”):

- Involve our higher faculties:
  - Intellectual activities: reading, learning, doing science or philosophy.
  - Imaginative activities: enjoying art, music, literature.
  - Moral and emotional pleasures: deep friendships, love, appreciation of beauty, acting from conscience and moral principle.
- These pleasures use and exercise capacities that distinguish humans from (most) non-human animals.

Key claim:

- Higher pleasures are more valuable than lower pleasures as pleasures themselves, even when we hold intensity and duration fixed.
- So two pleasures with equal intensity and duration can differ in quality, and the higher one is intrinsically better.

This is Mill’s main disagreement with Bentham:
- For Bentham, a very intense, long-lasting bodily pleasure could equal or surpass any other pleasure.

- For Mill, no amount of lower pleasures can compensate for losing certain higher pleasures, according to those best placed to judge.

---

3. Mill's Argument for the Superiority of Higher Pleasures

Mill's argument can be set out in stages.

(a) Hedonistic starting point

- Mill accepts that pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends.
- But he claims we can still recognize differences in quality between pleasures, not just differences in quantity.

(b) How can we tell which pleasures are better "as pleasures"?

He proposes a test:

- Suppose there are two kinds of pleasure, A and B.
- Ask those who:
  - Have experienced both A and B, and
  - Are competent judges—that is, capable of appreciating and enjoying both kinds.
- If:
  - All or almost all such people decisively prefer A over B,
  - And this preference is made independently of moral obligation (i.e., they simply find A more desirable as an experience),
- Then we can say that:
  - Pleasure A is of higher quality and therefore more valuable as a pleasure.

(c) Mill's empirical claim about actual preferences

Mill claims that, in fact:

- Those familiar with both higher and lower pleasures strongly prefer a life that exercises their higher faculties.
- They would:
  - Rather live as a human being with higher faculties, even if often dissatisfied,
  - Than as an unreflective creature who is fully content with only lower pleasures.
- Famous slogan:
  - "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied;
    better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."
  - If the pig or fool disagrees, Mill says, that is because they only know their own side of the question.

He also insists that:

- Many people who appear to prioritize lower pleasures have actually:
  - Lost the capacity for higher pleasures, due to neglect or circumstances,
  - Not calmly and knowingly chosen lower over higher while still fully capable of both.

(d) Conclusion

From this, Mill concludes:

1. Competent judges almost uniformly prefer pleasures involving higher faculties.
2. This preference would remain even if higher pleasures brought more discontent or more vulnerability to suffering.
3. Therefore, higher pleasures have a greater quality and worth than lower ones, as pleasures.
4. So in evaluating actions, we should not just count how much pleasure they produce, but also what kind of pleasure.

This upgrades utilitarianism from a purely quantitative hedonism (Bentham) to a qualitative hedonism (Mill).

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4. Objection to Mill's Argument (from Lecture)

Objection: Mill's "competent judges" test may smuggle in non-hedonistic values and is empirically doubtful.

The lecture raised concerns along these lines:

1. Empirical worry: do people really prefer higher pleasures?
    - Mill claims that almost all who know both kinds prefer higher pleasures.
    - But in real life, many educated people who fully know both:
        - Often choose "lower" pleasures (e.g., mindless entertainment, casual bodily enjoyments),
        - Even when they have access to and capacity for higher pleasures.
    - This suggests Mill's empirical claim about the judgments of competent judges may be false or overstated.
2. Motivation of the preference: is it really just about pleasure?
    - Even when people do say they prefer higher activities (e.g., philosophy, art, moral action) to lower ones, their reasons often include:
        - Appeals to dignity, self-respect, nobility, or moral worth.
    - These seem to be values that are not simply about the felt pleasantness of the experience.
    - This leads to the charge that:
        - Mill is partly valuing the nobility or dignity of the activity itself, not just how pleasant it feels.
        - But then he is no longer a pure hedonist, since now something besides pleasure (e.g., dignity) is intrinsically valuable.
3. Why this is a problem for Mill's hedonism
    - Mill wants to stay a hedonist: only pleasure is good as an end.
    - His defense of higher pleasures relies on the idea that competent judges find them better "as pleasures".
    - But if their preference is driven by non-hedonic considerations (like dignity, moral ideals, or social evaluation), then:
        - The preference does not show that higher pleasures are more pleasant, only that they are valued on other grounds.
    - So the argument seems to:

  - Either undermine the purely hedonistic basis of utilitarianism, or
  - Fail to justify the claim that higher pleasures are intrinsically more valuable.

Summary of the objection:

- Mill's appeal to "competent judges" and to a "sense of dignity" looks like an attempt to rank pleasures using standards other than sheer pleasantness.
- This threatens the coherence of his view:
  - He claims to be a hedonist, but his argument for higher pleasures seems to rely on non-hedonistic values and perhaps on questionable empirical claims about what informed people actually prefer.

13: Haybron

1. Haybron's Basic Idea: Happiness as "Psychic Affirmation"

- Happiness (for Haybron) = a person's overall emotional condition is broadly positive.
- More specifically: happiness is psychic (emotional) affirmation of one's life:
  - To emotionally respond to your life as if things are going well for you.
  - It is about moods and emotions, not about explicit judgments or beliefs.

Contrast:

- Cognitive affirmation: judging or thinking "my life is going well."
- Emotional (psychic) affirmation: feeling settled, secure, fulfilled, joyful, engaged, etc.

Haybron's project: analyze this emotional condition into three main dimensions.

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2. The Three Dimensions of Happiness

Haybron says happiness has (at least) three dimensions:

1. Endorsement
2. Engagement
3. Attunement

Each is a different emotional way of responding to one's life.

2.1 Endorsement

Basic idea: emotional approval of your life; "thumbs up" feelings.

- Characteristic affects:
  - Joy vs sadness
  - Cheerfulness vs irritability
- When endorsement is high:
  - You often feel happy, cheerful, delighted, joyful about your life.
- When endorsement is low:
  - You feel sad, dejected, gloomy, frequently irritated with life.

Example (high endorsement):

- Someone who frequently feels joy when thinking about their relationships and work, laughs easily, and generally "feels good" about how life is going.

Example (low endorsement, but other dimensions OK):

- A professor deeply absorbed in meaningful work (high engagement) and at peace with life (high attunement) but going through a short period of mild sadness about a recent disappointment.

2.2 Engagement

Basic idea: being energetically involved in your life and activities.

Two key forms:

1. Vitality / Exuberance vs Lethargy
    - Feeling energetic, alive, spirited vs sluggish, listless.
2. Flow vs Boredom
    - Flow: being fully absorbed in challenging, meaningful activities; lose track of time and self-consciousness.
    - Opposite: boredom/enui – feeling empty, disengaged, going through the motions.

Examples:

- High engagement:
    - An athlete, artist, or doctor who often gets into flow while training, creating, or treating patients; feels vital and absorbed.
- Low engagement:
    - An office worker constantly bored and listless, watching the clock, feeling that nothing is worth investing energy in.

2.3 Attunement

Basic idea: being at home in your life; inner settledness and security.

Haybron breaks attunement into three main components:

1. Peace of mind vs anxiety
    - Calm, inner peace vs pervasive worry, nervousness, stress.
2. Confidence vs insecurity
    - Deep emotional surety and inner stability vs feeling shaky, unsure, emotionally off-balance.
3. Uncompression vs compression
    - Feeling spiritually expansive, free, open vs cramped, pressured, small-souled (see section on compression below).

High attunement:

- You feel:
    - Psychically at home in your life
    - Relaxed, secure, unthreatened
    - Free to be yourself; defenses are down; you're not living in a state of constant vigilance.

Low attunement (disattunement):

- You feel:
    - Anxious, stressed, on edge
    - Alienated from your circumstances, as if you don't really fit or belong
    - Under threat or constant pressure.

Example (high attunement):

- Someone with a modest job and modest income, but:
  - Has a stable community and routine;
  - Sleeps peacefully;
  - Rarely feels stressed;
  - Feels deeply at home in their environment and relationships.

Example (low attunement, but maybe high endorsement):

- A person in a high-paying job who often feels cheerful when things go well (some endorsement), but is:
  - Almost always stressed, worried about deadlines, reputation, and performance;
  - Emotionally "on guard."
  - Haybron would say: despite some positive feelings, this person is not really happy, because attunement is badly damaged.

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3. Which Dimension Is Most Important for Happiness, and Why?

According to Haybron, attunement is the most important dimension.

Reasons:

1. Biological priority:
   - For any creature, first priority is safety and security: being able to let down defenses.
   - Only once that's in place does it make sense to:
     - Pursue projects energetically (engagement),
     - Or rejoice about successes (endorsement).
2. Dependence of other dimensions:
   - Serious anxiety, stress, or insecurity make it very hard to:
     - Enter flow or feel vital, and
     - Experience deep joy or fulfillment.
   - So attunement is a precondition for rich engagement and endorsement.
3. Judgment about real-life cases:
   - A cheerful, energetic but deeply anxious person still does not seem genuinely happy.
   - But a person who is calm, confident, uncompressed, even without constant cheerfulness, plausibly is happy.

Exam tip: If forced to choose, Haybron ranks: - 1st: Attunement - 2nd: Engagement - 3rd: Endorsement

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4. Compression and Its Place in the Three Dimensions

4.1 What Is Compression?

Compression = a pattern of affective or "spiritual" shrinking:

- Feeling:
  - Pressed upon, crowded, trapped
  - Emotionally flattened, deflated, small, like a "caged animal" or "worker ant"

- Living in a reactive mode:
  - Constantly responding to external demands;
  - Not living from your own nature or priorities.

Haybron's label: - Uncompression: feeling expansive, free, large-spirited. - Compression: feeling pinched, constrained, small-souled.

4.2 Sources of Compression

Two main sources:

1. Imposition / repression
   - Life is largely dictated by external forces:
     - Heavy social pressure to conform;
     - Over-scheduling and impossibly long to-do lists;
     - Work or survival demands that leave little room for self-expression.
2. Threat
   - Persistent sense of being under threat or scrutiny:
     - Fear of failure;
     - Hostile or unstable environment;
     - Need to stay constantly cautious and on guard.

In both cases: - You can't act naturally or freely; - You "hunker down" emotionally.

4.3 How Compression Fits into the Three Dimensions

Compression belongs primarily to attunement, but also affects engagement:

- Attunement:
  - Compression = a kind of disattunement:
    - You are not at home in your life.
    - Your emotional "stance" is defensive and reactive, not relaxed and confident.
- Engagement:
  - Compression tends to kill exuberance and reduce flow:
    - It's hard to feel vital, playful, or deeply absorbed when you're constantly pressured and on edge.

So:

- Attunement component: uncompression vs compression.
- Engagement component: compressed people are often listless or just pushing themselves mechanically, not genuinely engaged.

4.4 FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and Compression

FOMO leads people to:

- Try to do as much as possible:
  - Say "yes" to every opportunity, social event, and activity.
  - Fill every spare moment.

This encourages:

- Quantity over quality:
  - Aim: maximizing the number of experiences,
  - Instead of getting the most depth out of a smaller number of meaningful activities.

Result:

- Life becomes overcrowded and externally driven.
- You end up:
  - Stressed, rushed, and compressed;
  - Rarely having the time or psychic space to relax into attunement or deep engagement.

4.5 “Junk” Activities

In this context, “junk activities” are:

- Activities you do mainly to fill time, avoid FOMO, or keep up appearances:
  - Endless social media scrolling
  - Parties you don’t enjoy but attend for status
  - Mindless errands and busywork
- They may bring small, fleeting pleasures, but:
  - Contribute little to deep emotional well-being.
  - Crowd out time for activities that foster:
    - Attunement (calm, confidence, uncompression)
    - Engagement (flow, meaningful projects)
    - Endorsement (genuine joy and fulfillment).

4.6 Central vs Peripheral Affective States

Haybron distinguishes:

- Central affective states:
  - Deep, pervasive moods/emotions that shape your overall emotional condition.
  - Examples:
    - Chronic anxiety or peace of mind (attunement),
    - Long-term vitality or lethargy (engagement),
    - Deep fulfillment or entrenched sadness (endorsement).
- Peripheral affective states:
  - Brief, superficial feelings that do not significantly affect how happy you really are.
  - Examples:
    - A quick laugh at a meme;
    - Enjoying a tasty snack;
    - Annoyance in traffic that quickly passes.

Compression mainly damages central states:

- It shapes your baseline mood:
  - Ongoing stress, feeling small, constrained, reactive.
- “Junk activities” mostly add peripheral pleasures:
  - They may feel nice short-term, but do little for your central emotional condition.

Exam-useful summary: A compressed, stressed life: - Raises peripheral pleasures (lots of small hits), - But undermines central happiness (especially attunement, and often engagement).

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5. Are the Three Dimensions Incommensurable?

Incommensurable = not easily measurable on a single scale; not simply tradeable against each other.

Haybron's view (roughly):

- The three dimensions represent different ways of emotionally responding to life.
- They are not reducible to a single "more or less happy" feeling.
- You can:
  - Be high in one dimension and low in another (e.g., energetic but anxious).
  - Have various ideals emphasizing different dimensions:
    * Stoic ideal: attunement (tranquility, peace).
    * Aristotelian/"flow" ideal: engagement.
    * Democritean/cheerfulness ideal: endorsement.

So:

- The dimensions are partly incommensurable:
  - You cannot always say "3 units of endorsement = 3 units of attunement."
  - There are different legitimate patterns of happiness.
- But they also interact:
  - Strong disattunement undermines the other two.
  - Very high engagement can sometimes coexist with moderate attunement, etc.

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6. Cognitive vs Emotional (Psychic) Affirmation

6.1 Definitions

Cognitive affirmation:

- To respond cognitively (with beliefs/judgments) to your life as if it is going well.
- Involves:
  - Reflective thoughts like: "Overall, my life is going well," "I approve of my life."
- Roughly corresponds to:
  - Life satisfaction judgments in psychology ("How satisfied are you with your life as a whole?").

Emotional (psychic) affirmation:

- To respond emotionally (in moods/emotions) to your life as if it is going well.
- Involves having:
  - Positive patterns of attunement, engagement, and endorsement:
    * Peace of mind, confidence, uncompression (attunement),
    * Vitality, flow (engagement),
    * Joy, cheerfulness, fulfillment (endorsement).

Haybron's thesis:

- Happiness = emotional / psychic affirmation, not cognitive affirmation.
- You can sincerely judge life is going well but still be unhappy if your emotional condition is poor.

6.2 Do Cognitive and Emotional Affirmation Go Together?

They can go together, but they can also come apart.

Haybron emphasizes that:

- They often diverge:
  - People are bad at self-assessing their own emotional condition.
  - Social pressures encourage us to say we're satisfied even when emotionally troubled.
- Therefore:
  - Cognitive affirmation ≠ Happiness.

6.3 Examples of "Together" and "Come Apart"

Think of four basic combinations:

1. Both cognitive and emotional affirmation high
   (Judgment and feelings say: "Things are going well.")
   - Example:
     - A person who:
       - Reflectively believes they have a good life (supportive relationships, meaningful work),
       - Feels calm, confident, often in flow, and experiences genuine joy.
     - This is paradigmatic happiness for Haybron.
2. High cognitive, low emotional affirmation
   ("Life is going well" in thought, but emotionally unhappy.)
   - Example:
     - A successful lawyer who thinks:
       - "I've achieved everything: money, status, family stability. I should be happy."
     - But:
       - Is chronically anxious and stressed (low attunement),
       - Rarely feels engaged or in flow at work (low engagement),
       - Experiences little joy or fulfillment (low endorsement).
     - They have cognitive affirmation without happiness.
   - This is particularly important for Haybron: it shows why life satisfaction ≠ happiness.
3. Low cognitive, high emotional affirmation
   ("My life is not going well" in thought, but emotionally quite happy.)
   - Example:
     - A graduate student who thinks:
       - "I'm a failure; others are more accomplished. My life is a mess."
     - Yet actually:
       - Has strong friendships, is often in flow doing research/teaching,
       - Feels relaxed, confident, and often joyful.
     - They are, emotionally, pretty happy, even if cognitively they misjudge their life.

4. Both cognitive and emotional affirmation low
   (Judgment and feelings agree: “Things are not going well.”)
   - Example:
     - Someone with severe work problems and family conflict, who:
       * Judges their life is bad,
       * Feels anxious, depressed, disengaged, and joyless.
     - Clearly unhappy by Haybron’s standard.

Key exam point:

- Haybron’s position:
  - Happiness just is emotional (psychic) affirmation of one’s life.
  - Cognitive affirmation is neither necessary nor sufficient for happiness:
    * Not necessary: you can be emotionally happy while wrongly judging your life badly.
    * Not sufficient: you can judge your life great but be emotionally miserable.

6.4 Connection to Central vs Peripheral Affects

- Emotional affirmation, for Haybron, is about your central emotional condition:
  - Long-term patterns of attunement, engagement, endorsement.
- A person might:
  - Think life is good (cognitive affirmation),
  - And have many peripheral pleasures (nice meals, entertainment),
  - But still lack central emotional affirmation (be anxious, compressed, unfulfilled).
- Such a person is not genuinely happy in Haybron’s sense.

These notes cover:

- The three dimensions of happiness and key examples.
- Compression, its relation to stress, FOMO, “junk activities,” and central vs peripheral affective states.
- Why attunement is the most important dimension.
- Cognitive vs emotional (psychic) affirmation, how they relate, and how they can come apart.

14: Lyubomirsky

1. Limitations of the Scientific Literature on Happiness

You should be able to clearly state and explain at least three of these.

1.1 Can Happiness Be Measured Scientifically?

- Reliance on self-reports
  - Most studies measure happiness with questionnaires ("How happy are you?").
  - Problems: people may misjudge their own happiness, answer in socially desirable ways, or be influenced by mood, weather, recent events.
- Cultural and individual differences
  - Different cultures and personalities use scales differently (e.g., some avoid "10/10," others use extremes easily).
  - Makes it hard to compare happiness levels across people and groups.
- Narrow operationalization
  - "Happiness" is complex (pleasure, life satisfaction, meaning, absence of depression, etc.).
  - A single number often hides important differences (e.g., happy but anxious; content but bored).

1.2 Replication Failure

- Key finding: Many published results about what increases happiness do not reliably repeat when the study is redone.
- Causes:
  - Small, unrepresentative samples (e.g., mostly college students).
  - "Publication bias" toward positive, surprising results; failed replications often stay unpublished.
  - Flexible analysis ("p-hacking") can turn noise into apparently significant effects.
- Implication: We should be cautious about trusting any single study; even widely cited claims may be shaky.

1.3 Small Effect Sizes

- Many interventions show statistically significant but tiny increases in happiness.
  - Example: a gratitude exercise might move someone from 6.0 to 6.1 on a 10-point scale.
- Small effects:
  - May not be noticeable or meaningful in real life.
  - Can disappear outside controlled lab settings.
- Implication: Even when an intervention "works," it may only provide modest improvement, not dramatic life change.

1.4 Lack of Evidence for Long-Term Effects

- Most studies track people for short periods (days or weeks, sometimes a few months).
- We often do not know:
  - Whether benefits last after people stop deliberately practicing the activity.
  - Whether people will realistically maintain the practice for years.
- Hedonic adaptation:
  - People tend to get used to positive changes over time; the initial boost may fade.
- Implication: Claims about long-term, stable increases in happiness are often speculative or untested.

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2. Strategies for Becoming Happier (Lyubomirsky)

You must be able to describe at least four strategies: what they are and how/why they are supposed to help.

2.1 Preliminaries: Corniness and "Fit"

- Corniness
  - Many exercises (gratitude letters, optimistic visualization) can feel cheesy or artificial.
  - Important idea: they can still be effective even if they feel corny at first.
- Fit
  - Strategies do not work equally well for everyone.
  - A strategy "fits" when it matches your personality, values, and lifestyle.
  - You should experiment and keep the ones you can genuinely practice regularly.

2.2 Expressing Gratitude

- What it is: Deliberately noticing and appreciating the good things and good people in your life.
- How to practice:
  - Gratitude journal (writing down things you are grateful for).
  - Gratitude letters or visits (thanking someone who has helped you).
- Why it helps:
  - Shifts attention from what is missing or wrong to what is present and positive.
  - Strengthens social bonds and feelings of connectedness.
  - Can counteract adaptation by making you re-notice what you usually take for granted.

2.3 Cultivating Optimism

- What it is: Training yourself to expect good outcomes and to interpret events in a positive, hopeful way.
- How to practice:
  - "Best possible self" exercise: imagine and write about your life going as well as realistically possible in the future.
  - Reframing setbacks as temporary, specific, and changeable rather than permanent and global.
- Why it helps:
  - Encourages persistence and goal pursuit instead of giving up.
  - Reduces anxiety and hopelessness by focusing on possibilities rather than threats only.
  - Optimists often notice and recall positive experiences more, which sustains positive mood.

2.4 Avoiding Overthinking and Social Comparison

- Overthinking / rumination:
  - Repeatedly dwelling on your problems, mistakes, or negative emotions without moving toward solutions.
  - Tends to amplify sadness, anxiety, and anger.
- Social comparison:
  - Constantly comparing yourself to others (especially "upward" comparison: to people who seem better off).
  - Social media intensifies this, often making people feel inferior or deprived.
- Strategies:
  - Set time limits for problem-solving; then distract yourself with absorbing activities.
  - Notice comparison thoughts and deliberately shift focus to your own values and progress.
  - Limit exposure to triggers (e.g., certain social media, status-oriented environments).
- Why it helps:
  - Reduces unnecessary negative emotion that adds nothing constructive.
  - Helps you judge your life by your own standards instead of unrealistic external ones.

2.5 Practicing Acts of Kindness

- What it is: Intentionally doing helpful or generous things for others.
- How to practice:

  - Small, everyday acts (helping classmates, complimenting, volunteering).
  - Can be planned (e.g., several kind acts in one day) or spread out.
- Why it helps:
  - Increases feelings of connection, meaning, and self-worth.
  - Shifts focus away from your own problems.
  - Can trigger positive feedback from others (gratitude, warmth), reinforcing happiness.

2.6 Nurturing Social Relationships

- What it is: Investing time, energy, and care in close relationships (friends, family, partners).
- How to practice:
  - Regularly reach out; schedule time together.
  - Show responsiveness: listen, validate feelings, celebrate others' successes.
  - Repair conflicts with apologies and honest conversation.
- Why it helps:
  - Strong relationships are one of the most robust predictors of happiness.
  - Provide emotional support, a sense of belonging, and shared joy.
  - Buffer against stress and hardship.

2.7 Developing Strategies for Coping with Stress, Hardship, and Trauma

- What it is: Learning constructive ways to respond to difficulties instead of denial, aggression, or despair.
- How to practice:
  - Problem-focused coping: identify specific steps to improve the situation.
  - Emotion-focused coping: healthy ways to process feelings (talking, journaling, therapy, relaxation).
  - Finding meaning: asking what can be learned or how to grow from hardship.
- Why it helps:
  - Reduces the long-term emotional damage of stress and trauma.
  - Helps you regain a sense of control and coherence in life.
  - Can transform suffering into a source of resilience and purpose.

2.8 Learning to Forgive

- What it is: Choosing to let go of ongoing resentment and desire for revenge toward someone who wronged you.
- What it is not:
  - Not denying the harm, and not necessarily reconciling or trusting the person again.
- How to practice:
  - Empathy exercises: trying to understand the offender's perspective or circumstances.
  - Reframing: recognizing that holding onto anger mainly hurts you.
  - Sometimes formal rituals (writing a forgiveness letter, even if not sent).
- Why it helps:
  - Chronic anger and bitterness are emotionally exhausting and stressful.
  - Forgiveness can reduce anger, anxiety, and rumination, freeing mental energy.
  - Makes space for more positive emotions and healthier relationships.

2.9 Increasing Flow Experiences

- Flow: A state of deep absorption in an activity where you lose track of time and self-consciousness (e.g., sports, music, coding, drawing).
- Conditions that foster flow:
  - Clear goals.
  - Immediate feedback.
  - Challenge that matches but slightly stretches your skills.
- How to practice:
  - Choose activities you find intrinsically rewarding, not just instrumental.
  - Reduce distractions (phone, notifications).
  - Gradually build skills to meet higher challenges.
- Why it helps:
  - Flow is often reported as one of the most enjoyable, fulfilling states.
  - Builds skills and confidence over time.
  - Temporarily silences self-criticism and worry.

2.10 Savoring Life's Joys

- What it is: Deliberately attending to and enhancing positive experiences while they happen

or in memory.

- How to practice:
  - Slow down and fully notice sensory details (taste, smell, sights).
  - Share good experiences with others.
  - Mentally “replay” positive moments later to enjoy them again.
- Why it helps:
  - Increases the intensity and duration of positive emotions.
  - Counters the tendency to rush through good moments or ignore them.
  - Makes everyday pleasures more impactful for overall happiness.

2.11 Committing to the Pursuit of Your Goals

- What it is: Having meaningful personal goals and persistently working toward them.
- How to practice:
  - Choose goals aligned with your values (not just external pressure or status).
  - Break big goals into manageable steps; track progress.
  - Adjust goals as you learn more about yourself.
- Why it helps:
  - Provides direction, structure, and a sense of purpose.
  - Achievements provide satisfaction; progress itself can be rewarding.
  - Engages you in activities that can generate flow and social connection.

2.12 Meditation

- What it is: Practices that train attention and awareness (e.g., mindfulness: non-judgmental awareness of the present moment).
- How to practice:
  - Focus on the breath; gently return attention when distracted.
  - Brief daily sessions (even 5–10 minutes) done consistently.
- Why it helps:
  - Reduces stress, anxiety, and rumination by weakening automatic negative thought patterns.
  - Increases clarity and emotional regulation.
  - Can enhance capacity to notice and savor present experiences.

2.13 Practicing Religion and Spirituality

- What it is: Engaging in religious or spiritual beliefs and practices (prayer, worship, rituals, spiritual reflection).
- How it may help:
  - Provides community, shared values, and social support.
  - Offers a framework of meaning, especially in suffering and loss.
  - Rituals and practices can be calming and grounding.
- Note on fit:
  - Benefits depend strongly on personal belief and the type of community.
  - Not a good fit for everyone; forced or insincere practice is unlikely to help.

2.14 Exercise (and Other Physical Habits: Sleep / Diet / Nature)

- Exercise:
  - Regular physical activity (e.g., walking, running, sports) is linked to higher mood and lower depression.
  - Likely mechanisms: brain chemistry changes, improved health, sense of accomplishment, stress relief.
- Sleep, diet, nature (briefly):
  - Adequate sleep, balanced nutrition, and time in natural environments support mental and emotional well-being.
  - They provide a physiological foundation for other happiness strategies to work.
- Why these matter:
  - Poor physical habits can severely limit the effect of psychological strategies.
  - Improving them can yield relatively reliable, stable benefits for mood and energy.

Exam Use

For the exam, be prepared to:

1. Name and explain at least three limitations of the scientific literature on happiness (measurement problems, replication failure, small effect sizes, lack of long-term evidence).
2. Describe at least four happiness strategies (what they involve and why they are thought to promote happiness), making clear:
   - The basic practice.
   - The psychological mechanism (attention shift, social connection, meaning, reduced rumination, etc.).

- The importance of fit and regular practice rather than one-time actions.

15: Nussbaum

1. Central Human Capabilities

1.1 Central Question and Ideas of Tragedy & Dignity

- Guiding question of Nussbaum's approach:
  "What is this person actually able to do and to be?"
- Human dignity: a truly human life is one where a person can develop and exercise distinctively human powers (reason, sociability, emotion), not merely survive like a well-cared-for animal.
  - Example: well-fed zoo animals live in comfort but lack many human-like capabilities (freedom of movement, choice, rich social bonds). Their lives illustrate loss of dignity.
- Tragedy: When people lack the conditions to develop central capabilities, their lives are tragically stunted, even if they stay alive and feel "content."
- Central idea: certain capabilities "exert a moral claim that they should be developed." Blocking them is a violation of human dignity.

1.2 Examples of Central Human Capabilities (know at least three)

Nussbaum offers a list; these are separate, intrinsic components of a flourishing life. Know at least these four:

1. Bodily Health

- Being able to have good physical health, including:
  - Adequate nutrition
  - Basic medical care
  - Reproductive health
  - Shelter
- Without this, a person may survive but in a damaged, undignified way (e.g., constant illness, malnutrition).

2. Emotions

- Being able to:
  - Form attachments to people and things
  - Love and be loved
  - Grieve the loss of loved ones
  - Feel longing, gratitude, justified anger
- Nussbaum disagrees with the Stoics, who aimed to eliminate emotions like grief and fear. She thinks:
  - Rich emotional life is essential to being fully human.
  - Eliminating these emotions would impoverish a life, not perfect it.

3. Affiliation

- Being able to:

  - Live with and toward others
  - Recognize others as fellow human beings
  - Show concern, empathy, and compassion
  - Participate in friendships, family, and community
  - Be treated with respect, without humiliation or discrimination
- In work: being able to relate to others as equals, not as mere tools.

4. Play

- Being able:
  - To laugh
  - To play
  - To enjoy recreational activities
- A life with no time or opportunity for play is missing an important dimension of human flourishing.

1.3 Criteria for Being a Central Human Capability

What makes something count as a central human capability, rather than just a preference?

Nussbaum's key criteria:

1. Essential for a "truly human" life, not merely an animal life
   - These capabilities mark the difference between basic survival and a life worthy of human dignity.
   - If lacking them makes a life "more or less like an animal's," then they are candidates for central capabilities.
2. Intrinsic value, not merely instrumental
   - They are valuable in themselves, not only as means to other goals.
   - Example: Affiliation is not just useful for economic success; relationships and mutual recognition are part of a good life in their own right.
3. Foundational for pursuing any life plan
   - They are general preconditions for virtually any reasonable conception of the good life.
   - Example: Practical reasoning and basic health are needed to pursue any serious life project.
4. Cross-cultural resonance, tied to tragedy and human dignity
   - When these capabilities are missing, people across cultures typically recognize this as a tragedy.
   - Think of how stories of:
     - Enforced isolation
     - Humiliating treatment
     - Starvation
     - Political oppression

     evoke a sense that something deeply human has been violated.
5. Politically justifiable as minimal thresholds
   - The list is designed for political purposes: to specify what a just society must secure at least to a threshold level for each person.

    - Not a full theory of the good life, but a partial one that many worldviews can endorse.
6. Capabilities, not just resources or actual functionings
    - Focus is on real opportunities (what one is able to do/be), not:
        - Just resources (e.g., money)
        - Or actual choices made.
    - Example: It matters that a woman has the genuine opportunity to work outside the home, even if she chooses not to.
7. Moral evaluation of abilities
    - Not every human capacity qualifies.
    - Only those judged morally valuable from an ethical point of view.
    - Example: Capacity for cruelty is a real human power but is excluded from the list.
8. Each person as an end
    - Capabilities must be secured for every individual, not just for the group "on average."
    - You cannot justify sacrificing one person's basic capabilities for the sake of overall social gain.

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2. Incommensurability of Capabilities

2.1 What "Incommensurable" Means for Nussbaum

- The capabilities on Nussbaum's list are separate components of a flourishing life.
- Incommensurable: you cannot compensate for severe lack of one capability by giving more of another.
    - No single scale of value on which all capabilities can be traded off against each other like money.

2.2 Key Claims

1. No substitution across capabilities
    - Missing one central capability is a serious loss that cannot be "made up" by excess in another.
    - Example:
        - High income cannot compensate for lack of political freedom.
        - Excellent health cannot compensate for forced social isolation or lack of emotional attachments.
2. Each capability has its own distinctive value
    - Each answers to a different dimension of what it is to be fully human:
        - Health, emotional life, social relations, play, etc.
    - Losing one is not like losing a quantity of the same good; it is losing a different type of good.
3. Limits cost–benefit reasoning
    - Simple cost–benefit analysis encourages trade-offs in one homogeneous "currency" (e.g., money, utility).
    - Nussbaum's view:
        - Pushing people below the threshold in any central capability is a tragedy.
        - That tragic aspect is not captured by merely summing or averaging benefits in other areas.

4. Two “architectonic” capabilities
    - Practical reason and affiliation “organize and suffuse” the others:
        - Health, work, and play should be available in ways that allow reason and social interaction.
    - But even these do not reduce the other capabilities to mere means: the others still have their own irreducible worth.

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3. Objection to Life Satisfaction Theories: Adaptive Preferences

3.1 Life Satisfaction Theories

- These theories define well-being, happiness, or quality of life in terms of:
    - How satisfied people say they are with their lives
    - Or how well their preferences are fulfilled.
- Policy consequence: If people report high satisfaction, they are deemed well-off.

3.2 Adaptive Preferences

- Adaptive preferences: people often adjust their desires and standards downward to fit what they realistically can get in oppressive or deprived conditions.
    - People learn not to want what they’re systematically prevented from having.
    - They may come to accept humiliation, lack of opportunities, or discrimination as “normal” or even “good.”

Examples: - A woman in a patriarchal society: - Taught from childhood that obedience and self-sacrifice are virtues. - Comes to report being “satisfied” with a life with no education, no job, and no say in family decisions. - The “zoo animal” thought: - Animals may be calm and content in captivity. - But we still think it tragic that they cannot roam, hunt, or live their natural lives.

3.3 Nussbaum’s Objection Using Adaptive Preferences

1. Subjective satisfaction can mask objective deprivation
    - People who are deeply deprived of central capabilities can sincerely claim to be satisfied, because they have adapted to their circumstances.
    - Life satisfaction measures would therefore misclassify many unjust situations as acceptable or even good.
2. Loss of aspiration is itself part of the harm
    - The process of adaptation—learning not to want basic freedoms, education, or respect—is itself a form of damage to human flourishing.
    - Life satisfaction theories take this damage as “evidence of well-being,” which is perverse.
3. Better question: capabilities, not satisfaction
    - Instead of asking “How satisfied is this person?” we should ask:
        - “What is this person actually able to do and to be?”
    - The capabilities approach:
        - Can recognize that a woman or poor person may be subjectively content yet objectively deprived of crucial opportunities.

Conclusion:
Because of adaptive preferences, life satisfaction is not a reliable measure of human flourishing. We need a standard (like the capabilities list) that can criticize unjust, dignity-denying conditions even when people have adapted to them psychologically.

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4. Objection to Hedonism: Good Pains and Bad Pleasures

4.1 Hedonistic Theories

- Hedonism: Well-being or happiness consists solely in:
  - The presence of pleasure
  - The absence of pain.
- All pleasures are treated as good (or at least good for the person), all pains as bad.

4.2 Nussbaum's Core Claim

- Not all pleasures are good, and not all pains are bad.
- Emotional life is partly evaluated by its fittingness and moral quality, not just by how it feels.
- There are:
  - Good pains: painful experiences that are appropriate or integral to a flourishing human life.
  - Bad pleasures: pleasurable experiences that reflect or produce moral failure and damage to flourishing.

4.3 Good Pains: Grief and (some) Fear

A. Grief

- Grief over the loss of a loved one is:
  - Painful and distressing.
  - But an appropriate emotional response to something deeply valuable.
- It expresses:
  - Love
  - Recognition of the importance of the person lost
  - Depth of attachment and commitment.
- In Nussbaum's framework:
  - Grief is part of the Emotions capability and the Affiliation capability.
  - A person who never grieves may be emotionally stunted or detached, lacking full human connection.
- So:
  - Grief is a good pain—it contributes to a richer, more fully human life, even though it hurts.

B. Fear

- Fear can be:
  - Overwhelming and damaging (e.g., chronic terror that “blights emotional development”).
  - Or appropriate and valuable when proportionate to real danger.
- Appropriate fear:
  - Protects Life and Bodily Health capabilities.
  - Shows realistic awareness of threats.
  - Motivates prudent action (e.g., leaving a dangerous situation).
- Thus:
  - Some fear is a good pain, necessary to a rational, realistic grasp of the world and self-preservation.
  - Total absence of fear would be reckless, not ideal.

4.4 Bad Pleasures: Pleasure in Harming Others

- Consider someone who takes intense pleasure in:
  - Cruelty
  - Humiliating others
  - Inflicting pain (a sadist).
- From a hedonistic perspective:
  - This person is “happier” because they experience more pleasure.
- Nussbaum’s view:
  - This is a bad pleasure.
  - It:
    * Violates the capability of Affiliation (failure to recognize others as equals with dignity).
    * Damages the agent’s character and emotional life.
    * Harms victims’ capabilities (bodily integrity, emotions, self-respect).
- Even if the sadist feels good, we do not judge that their life is going better in any deep sense.
- This shows:
  - Quality and moral content of pleasure matter.
  - We can and should say: some pleasures make a life worse, not better.

4.5 Summary: Why Hedonism Fails

1. Hedonism can’t distinguish morally good from morally bad enjoyment
   - Treats all pleasure as positive for well-being, regardless of its object.
   - Ignores the idea that pleasures can express cruelty, hatred, or contempt.
2. Hedonism can’t account for the value of appropriate suffering
   - Views all pain as something to be minimized.
   - Cannot explain why a life without grief or courageously borne fear would be impoverished, not ideal.
3. Capabilities approach evaluates emotions by their role in a dignified life
   - Emotions are central capabilities themselves.
   - They are assessed by:
     - Whether they fit the world appropriately

  - Whether they support or damage other central capabilities (affiliation, practical reason, etc.).
- Thus:
  - Good pains (like grief and appropriate fear) are integral to flourishing.
  - Bad pleasures (like sadistic enjoyment) count against flourishing.

4.6 Link to Nussbaum vs. Stoics

- Stoics: ideal is freedom from disturbing emotions (apatheia); emotions like grief and fear are seen as errors.
- Nussbaum:
  - Emotions are key to Emotions and Affiliation capabilities.
  - They embody judgments about what is valuable.
  - Properly cultivated emotions (with their pains) are part of a flourishing life.
- So:
  - Both against Stoicism and against hedonism, Nussbaum defends the idea that the right emotions—even when painful—are good for us, and the wrong emotions—even when pleasant—are bad for us.

16: Mismatch Foragers

Foragers and Happiness – Exam-Focused Notes

0. Basic Background

- "Foragers" = hunter-gatherers
  Small, mobile bands living by hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plants; no agriculture, no states, no formal schooling.
- Evidence is indirect and uncertain
  - Based on: archaeology, evolutionary biology, and observation of modern foraging groups (e.g., Hadza, !Kung).
  - We cannot be sure exactly how ancient foragers lived or how happy they were.
- Key exam task
  - Be able to describe in detail at least 5 features of forager societies (from the provided list).
  - For each, discuss:
    1. How it might help or hinder human flourishing/happiness.
    2. How it compares to life in modern industrial societies.

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1. Highly Social Life: Rarely Alone, Same Close Family and Friends for Life

Description

- Foragers typically:
  - Live in small, tightly knit bands.
  - Spend much of the day physically together: hunting, gathering, cooking, talking.
  - Have long-term stable relationships: same kin, same core group, often lifelong.
  - Are rarely completely alone; solitude is limited and often temporary.

Effects on Flourishing

Potential benefits:

- Strong social support
  - High emotional security when sick, injured, grieving, or parenting.
  - Constant access to others for conversation and cooperative problem-solving.
- Sense of belonging and identity
  - Clear place in a network of relatives and friends.
- Protection from isolation
  - Chronic loneliness—strongly linked to depression in modern societies—likely less common.

Potential drawbacks:

- Limited privacy and autonomy
  - Hard to withdraw from the group or escape social expectations.
  - Constant observation by others; reputations are highly visible.
- Conflict is inescapable
  - If relationships sour, you cannot easily “start over” with a new community.

Comparison to Modern Industrial Societies

- Modern world:
  - Many people live in nuclear families or alone, not extended bands.
  - More geographical mobility: move cities, change jobs, cut ties.
  - Loneliness and social isolation are major problems (e.g., people living alone, weak community ties).
- Trade-offs:
  - Modern people enjoy more privacy and the ability to leave bad relationships.
  - But often lack deep, lifelong, in-person social bonds that foragers typically had.
- Foraging lesson for flourishing:
  - We might improve well-being by intentionally building stable, close, face-to-face communities, without giving up all modern privacy and mobility.

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2. Egalitarian Social Structure

Description

- Forager bands are usually:
  - Highly egalitarian: no formal chiefs, kings, or rigid hierarchies.
  - No large wealth differences: no land ownership, little material surplus.
  - Status is limited and fluid: good hunters or storytellers are respected, but cannot dominate others for long.
  - People use norms (e.g., teasing, criticism) to prevent bragging and power-grabs.

Effects on Flourishing

Potential benefits:

- Less domination and oppression
  - Fewer opportunities for extreme exploitation by powerful elites.
- Stronger mutual respect
  - People see each other as roughly equals, encouraging cooperation.
- Reduced status anxiety
  - Less pressure to climb social ladders, accumulate wealth, or signal status through consumption.

Potential drawbacks:

- Limited formal authority
  - Harder to coordinate large, complex projects without accepted leaders.
- Suppression of excellence?
  - Strong anti-bragging norms might discourage individuals from standing out or innovating too visibly.

Comparison to Modern Industrial Societies

- Modern societies:
  - Marked by strong hierarchies: governments, corporations, schools.
  - Large inequalities in income, wealth, and power.
  - Status competition (career, luxury goods, social media) is intense.
- Trade-offs:
  - Hierarchies may enable efficient large-scale organization (hospitals, universities, infrastructure), which can increase overall well-being.
  - But also generate stress, resentment, humiliation, and injustice.
- Foraging lesson for flourishing:
  - We might aim to reduce extreme inequality, build more participatory and cooperative structures, and soften harmful status competition.

---

3. Shared Childcare

Description

- Foragers typically practice “alloparenting”:
  - Childcare is distributed among mothers, fathers, grandparents, older siblings, and other adults.
  - Children are often physically with the group, not isolated with one caregiver.
  - Parenting is seen as a collective responsibility rather than a private burden.

Effects on Flourishing

Potential benefits:

- Reduced burden on individual parents
  - Less overwhelming stress for a single mother or nuclear family.
- More consistent care for children
  - If one caregiver is sick or busy, others step in.
- Richer social experience for kids
  - Exposure to multiple adult role models and skills.

Potential drawbacks:

- Less parental control
  - Biological parents have less exclusive say over children’s upbringing.
- Potential for conflict

  - Disagreements over discipline or values among multiple caregivers.

Comparison to Modern Industrial Societies

- Modern societies:
  - Emphasis on the nuclear family; often just one or two parents doing most childcare.
  - Childcare is often individualized and expensive (daycare, nannies).
  - Many parents experience exhaustion and work–family conflict.
- Trade-offs:
  - Modern parents may have more personal choice in how they raise children.
  - But suffer isolation, burnout, and guilt due to limited support.
- Foraging lesson for flourishing:
  - We might improve well-being by re-creating forms of shared childcare (extended family networks, co-ops, community centers, supportive workplace policies).

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4. Mixed-Age Playgroups; No School

Description

- Forager children:
  - Spend much time in free play in mixed-age groups.
  - Learn by observation, imitation, and participation in daily activities.
  - No formal schools, tests, or rigid curricula.
  - Knowledge is practical and embedded in life: hunting skills, plant knowledge, social norms, stories.

Effects on Flourishing

Potential benefits:

- High autonomy for children
  - Kids choose games, explore interests, and learn at their own pace.
- Strong intrinsic motivation
  - Learning is tied to play and real tasks, not external grades or threats.
- Social and emotional development
  - Mixed-age groups foster empathy, leadership, and cooperation.

Potential drawbacks:

- Limited exposure to abstract and modern knowledge
  - Little formal math, science, or literacy (as we know it).
- Less preparation for complex modern jobs
  - In our world, many careers require structured schooling.

Comparison to Modern Industrial Societies

- Modern education:
  - Age-segregated, compulsory schooling for many years.
  - Heavy emphasis on testing, ranking, and standardized curricula.

  - Can cause stress, anxiety, boredom, and competition among students.
- Trade-offs:
  - Schooling opens access to advanced knowledge and opportunities not available in forager societies.
  - But may undermine play, autonomy, and joy in learning.
- Foraging lesson for flourishing:
  - We might benefit from more play-based, mixed-age, interest-driven learning environments, within or alongside formal schooling.

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5. No Division of Labor (Except by Sex), and Non-Traditional Gender Roles

Description

- Foragers generally:
  - Have limited occupational specialization: most adults share a broad set of skills (gathering, hunting, tool-making, child-care, storytelling, etc.).
  - Do show some division by sex, but:
    * Women may gather, but also sometimes hunt, fish, or participate in "taboo" tasks by modern standards.
    * Men may participate in childcare, food processing, and social activities.
  - Rigid modern "breadwinner husband / homemaker wife" ideals do not neatly apply.

Effects on Flourishing

Potential benefits:

- Variety and skill breadth
  - People use a wide range of abilities; less risk of boredom from narrow, repetitive jobs.
- Reduced extreme gender inequality (in many groups)
  - Contributions of both sexes are essential and visibly valuable to survival.

Potential drawbacks:

- Lack of deep expertise
  - Less highly specialized skill development that can lead to major technological or artistic advances.
- Persistent sex-based expectations
  - Some tasks may still be more associated with one sex, which can limit individual choice.

Comparison to Modern Industrial Societies

- Modern economies:
  - Intense occupational specialization (doctors, engineers, accountants, factory workers, etc.).
  - Historically very rigid gender roles (men in paid work, women in unpaid domestic labor), though changing.
- Trade-offs:
  - Specialization enables high productivity, complex technology, and medical advances, raising living standards.

  - But also leads to monotonous work, alienation, and persistent gender inequality (pay gaps, glass ceilings, unpaid care work).
- Foraging lesson for flourishing:
  - We might aim for:
    * Less rigid gender roles and more shared domestic and economic responsibilities.
    * More varied, meaningful work, even within a specialized economy (job rotation, autonomy, skill diversity).

---

6. Female Autonomy and Power (Example: Hadza)

Description

- In some foraging societies (e.g., Hadza):
  - Women enjoy relatively high autonomy:
    * They can often choose their partners and may leave unhappy relationships.
    * They control their own foraging and have say over how resources are used.
  - Women's foraging (e.g., gathering plant foods) is crucial to group survival, giving them social influence.
  - Decision-making is often collective, with women's voices heard.

Effects on Flourishing

Potential benefits:

- Reduced gender-based oppression
  - Women are less economically and socially dependent on men.
- Greater safety and dignity for women
  - Ability to exit abusive relationships; more bodily autonomy.
- Better outcomes for children
  - When women have power over resources, child health often improves.

Potential drawbacks:

- Not perfect equality
  - Some male dominance and gender norms may still exist; autonomy varies by group.
- Vulnerability to external changes
  - Contact with non-forager societies can introduce new forms of inequality or exploitation.

Comparison to Modern Industrial Societies

- Modern world:
  - In many places, women have legal rights, education, and careers, but:
    * Face pay gaps, glass ceilings, domestic violence, and unpaid care burdens.
  - In other regions, women's autonomy remains very limited (e.g., restrictions on movement, work, or dress).
- Trade-offs:
  - Modern societies provide formal equality in law and large-scale institutions (courts, HR policies) aiming at fairness.

  - But social norms and economic structures still often entrench male advantage.
- Foraging lesson for flourishing:
  - Gender equality and autonomy are compatible with small-scale, non-industrial life and may enhance flourishing.

  - We can strive to strengthen real, not just formal, gender equality: economic independence, safety, and shared authority.

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7. Short Workweek

Description

- Studies of some modern foragers suggest:
  - "Work" (hunting, gathering, tool repair) often takes far fewer hours per week than full-time jobs in industrial societies.
  - Significant time is spent on rest, storytelling, ritual, socializing, and play.

(Exact number of hours varies by group and season; the key idea is "less than typical modern full-time work" rather than a precise figure.)

Effects on Flourishing

Potential benefits:

- More leisure and social time
  - More hours for play, rest, relationships, and cultural activities.
- Lower chronic stress
  - Less constant time pressure from work.

Potential drawbacks:

- Economic insecurity and vulnerability
  - No stored wealth; survival closely tied to environmental conditions.
- High physical risk
  - Bad hunting days, injuries, or droughts can be life-threatening.

Comparison to Modern Industrial Societies

- Modern work:
  - Long hours, commuting, and digital connectivity → work invades leisure time.
  - Many experience chronic stress, burnout, and lack of work–life balance.
  - But stable jobs can provide predictable income, healthcare, pensions, and a sense of purpose.
- Trade-offs:
  - We exchange some leisure for material security, comfort, and consumption.
  - But may sacrifice mental health and time for relationships.
- Foraging lesson for flourishing:
  - We might reconsider:

        * How many hours we truly need to work for a good life.

        * Policies like shorter workweeks, flexible schedules, or universal basic income to free more time for social and meaningful activities.

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8. Were Foragers Happier than Us? What Can We Learn?

"Were they happier?" – Key Point

- We do not know:
  - No direct self-reports from ancient foragers.
  - Modern foragers live under changed conditions (land loss, contact with states, disease).
- So, we cannot confidently say they were overall happier or less happy than people today.

What We Can Reasonably Learn

- Certain structural features of forager life are plausibly good for flourishing:
  - Strong, stable social bonds; rich face-to-face communities.
  - Shared childcare and support for parents.
  - Greater equality and often more female autonomy.
  - More time for leisure, play, and community life.
- Other aspects are clearly risky or unpleasant:
  - High child mortality.
  - No modern medicine or safety nets.
  - Vulnerability to famine, injury, and environmental shocks.

Balanced Take-Away

- The idea that "modern life is unnatural and therefore bad" is too simple:
  - Some modern features clearly improve well-being (medicine, safety, longer lives, comfort).
  - Some forager features may be worth emulating or adapting.
- Practical lesson for our own lives:
  - Use knowledge of forager societies to question modern defaults (e.g., extreme individualism, long work hours, intense schooling, rigid gender roles).
  - Experiment with:
    * Stronger communities and friendships.
    * Shared childcare and mutual aid.
    * More egalitarian relationships and workplaces.
    * Protecting leisure, play, and autonomy.
  - While keeping the genuine benefits of modern technology, medicine, and rights.

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9. Exam Tips

- Be ready to:

- Describe at least 5 features:
  - Highly social life
  - Egalitarian structure
  - Shared childcare
  - Mixed-age play / no school
  - Limited division of labor; non-traditional gender roles
  - Female autonomy and power
  - Short workweek
- For each, explain:
  1. What it looked like in forager societies.

  2. Why it might increase or decrease happiness/flourishing.

  3. How it differs from modern industrial societies (advantages and disadvantages).
- Emphasize:
  - Uncertainty about exact forager life and happiness levels.

  - The idea that we can selectively adopt some forager-like elements to improve well-being without rejecting modern life entirely.

17: Liking Vs Wanting Supernormal Stimuli

1. Liking vs Wanting: Concepts and Their Divergence

Basic Distinction

- Liking
  - Subjective pleasure, enjoyment, hedonic feeling.
  - "How good it feels" when you do/consume something.
  - Often conscious and reportable: "I enjoy this," "this tastes good."
- Wanting
  - Motivation, urge, inclination to pursue or consume something.
  - Can operate without conscious reflection: craving, compulsion.
  - May persist even when you know you no longer enjoy the thing or judge it bad for you.

Key Point:
They are conceptually distinct. It is logically possible, and empirically common, for wanting and liking to come apart.

Ways They Diverge

1. False Beliefs About Enjoyment
   - You believe you like something (e.g., a prestigious job, social media use) because of habit, social expectations, or status.
   - On honest reflection, you realize you don't actually enjoy it very much.
   - Your beliefs about liking can misalign with your actual experience of liking.
2. Wanting Without Liking
   - You have a strong urge to do X but:
     - X is not particularly pleasurable anymore, or
     - You might even find X aversive or empty.
   - Typical in addiction and compulsive behaviors.
3. Liking Without Wanting
   - You enjoy something when you do it, but don't feel strong urges beforehand.
   - Example: You truly enjoy a quiet walk, reading, or visiting friends, but you rarely feel a powerful "pull" to initiate it compared with checking your phone.

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2. Neuroscience of Wanting vs Liking

Distinct Brain Systems

Current best-supported theories in neuroscience (especially "incentive salience" theory) hold:

- Wanting system
  - Centers: mesolimbic dopamine system, particularly:
    - Ventral tegmental area (VTA)
    - Nucleus accumbens (core)
    - Projections to prefrontal cortex and other limbic areas.
  - Key neurotransmitter: dopamine.

  - Function: tags stimuli and cues as “important” or “motivationally salient,” generating cravings and pursuit, not pleasure itself.
- Liking system
  - Centers: small “hedonic hotspots”:
    * Parts of the nucleus accumbens shell
    * Ventral pallidum
    * Other regions in brainstem and limbic system.
  - Neurochemicals: opioids, endocannabinoids, and certain GABA processes.
  - Function: generate pleasurable feelings and hedonic “liking” reactions.

Evidence of Dissociation

- Animals can be manipulated so dopamine (wanting) is boosted while hedonic hotspots are unchanged:
  - They work harder for a reward (more wanting), but facial expressions of pleasure (liking) do not increase.
- Conversely, stimulating hedonic hotspots can increase liking reactions without creating strong motivated pursuit.

Conclusion:
Motivation (wanting) and pleasure (liking) are realized in partially separate brain systems, using different circuits and neurotransmitters.

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3. Drug Addiction as Misalignment of Wanting and Liking

What Happens in Addiction?

1. Sensitization of the Wanting System
   - Repeated drug use causes sensitization of mesolimbic dopamine pathways.
   - Environmental cues associated with the drug (places, people, paraphernalia) come to trigger intense dopamine “spikes”.
   - Result: extremely strong cravings and urges when exposed to cues, even after long abstinence.
2. Tolerance and Reduced Liking
   - Over time, subjective pleasure (“high”) often decreases: the user no longer gets the same hedonic payoff.
   - They may say: “I don’t even enjoy it anymore, but I can’t stop.”
   - So:
     - Wanting (craving) can remain very high or increase.
     - Liking (pleasure) can stay constant or decline.
3. Neural Mechanism of Misalignment
   - Wanting: hyper-reactive dopamine system responds strongly to drug-related cues.
   - Liking: hedonic system adapts and may become less responsive; chronic use can disrupt normal hedonic function.
   - Thus the same behavior (taking the drug) is driven by a powerful motivation system that is no longer tracking actual pleasure.

Addiction Beyond Drugs

- Similar patterns can occur with:
  - Gambling (especially slot machines, online betting)
  - Junk food
  - Internet pornography
  - Certain video games
- Common features:
  - Strong cue-triggered urges.
  - Declining or plateaued enjoyment.
  - Persistence of use despite recognition of harm.

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4. Wanting vs Long-Term Well-Being and Values

Two levels of divergence:

1. Wanting vs Liking (momentary pleasure)
   - As above: we can crave things we no longer enjoy.
2. Wanting vs What We Value / Long-Term Well-Being
   - Even if we "like" something in the moment, we may judge that, over time, it makes our life worse (e.g., heavy social media use, binge-watching, junk food).
   - Philosophers like Harry Frankfurt emphasize:
     - We care not only about what we want, but also about "what we want to want" (our higher-order values).
   - The attention economy, as described by Jenny Odell and James Williams:
     - Uses persuasive design to keep us clicking, scrolling, and reacting.
     - Can undermine our capacity for reflection and self-regulation, making it harder "to want what we want to want."
     - Leads to short-term engagement winning against long-term aims (meaningful work, relationships, political engagement, creativity).

Exam-Relevant Idea:
Misalignment can thus be: - Neural: wanting vs liking. - Normative: wanting vs what we judge good for us or truly value over the long term.

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5. Supernormal Stimuli: Definition and Core Idea

Definition

A supernormal stimulus is:

> An artificially exaggerated version of a natural stimulus that a species evolved to respond to, which triggers a stronger behavioral response than the natural, "normal" stimulus.

Key features:

- Exploits evolved preference mechanisms (for certain shapes, colors, tastes, etc.).

- Is more intense (bigger, brighter, sweeter, more frequent) than anything typically found in the original environment of the species.
- Can cause the animal to prefer the artificial stimulus over the natural one, even when that is maladaptive.

Why They Work

- Evolution shapes organisms to treat certain cues as reliable signs of fitness-relevant goods (food, mates, offspring).
- Supernormal stimuli mimic and amplify those cues.
- The evolved system "over-fires" in response: the animal wants it more than the thing that is actually good for survival or reproduction.

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6. Examples of Supernormal Stimuli in Non-Human Animals

Know at least three clear examples:

1. Birds Preferring Artificial "Eggs"
    - Some birds will prefer to sit on extra-large, more speckled, more colorful artificial eggs over their own natural eggs.
    - The exaggerated size/color pattern overstimulates their built-in preference for "healthy" eggs.
2. Herring Gull Chick Pecking Behavior
    - Naturally, chicks peck at the red spot on their parent's bill to get food.
    - In experiments, chicks peck even more at a simple stick with three bright red stripes than at the real bill.
    - The artificial cue is a supernormal version of the key visual feature (red contrast).
3. Male Butterflies with Artificial Females
    - Male butterflies can be attracted more strongly to larger, brighter cardboard models than to actual females.
    - Exaggeration of wing size and color intensity creates a supernormal sexual stimulus.
4. Geese and Oversized Egg-Shaped Objects (another common example)
    - Geese instinctively roll eggs back into their nest.
    - They will preferentially roll larger egg-shaped objects (e.g., a volleyball or fake oversized egg) over real eggs.
    - Again, bigger and more salient object triggers a stronger response.

Common Pattern:
In each case, the animal's instinctive response system treats an exaggerated cue as even more appealing than the real, fitness-supporting target.

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7. Human Supernormal Stimuli: Candidates and Analysis

General Idea

Modern technologies and industries create stimuli that:

- Are more intense, more concentrated, or more frequent than ancestral environments contained.
- Tap into evolved systems for:
  - Sugar, fat, and salt (food)
  - Sexual interest
  - Social approval and information
  - Novelty and uncertainty
- These can plausibly be seen as supernormal stimuli for humans.

For the exam, know at least two clear human examples and be able to:

- Argue why they count as supernormal.
- Discuss whether they involve:
  - Wanting vs liking divergence.
  - Urges that damage long-term well-being or values.

Example 1: Highly Processed “Junk” Food

Why it’s a supernormal stimulus

- Our ancestors evolved in environments with scarce sugar and fat.
- Natural foods: moderate sweetness, fat, and salt.
- Modern processed foods are:
  - Extremely high in sugar, refined carbohydrates, fat, and salt.
  - Engineered for hyper-palatability (taste, texture, mouthfeel).
- Result: They present a supernormal version of the cues that once reliably signaled high-value calories.

Wanting vs Liking

- Wanting:
  - Strong cravings, especially in response to cues (smells, packaging, ads).
  - Dopamine response to sugar/fat and cues can sensitize with repeated consumption.
- Liking:
  - Initial consumption is pleasurable.
  - Over time, people often report diminishing enjoyment and even feeling sluggish or guilty, yet they continue to eat.
- So we can see:
  - Wanting may remain high or increase (craving).
  - Liking can plateau or decrease.

Effect on Long-Term Well-Being

- Frequent consumption is linked to:
  - Obesity, diabetes, heart disease.
  - Lower energy and health, possibly reduced mood.
- Thus, indulging the urge can reduce overall well-being, despite short-term pleasure and strong motivation.

Example 2: Social Media and the Attention Economy

Why it's a supernormal stimulus

- Humans evolved to care deeply about:
  - Social approval, reputation, group inclusion.
  - New information about threats and opportunities.
- Social media platforms (as described by Jenny Odell and others):
  - Provide continuous, rapid, quantified feedback (likes, comments, follower counts).
  - Use persuasive design: notification badges, red icons, intermittent variable rewards, infinite scroll.
  - Expose us to constant novelty, outrage-provoking news, and emotional content.
- This is a supernormal environment compared with the slow, small-scale social interactions of ancestral life:
  - Many more "social signals" per minute than we evolved for.
  - Amplified emotional triggers (fear, anger, envy, desire).

Wanting vs Liking

- Wanting:
  - Compulsive checking behaviors, especially upon seeing notifications or feeling bored or anxious.
  - Strong urge to refresh feeds, respond to notifications, and chase "engagement."
- Liking:
  - People often report:
    - Brief hits of satisfaction when receiving likes or messages.
    - Overall feelings of stress, anxiety, distraction, envy, or emptiness after extended use.
- A user can feel:
  - "I keep reaching for my phone, but I don't even like what I'm seeing."
  - This is a classic wanting > liking pattern.

Effect on Long-Term Well-Being and Values

- As James Williams notes, persistent distraction can:
  - Prevent us from "living the lives we want to live."
  - Undermine capacities for reflection and self-regulation, making it harder to "want what we want to want."
- As Odell emphasizes:
  - The attention economy can trap people in waves of hysteria, fear, and outrage, generating anxiety while making it hard to think clearly or act effectively.
- Long-term costs can include:
  - Reduced ability to concentrate.
  - Neglect of meaningful relationships and projects.
  - Distorted sense of reality and values.
- So social media can be:
  - A supernormal social stimulus (exaggerated friendship/attention/novelty).
  - A case where we frequently want to engage, often don't deeply like the experience, and harm long-term well-being and autonomy.

Example 3: Internet Pornography

Why it's a supernormal stimulus

- Humans evolved sexual interest for:
  - Real partners, with limited variety and frequency.
- Internet pornography:
  - Offers endless variety of bodies and scenarios (novelty).
  - Extremely convenient, available on demand.
  - Intensifies visual and sexual cues beyond what is typical in ordinary life.
- This creates a supernormal sexual environment, far beyond ancestral conditions.

Wanting vs Liking

- Wanting:
  - Strong urges or compulsive use, especially with certain cues (boredom, stress, loneliness).
- Liking:
  - Pleasure during use, but some report:
    - Diminished satisfaction over time.
    - Desensitization to normal sexual interaction.
    - Feelings of emptiness or shame afterward.
- Thus, as with drugs, we can see rising or stable wanting with declining liking.

Effect on Long-Term Well-Being

- Potential consequences:
  - Interference with real-life intimacy.
  - Unrealistic expectations about sex and bodies.
  - In some cases, decreased motivation for relationships and other life projects.
- Again, urges can lead to behavior that undermines valued aspects of life and relationships.

Example 4: Gambling and Slot Machines (Optional Additional Example)

- Slot machines and online gambling use:
  - Intermittent variable rewards (like the notification schedule on social media).
  - Bright colors, sounds, near-misses: all designed to exaggerate reward cues.
- This creates a supernormal reward environment for systems evolved for occasional, natural wins.
- Clear case of:
  - Strong dopamine-driven wanting.
  - Liking that often declines.
  - Severe long-term harm (financial ruin, stress, social damage).

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8. Supernormal Stimuli and Wanting–Liking Divergence in Humans

Do Supernormal Stimuli Create Wanting–Liking Divergences?

Often, yes:

- By over-activating our motivational systems (dopamine and related circuitry), they:
  - Increase wanting and cue-triggered urges.
- But because of:
  - Tolerance.
  - Desensitization.
  - Conflicts with our values and self-image.
- They often do not increase liking indefinitely and may even decrease the real enjoyment or meaning of the activity.

Do They Reduce Long-Term Well-Being or Other Values?

Common patterns across human cases:

- Short-term:
  - Intense motivation and quick gratifications.
- Long-term:
  - Health problems (junk food).
  - Attention fragmentation and anxiety (social media).
  - Relationship and sexual difficulties (porn).
  - Financial and psychological damage (gambling).

These are paradigmatic cases of:

1. Wanting > Liking
   We pursue something more than we actually enjoy it.
2. Wanting vs What We Value
   Our immediate urges conflict with:
   - Our long-term interests.
   - Our reflective judgments about the kind of life we want to live.

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9. How to Use These Ideas in an Exam Answer

When asked about these topics, be sure you can:

1. Define and distinguish liking vs wanting
   - Liking = pleasure; wanting = motivation/urge.
   - Explain that they are conceptually distinct and can diverge.
2. Describe the neuroscientific basis
   - Wanting: mesolimbic dopamine system.
   - Liking: hedonic hotspots with opioids/endocannabinoids.
   - Emphasize different circuits and neurochemicals.
3. Explain addiction through this lens
   - Sensitized wanting system; tolerance in liking.
   - Addict may strongly want a drug they no longer enjoy and judge as bad.
4. Define supernormal stimulus
   - Artificially exaggerated natural cue causing stronger response than the natural stimulus.

    - Explain why evolution makes us vulnerable to these.
5. Give at least three animal examples
    - Birds preferring large/artificial eggs.
    - Herring gull chicks preferring a red-striped stick.
    - Male butterflies preferring larger/brighter models.
    - (Optionally: geese and oversized egg-shaped objects.)
6. Give at least two human examples and analyze
    - Junk food, social media, porn, gambling.
    - For each: say why it is supernormal; discuss wanting vs liking; discuss impact on long-term well-being and values.
7. Connect to the attention economy readings
    - Persuasive design as engineering supernormal stimuli for attention.
    - Connection to James Williams' point about undermining our ability to "want what we want to want."
    - Odell's emphasis on the need to withdraw or resist in order to regain meaningful, self-directed attention.

These elements together will let you answer questions about:

- The difference between wanting and liking in neuroscience.
- How this explains addiction.
- What supernormal stimuli are in animals and humans.
- How they can produce both neural misalignments (wanting vs liking) and normative misalignments (urge vs long-term well-being and values).

18: The Good Life

1. Waldinger & Schulz: The Good Life, Social Fitness, and the Harvard Study

A. Their main claim about the good life

- The “good life” is not a life without problems.
- It includes joy and love, but also pain, struggle, and eventual death.
- Core idea: close, supportive relationships are a major determinant of:
  - Happiness and life satisfaction
  - Physical health and longevity
  - Mental health and resilience

So, if you care about living well, you should take relationships as seriously as you take career or physical health.

B. The Harvard Study of Adult Development

Design: - Began in the late 1930s. - Followed two groups of young men across their entire adult lives: 1. Harvard undergraduates (relatively privileged) 2. Boys from Boston’s poorest neighborhoods (less privileged) - Methods: - Regular detailed interviews
- Questionnaires about work, relationships, mental health
- Medical exams and health records

Why it’s important: - It is the longest in-depth longitudinal study of human life ever done. - It tracks people over many decades, instead of just taking one-time snapshots.

Key findings: - What best predicts happiness, health, and longevity is: - Quality of close relationships (family, friends, partners, community), - Not wealth, status, or fame. - Loneliness and social disconnection: - Are associated with worse physical health (e.g., more illness, shorter life), - Are as harmful as some major health risk factors (like smoking or obesity). - Strong relationships: - Protect both body (lower risk of some diseases) and mind (better mood, better memory).

Philosophical upshot: - If relationships matter more than many things we commonly chase (money, prestige, status),
then rational life planning should: - Give high priority to cultivating and maintaining close, supportive relationships.

C. Social Fitness: Why It Matters as Much as Physical Fitness

Analogy to physical fitness: - Physical fitness: - Requires regular effort: exercise, sleep, diet. - Declines if you neglect it. - Social fitness (their term): - Your capacity to form, maintain, and deepen supportive relationships. - Requires regular attention and practice. - Also declines if neglected.

Key idea: - We tend to assume that relationships “take care of themselves” if they are “meant to be.” - Waldinger and Schulz argue this is mistaken:
Relationships, like muscles, weaken without use.

What it means to “cultivate social fitness”: - Regularly assess your relationships: - Who are my closest people right now? - Which relationships feel strong? Strained? Neglected? - Then act to strengthen them: - Reach out, repair conflicts, invest time, show care. - Treat social fitness as something you train deliberately, not as something automatic.

Illustrative idea (John and Leo): - Think of two old friends (John and Leo): - They were close in college but assume their bond will last without effort. - Years of “too busy right now” → fewer calls, fewer shared experiences. - The friendship quietly weakens. - Their point: if John and Leo had treated their friendship like fitness (requiring regular “workouts”), they could have maintained or deepened it.

Why social fitness is as important as physical fitness: - Because, as the Harvard Study shows, relationships are a central determinant of health and happiness. - Just as you schedule workouts or doctor’s appointments, you ought to schedule and protect time and energy for relationships.

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2. Brené Brown: Fitting In vs Belonging

A. Definitions

Fitting in: - Trying to change yourself so that others will accept you. - You adjust your: - Opinions, interests, appearance, or behavior - To match what you think others want or expect. - The question underneath: “Who do I need to be so you will like me?”

Belonging: - Being accepted and valued as you actually are. - You can be: - Honest about your feelings and views, - Imperfect and vulnerable, - Still feel you are part of the group. - The question underneath: “Can I bring my real self and still be loved here?”

B. Why fitting in is problematic

According to Brené Brown:

1. It requires self-erasure.
    - You hide or distort parts of yourself to gain acceptance.
    - Over time, this creates shame and a sense of being a “fake.”
2. It undermines real connection.
    - Others are connecting to the mask, not the real you.
    - Even if people “like” you, you can feel lonely because your true self is unknown.
3. It is fragile.
    - Acceptance depends on constantly maintaining the performance.
    - Any slip (honest opinion, vulnerability) feels like it might cause rejection.
4. It exhausts you.
    - Constant monitoring and self-editing are tiring.
    - This leaves less energy for genuine intimacy and support.

Connection to the good life and social fitness: - If you are always fitting in rather than belonging: - Your relationships will be shallow or unstable. - They will not provide the deep, supportive connections that the Harvard Study shows are crucial. - So, cultivating belonging—where you can be authentic—is central to real social fitness and long-term flourishing.

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3. Waldinger & Schulz's Three Recommendations for Strengthening Relationships

1. Give Time and Attention

Core idea: - Relationships grow through regular, high-quality attention, not just occasional grand gestures.

Why it matters: - Time and attention signal: - "You matter to me." - "I'm willing to prioritize you over distractions." - Without this, people feel secondary to work, phones, or other tasks.

How to do it (examples): - Protect uninterrupted time: - Put away your phone at dinner. - Schedule regular one-on-one time with partner, friends, or family. - Be fully present: - Listen without multitasking. - Notice tone and body language, not just words.

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2. Radical Curiosity

Core idea: - Don't assume you already fully know the other person. - Approach them with deep, open curiosity about their inner world.

Why it matters: - People change over time (views, fears, hopes). - If you stop being curious, you treat them as a fixed character rather than a growing person. - Curiosity: - Prevents misunderstandings, - Strengthens empathy, - Makes the other person feel truly seen.

How to do it (examples): - Ask open-ended questions: - "How are you really feeling about work lately?" - "What's been on your mind these days?" - When there is tension: - Instead of assuming bad intent, ask: - "Help me understand what was going on for you when that happened." - Listen to underlying emotions and values, not just surface facts.

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3. Give the Support You Want to Receive

Core idea: - Treat others in the way you yourself would want to be treated if you were in their position. - Use your own needs as a guide, but combine this with curiosity about their preferences.

Why this helps: - It encourages: - Empathy: imagining how you would feel in their situation. - Responsiveness: taking their struggles seriously instead of minimizing them. - It counters the tendency to be dismissive or distant when others are in need.

How to do it (examples): - If you would want someone to check in regularly when you are stressed: - Do this for others who are going through something (illness, breakup, exams). - If you would want people to listen without immediate advice: - Offer that kind of listening first. - Then ask: "Would you like advice, or do you just want me to listen?" - If you would appreciate practical help (e.g.,

errands, food) when overwhelmed: - Offer specific forms of help, not just “Let me know if you need anything.”

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4. The WISER Model for Dealing with Relationship Difficulties

The WISER model is a step-by-step strategy to handle conflicts or tensions in relationships more skillfully.

Overview of Steps

1. Watch
2. Interpret
3. Select
4. Engage
5. Reflect

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1. Watch

What it means: - Pause and observe: - Your own emotions and bodily reactions, - What is happening in the situation, - Without immediately reacting.

Why it matters: - Prevents impulsive, heated responses you might later regret. - Gives you a chance to calm down and think.

Example: - Your friend cancels plans last minute for the third time. - Immediate reaction: anger, “They don’t care about me.” - “Watch” step: - Notice: “I feel hurt and angry; my chest is tight; my thoughts are racing.” - You choose to wait before sending a harsh text.

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2. Interpret

What it means: - Consider multiple possible explanations for the other person’s behavior. - Challenge your first, often negative, interpretation.

Why it matters: - Our default story is often: - “They’re selfish,” “They don’t care,” etc. - This may be wrong or incomplete. - Considering alternative explanations opens space for empathy and better responses.

Example (continuing): - Instead of settling on “My friend doesn’t value me,” you consider: - They might be overwhelmed at work, - They might be struggling with mental health, - They might be bad at time management but still care.

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3. Select

What it means: - Choose a response strategy that fits: - Your long-term goals for the relationship, - Your values, - The seriousness of the situation.

Why it matters: - Not every problem requires the same response: - Sometimes you let things go, - Sometimes you have a serious talk, - Sometimes you change your own boundaries. - Selecting intentionally avoids both overreacting and underreacting.

Example: - Long-term goal: preserve an honest, close friendship. - You select a strategy: - Have a calm conversation about how repeated cancellations make you feel, - Rather than sending an angry text or silently withdrawing.

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4. Engage

What it means: - Carry out the chosen strategy in real interaction with the person.

How to do it well: - Use “I” statements instead of accusations: - “I felt hurt when our plans were cancelled again,” - Instead of “You never take me seriously.” - Maintain a respectful tone and body language. - Stay open to their side of the story.

Example (conversation): - You say: “I care about our friendship and also feel hurt when our plans keep getting cancelled. Can we talk about what’s going on?” - You listen to their explanation and discuss ways to handle scheduling better.

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5. Reflect

What it means: - After the interaction, review: - What went well? - What didn’t? - What did you learn about yourself and the other person? - Use this to improve your approach in future conflicts.

Why it matters: - Conflict-handling is a skill that improves with deliberate reflection. - Reflection strengthens your social fitness over time.

Example: - You realize: - Waiting before reacting helped, - “I” statements kept the conversation from escalating, - Next time you might propose fewer, more definite plans with this friend to reduce cancellations.

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5. The Urgent vs the Important: A Threat to Relationships

A. Distinction

Urgent tasks: - Demand immediate attention. - Often come with deadlines or external pressure: - Work emails, project deadlines, exams, bills, minor crises. - They feel pressing right now.

Important tasks: - Deeply matter for your long-term values and well-being. - Often have no fixed deadline, so they can be delayed: - Quality time with loved ones, - Calling a friend who’s going through a hard time, - Expressing appreciation or apologizing, - Investing in health and personal growth.

Crucially: many relationship-building activities are important but not urgent.

B. “No time today but plenty of time tomorrow”

Pattern: - People tell themselves: - “I’m too busy today for a long conversation / date night / visit, but I’ll have more time later.” - Then: - “Later” never really comes; new urgent tasks always appear. - Over months or years: - Relationships receive only leftover time and energy.

Result: - Relationships quietly erode: - Less emotional intimacy, - More misunderstandings, - Feeling taken for granted or distant.

C. How prioritizing the urgent harms close relationships

1. Neglect of maintenance:
   - Strong relationships require regular maintenance, just like physical health.
   - When urgent tasks always win, you skip the small, steady actions that keep bonds strong (talking, checking in, showing care).
2. Signals of low priority:
   - When someone is repeatedly postponed for work or other tasks, they can feel:
     - Unimportant,
     - Unloved,
     - Like “background noise” in your life.
   - This weakens trust and willingness to be emotionally open.
3. Lost opportunities for depth:
   - Intimate conversations and shared experiences often arise in unstructured, unhurried time.
   - Over-scheduling your life with urgent tasks leaves no room for this.
4. Contradiction with your own values:
   - Many people say relationships matter most, but live as if work and other urgencies matter more.
   - Systematically choosing the urgent over the important creates a values/practice mismatch.

D. What the exam may expect you to explain

- Be able to:
  - Define “urgent” vs “important.”
  - Explain that relationship-nurturing activities are often important but not urgent.
  - Describe how always choosing urgent tasks (work, deadlines, etc.) leads to:
    - Neglected relationships,
    - Erosion of close bonds,
    - Ultimately less happiness and well-being.
  - Connect this to the Harvard Study:

* Since close relationships are key to thriving, failing to protect time for them undermines your chances of living a good life.

These points together show how Waldinger and Schulz connect: - The empirical findings of the Harvard Study, - The concept of social fitness, - Brené Brown's idea of true belonging, - Concrete relationship practices (time and attention, radical curiosity, supportive behavior), - The WISER conflict model, - And the urgent vs important distinction,

into a single picture of how to intentionally build and protect the close, supportive relationships that make a good life possible.

19: Braiding Sweetgrass

1. The Gift Perspective

Core idea:
See the world (especially the natural world) as full of gifts rather than commodities.

- What is a gift?
  - Comes to you through no action of your own
  - Free; not earned; not a reward or payment
  - Calls for appreciation, not calculation
- Your role in a gift world:
  - To be open-eyed and present
  - To notice, receive, and respond appropriately (gratitude, care, reciprocity)
- Existence as a gift from non-human people:
  - Your life originates from gifts:
    - Air from plants and trees
    - Food from plants, animals, fungi, soil microbes
    - Water filtered by ecosystems
    - A habitable climate from the whole Earth system
  - Your life continues only through ongoing gifts:
    - Every breath, every bite of food, every sip of water are unpurchased “services” from non-human beings
  - Kimmerer calls many non-human beings “people” (plant people, animal people, etc.) to emphasize:
    - They are not mere “resources”
    - They are members of a shared community, with which we are in relationship
- The joy of a world full of gifts:
  - The world becomes a place of ongoing giving and receiving, not just extraction
  - Everyday life can be experienced as surrounded by generosity, not scarcity

2. From Gift → Gratitude → Reciprocity / Generosity

Progression:

1. Receiving a gift
   - Recognizing that what you receive is not owed to you
   - Seeing your dependence on others (human and non-human)
2. Gratitude
   - Emotional and cognitive recognition: “I have been given something good.”
   - Leads to:
     - Humility (I rely on others)
     - Appreciation (this is not just “mine”)
3. Reciprocity / Generosity
   - Proper response to gifts is not just “thanks,” but giving back
   - Reciprocity can be:
     - Direct: you help the specific being/community that helped you
     - Indirect: you help the broader community or ecosystem

- Important idea:
  The value of a gift increases as it is shared and passed on.
  - Hoarding diminishes the spirit of the gift
  - Sharing extends the circle of gratitude and care

- Human purpose (according to Kimmerer):
  - To feel and express gratitude
  - To love and care for the beings who sustain us
    This is how humans properly inhabit a gift-filled world.

3. Gift Economy vs Market Economy

Gift Economy (as Kimmerer understands it)

- Goods are gifts, not commodities.
- Main features:
  - Giving creates relationships and mutual obligations
  - Emphasis on circulation: gifts move through the community
  - Goal: mutual flourishing and relationship-building
  - Status comes from generosity, not accumulation
  - The more a gift is shared, the more valuable and meaningful it becomes

Market Economy

- Goods are commodities with a price.
- Main features:
  - Exchange is based on equivalence and payment
  - Relationships are often impersonal (buyer–seller, not kin)
  - Goal: profit, growth, accumulation, individual gain
  - Value measured mainly in money
  - Tends to encourage a scarcity mindset: you win by having more than others

Key Differences

- Nature of value:
  - Gift economy: value = relationship, gratitude, shared well-being
  - Market economy: value = market price, profit
- Attitude toward the world:
  - Gift economy: world as generous, alive, full of “people” who give
  - Market economy: world as resource, stuff to be owned, bought, sold
- Resulting behavior:
  - Gift economy: sharing, restraint, reciprocity
  - Market economy: extraction, competition, overuse is tempting when profitable

4. Why Inhabit the Gift Perspective? (Three Reasons)

Kimmerer offers three main considerations in favor of adopting the gift perspective:

1. It is joyful

- Experiencing your life as full of gifts leads to:
  - Wonder, appreciation
  - A sense of being loved and supported by the Earth
- Everyday experiences become occasions for gratitude, not entitlement.

2. It fosters an abundance, not scarcity, mindset
   - Gift perspective:
     - Focuses on what is given, what circulates, what we share
     - Encourages the sense that there is enough when used respectfully and shared
   - Scarcity mindset (typical of market focus):
     - Focuses on competition and hoarding
     - Makes others' gain feel like your loss
3. It might help humanity survive and flourish long-term
   - Gift thinking:
     - Encourages restraint (take only what you need)
     - Encourages reciprocity (give back, repair damage)
     - Treats ecosystems and non-human people as partners to care for, not just resources
   - This reduces ecological destruction and supports sustainable forms of life.
   - A market-only perspective, focused on constant growth and extraction, risks destroying the systems that support life.

5. Thesis of Mutual Flourishing

Thesis:
Humans and non-human people can and should flourish together; true human well-being must be linked to the well-being of the more-than-human world.

Key points:

- Humans are "the little brother" or "the new kid on the block"
  - Other beings (plants, animals, fungi) have been here much longer.
  - They are our "older siblings," with more experience in how to live sustainably.
  - We should learn from them rather than assume superiority.
- Flourishing is mutual, not one-sided
  - We should not seek human comfort and prosperity at the expense of the land, water, and non-human people.
  - Instead: design ways of living where:
    - Humans get what they need within limits
    - Ecosystems remain healthy or are improved
- Lesson from our "big siblings":
  - Do not destroy the systems on which you depend.
  - Many species live within the carrying capacity of their environment; humans must learn to do the same.
- Mutual flourishing rejects:
  - The idea that nature must be sacrificed for "progress"
  - The idea that caring for the Earth means human deprivation
    Instead: caring for the Earth is part of caring for ourselves and future generations.

6. The Honorable Harvest

The Honorable Harvest is a set of ethical guidelines for taking from the Earth in a way that respects mutual flourishing and reciprocity.

At least 3 key features (with more for context):

1. Ask permission from the ones whose lives you seek
    - Treat plants/animals as people with whom you are in relationship.
    - Listen for signs (abundance, health, presence/absence) that indicate “yes” or “no.”
2. Never take the first, never take the last
    - Ensures that:
        - There is always a “seed” population to regenerate
        - Others (human and non-human) also have access
3. Take only what you need
    - Rejects unnecessary excess and greed.
    - Encourages mindfulness about real needs vs wants.
4. Take only that which is given
    - Do not force or damage to obtain more.
    - Harvest in season, from abundant populations.
5. Never take more than half; leave some for others
    - Ensures:
        - Regeneration
        - Food/habitat for other beings
    - Concrete rule to prevent overharvesting.
6. Use everything you take
    - No waste.
    - Respect the life that was given by not discarding it carelessly.
7. Give thanks
    - Explicit expression of gratitude honors the giver.
    - Reinforces the gift perspective and your role as a grateful recipient.
8. Share what you have taken
    - Extends the gift beyond yourself.
    - Spreads the benefits and the gratitude through the community.
9. Give a gift in return
    - Restore habitats, plant seeds, clean rivers, protect species, tend the land.
    - Reciprocity is active: not just “not harming,” but positively contributing.

Overall:
The Honorable Harvest operationalizes the gift perspective and mutual flourishing: you receive from the Earth with gratitude, restraint, respect, and active reciprocity.

7. Two Guiding Questions for Relating to People (Human and Non-Human)

Kimmerer suggests that our relationships with all people—human and non-human—should be guided by two central questions. A useful way to formulate them:

1. What gifts am I receiving from this being or community?
    - Recognize how others support your life and well-being.
    - For human people: time, care, labor, knowledge, emotional support.

    - For non-human people: air, food, water, materials, beauty, inspiration.
2. What can I give in return to support their flourishing?
    - Move from passive gratitude to active reciprocity.
    - For human people: kindness, fairness, help, listening, sharing resources.
    - For non-human people: protecting habitats, reducing harm, restoring ecosystems, cultivating plants respectfully, following the Honorable Harvest.

Using these two questions:

- Keeps relationships reciprocal, not one-sided or exploitative.
- Applies equally to:
    - Family, friends, strangers
    - Animals, plants, waters, soils, and ecosystems
- Enacts the gift perspective and the thesis of mutual flourishing in daily life.

20: The Happiness Problem

Sam Wren-Lewis, The Happiness Problem – Exam Notes

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1. The Control Strategy

What it is

A common (but mistaken) approach to happiness:

1. Belief 1: If I work hard enough, I can get everything on my "life list" (career, money, status, relationship, etc.).
2. Belief 2: Once I get these things, I will be happy and secure.
3. Conclusion: I should devote almost all my energy to getting and protecting these things.

This creates a "problem-solving bubble":
You focus on fixing, optimizing, and controlling your life as if happiness were a problem to be solved by getting the right external conditions.

Why Wren-Lewis thinks it is problematic

1. Insecurity is inescapable
   - No matter how much we achieve, we remain vulnerable:
     - Health can fail.
     - Relationships can end.
     - Jobs and money can be lost.
   - So the idea that we can make ourselves fully secure through control is an illusion.
2. Endless striving, no lasting peace
   - Achieving one goal quickly leads to new worries (hedonic adaptation, moving the goal-posts).
   - We always need the next achievement to feel safe, so deep contentment never arrives.
3. "Going to war with reality"
   - Control strategy treats unwelcome facts (aging, loss, uncertainty) as enemies to be defeated.
   - This fuels anxiety, perfectionism, and frustration rather than acceptance or peace.
4. Mistaking means for ends
   - Control (plans, achievements, status) is treated as the ultimate goal.
   - But control is at best a means to living well; it has no guaranteed connection to meaning or deep happiness.
   - If we fail to get what we want, the control strategy leaves us with nothing: no meaning, no acceptance, just "I failed."
5. Missing what really matters
   - In focusing on ticking off items on a list (career milestones, wealth, etc.), we often neglect:
     - Relationships
     - Purpose
     - Personal growth

- We may be “successful” but still feel empty because we never asked what actually matters to us.

Key contrast phrase:
Control strategy = “going to war with reality.”

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2. The Understanding Strategy

What it is

An alternative approach:

1. Accept insecurity
   - Recognize that some vulnerability is built into human life.
   - Stop trying to eliminate all uncertainty; instead, learn to live with it.
2. Shift aim: from control to understanding
   - Spend time trying to understand:
     - Yourself (your values, fears, patterns, motives)
     - Others (their backgrounds, needs, struggles)
     - The world (how things actually work, limits of control)
   - The goal is not total control, but a wise relationship to reality.
3. Discovering and creating what matters
   - What matters to you is not just “found” like a ready-made object.
   - It is an ongoing process of:
     - Discovery: noticing what genuinely brings you meaning and fulfillment.
     - Creation: committing to projects, roles, and relationships that make your life meaningful.
   - Tools like life review exercises (reflecting on past experiences of meaning) help clarify this.
4. Control reinterpreted
   - Control is still useful—but only as a means, not the central goal.
   - We use control tools (planning, effort) to serve what we have understood to matter, not to chase security itself.
5. Intrinsic value of understanding
   - Understanding has value even when circumstances don’t improve.
   - Better self-knowledge, empathy, and realism can themselves make life more meaningful and bearable.

Key contrast phrase:
Understanding strategy = “striving for peace with reality,” not war against it.

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3. Commitment: Risks and Rewards

What is commitment?

A commitment is a long-term, binding involvement with: - A person (e.g. marriage, close friendship), - A role (e.g. being a parent), - A project (e.g. a demanding career, creative work, activism).

It involves: - Ongoing effort, - Willingness to endure difficulties, - Letting this person/project shape your identity and life.

Wren-Lewis: At some point, we must stop endlessly searching and actually commit, if we want deep meaning.

Rewards of commitment

1. Deep sources of joy and meaning
    - Intimate relationships, parenting, and serious projects can bring:
        - A sense of belonging,
        - Purpose,
        - Fulfillment that short-term pleasures cannot match.
2. Growth and identity
    - Commitments shape who we become.
    - They give life structure, a story, and reasons to get up in the morning even when things are hard.
3. Escaping the shallow list mentality
    - Commitment forces us off the endless “optimization” treadmill.
    - We build a life around what we genuinely care about, not just what looks impressive on a list.

Risks and difficulties of commitment

1. Risk of failure
    - Marriages can end; projects can collapse; children can struggle.
    - We cannot guarantee success; commitment exposes us to heartbreak and disappointment.
2. Inevitable hardships
    - Serious commitments are demanding:
        - Conflict, boredom, sacrifice in relationships.
        - Stress, setbacks, and long hours in projects or careers.
    - No commitment brings only pleasure.
3. Loss of options
    - Saying “yes” to one path means saying “no” to others.
    - Some people fear feeling “trapped” or missing out on other possibilities.

Appropriate response to failure: self-compassion

- When commitments go badly, the control strategy might say:
    - “I failed; I should have controlled better.”
- Wren-Lewis recommends self-compassion:
    - Recognize limits of control.
    - Treat yourself with kindness rather than harsh judgment.
    - Learn from the experience instead of letting it define your worth.

Key point:
Without commitment, we may avoid risks, but we also miss the deepest sources of joy and meaning.

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4. Understanding Others: Beyond Moral Judgment

Why not stop at moral judgment?

We often: - See someone behave badly → label them (“selfish,” “lazy,” “cruel”) → stop thinking.

Wren-Lewis argues this is inadequate because:

1. Judgment blocks understanding
    - Once we’ve judged someone, we often stop asking why they act this way.
    - We lose curiosity and empathy.
2. People are shaped by causes
    - Upbringing, trauma, culture, mental health, and social pressures all influence behavior.
    - Pure moral judgment ignores these deeper explanations.
3. Moral labels are too simple
    - Most people are not just “good” or “bad.”
    - They may have mixed motives, conflicting values, or be acting under pressure or fear.
4. Understanding ≠ excusing
    - Explaining behavior (e.g. via past trauma) does not mean:
        - The behavior is okay,
        - We must tolerate harm.
    - We can still hold people accountable, while seeking deeper understanding.
5. Compassion improves relationships and insight
    - Compassion encourages us to ask:
        - What pain, fear, or need is behind this behavior?
    - This can:
        - Reduce anger,
        - Improve communication,
        - Help us respond more wisely instead of just punishing or rejecting.

Key idea:
We should move from mere judgment (“You’re bad”) to explanation and understanding (“What led you here?”).

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5. Example: Deeper Explanation, Deeper Understanding

You must be able to describe at least one such example. Here is one you can use:

Example: The “lazy” coworker

Initial situation: - A coworker, Alex, is often late and misses deadlines. - First reaction: “Alex is lazy and irresponsible.”

Moral judgment only: - We label Alex as morally flawed. - We feel resentment and maybe complain about them. - We don’t ask what is going on in their life.

Looking for a deeper explanation: - You later learn: - Alex is a single parent caring for a sick child. - They are also working a second job at night. - They have been dealing with severe anxiety and lack of sleep.

New understanding: - Alex's behavior (lateness, missed deadlines) is still a problem and may still need addressing. - But you now see: - It is driven by overwhelming responsibilities and stress, not simple laziness. - Their "failure" reflects difficult circumstances and limited support.

How this changes your response: - You may still set boundaries or request changes. - But you are more likely to: - Talk compassionately with Alex, - Offer help or propose flexible arrangements, - Push for structural support (e.g. adjusted workload).

What this illustrates: - Moral judgment alone: "Bad worker; end of story." - Deeper understanding: "A struggling person whose behavior has complex causes." - This aligns with Wren-Lewis's view that compassion and explanation lead to a richer, fairer understanding of others, without denying responsibility.

Core Contrasts to Remember

- Control strategy = chase total security through achievements; war with reality; control as end.
- Understanding strategy = accept insecurity; seek self/other/world understanding; peace with reality; control as means.
- Commitment = risky, often painful, but crucial for deep meaning and joy.
- Understanding others = don't stop at "good/bad"; look for deeper explanations; use compassion without excusing harm.

21: Haybron Again

Lecture Notes: Happiness, the Good Life, and Luck

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1. Big Picture

- Both readings ask: What makes a life “good” and how does happiness fit into that?
- Key themes:
  - The good life is not the same as constant happiness or success.
  - Moral character and wise choices matter more than wealth or status.
  - Luck and contingency shape our lives, but we still have agency in how we respond.
  - We should be realistic about limits of control, yet still pursue meaning and goodness.

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2. Reading 1: A Good Life and How to Live It

2.1 Defining a “Good Life”

Core proposal:
- A good life = a life you could reasonably affirm or be justifiably satisfied with. - Call this the “justified affirmation” account. - It’s about whether your life deserves affirmation, not whether you feel satisfied.

Two dimensions:

1. Well-being (good for you)
   - Your life must be well worth living:
     - Better than not having lived, by a substantial margin.
     - Does not require:
       * High happiness
       * Big achievements
       * Things always going well
   - Even very ordinary, somewhat unlucky lives can still be well worth living.
2. Virtue / ethical quality (good as a life)
   - Have you conducted yourself well?
   - Includes:
     - Moral virtues (kindness, justice, honesty).
     - Wider practical wisdom (prudence, dignity, making sensible choices).
   - A good life = well-lived and well worth living.

2.2 Why Morality Matters So Much

The “eulogy test”: - Imagine writing a eulogy: - Would you honestly say: “She had a good life”? - We generally: - Deny that clearly bad, cruel people had good lives, even if rich and happy. - Affirm that morally admirable people, even with suffering, had good lives.

Tension: - Virtuous but extremely miserable life (unending horror, grief, illness, no consolations): - We hesitate to call this a good life. - So: - Virtue is necessary but not sufficient. - There must be some threshold of doing/faring well enough to make life well worth living.

2.3 How Hard Is a Good Life to Achieve?

- Well-being requirement is low: lots of small pleasures, most lives contain more good than we notice.
- Humans have negativity bias:
  - We react more strongly to bad events than to everyday goods.
- For most people, the main obstacle to a good life is:
  - Not lack of happiness or success
  - But bad choices and bad character.

Key claim: - For the most part, whether you have a good life is up to you, because: - You largely control whether you act well. - Many people already have good lives: - They fulfil basic responsibilities, care for others, earn an honest living. - They have reason to affirm their lives, even if they're not especially happy.

2.4 Ordinary Lives vs Famous Achievers

- Good lives are often ordinary, not famous or "great".
- Extreme achievement and fame often demand:
  - Single-minded devotion
  - Sacrificed relationships and balance
- An unnoticed, wise homemaker may have a better life (by this standard) than celebrated figures with chaotic or destructive personal lives.
- We can be glad others did extraordinary things, but need not want to live like them.

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3. Practical Priorities for a Good Life (Reading 1)

The author suggests four main practical priorities:

3.1 Connect with People and Things That Matter

- Connection is both:
  - A major source of happiness, and
  - An independent part of living well.
- Threats to connection:
  1. Materialism
     - Making life about money, status, "stuff".
     - Can undermine the relationships and values we actually care about.
  2. Perpetual distraction (technology)
     - Phones, social media, games = constant low-level stimulation.
     - Risk: being "plugged in but disconnected" from reality, people, and meaning.
     - Texting and online interaction are not substitutes for rich, face-to-face relationships.

Work and money choices: - Very high-paid jobs (finance, law, etc.) often: - Demand long hours, high stress. - Are well-paid because they're punishing. - Two main realistic paths to riches: 1. Hard, unpleasant high-paying work. 2. Hard work at something you're really good at and care about. - Above a moderate income level (about where basic security and comfort are met): - More income has little extra effect on happiness. - Takeaway: - Don't sacrifice meaningful work and relationships purely for higher pay. - Value money, but don't overvalue it.

3.2 Relax

Two senses of "relax":

1. Pace of life
    - Modern life: chronic busyness, "treadmill existence".
    - Historically, humans had lots of downtime; doing "nothing" together was normal.
    - True connection often requires unhurried, unscheduled time:
        - You cannot simply "schedule" deep "quality time" in tiny slots.
    - Many dying patients regret:
      > "I wish I hadn't worked so hard."
    - Slowing down helps:
        - Noticing life's small goods.
        - Being present to people and surroundings.
2. Emotional relaxation
    - Don't blow problems out of proportion.
    - Avoid being needy, perfectionist, or constantly dissatisfied.
    - Learn to shrug off setbacks, keep perspective, and not dwell on anger or anxiety.
    - Expect setbacks as part of life; don't let them dominate your outlook.

3.3 Avoid Debt

- Debt = unfreedom.
    - It can trap you in jobs or lifestyles you dislike or find unethical.
- Many suffer by using debt to buy unnecessary things they cannot afford.
- "Focusing illusions" in big purchases (especially housing):
    - We exaggerate differences (curb appeal, extras) and ignore shared basics (shelter, safety).
    - We overestimate how much "upgrades" will affect long-term happiness.
- Takeaway:
    - Financial security is important; heed risks of overleveraging yourself.
    - Don't trade long-term freedom and peace of mind for status goods.

3.4 "Make It Come Out Even": The Moral Balance Sheet

- Central moral rule (from the author's great-grandmother):
  "Make it come out even."
- Idea:
    - Think in terms of a moral balance sheet, not money:
        * Have you fulfilled obligations?
        * Given back enough relative to what you've received?
        * Left relationships and the world better, not worse?

The “conversation test”: - Imagine facing everyone your actions affected (family, co-workers, strangers, future generations). - Could you, honestly and without evasion, say: - “I treated you reasonably well.” - “My way of living was justified”? - You will fail sometimes, but: - Aim overall for a positive moral balance. - Make amends where possible.

Key points: - “Making it come out even”: - Is about how you lived, not simply net benefits produced. - Does not justify harming others even if you think you’ve been wronged. - Even severely disabled or dependent people can “make it come out even”: - Through courage, generosity, and the way they enrich others’ lives.

Final practical summary from Reading 1: - Engage in meaningful activities — but don’t overwork. - Make time for people you love and for real connection. - Limit debt and keep finances simple enough to preserve freedom. - Live so that, in the end, you can honestly affirm your life as morally decent:
“Well-lived and well worth living.” - Context matters: surround yourself with people and environments that support these priorities.

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4. Reading 2: Luck and the Search for Happiness (Sissela Bok)

4.1 Radical Contingency and Gratitude

- Bok reflects on how unlikely each person’s existence is:
  - Her own life depended on:
    - Her mother refusing a recommended hysterectomy.
    - A riskier operation succeeding.
- The decision was partly rooted in her mother’s:
  - Ideas about happiness (valuing larger families).
  - Trust in luck (“magical luck”).
- This illustrates:
  - How random events and personal choices intertwine to produce a life.
  - Why survival after near-death often leaves people feeling:
    - Awed and deeply grateful just to be alive.

4.2 Luck vs Agency

Perspective Bok proposes: - Our lives result from innumerable accidents and forces we don’t control. - But: - This should not lead to fatalism (blaming parents, society, fate, and then giving up). - Instead: - We partly become who we are by how we respond to shifting, unpredictable circumstances. - Like her mother, we can still act, take risks, and reshape our situation within limits.

4.3 Happiness as a Quest Without Guarantees

Bok uses myths and folktales: - Young people “set out to seek their fortune”: - No guarantee of success; happiness is not owed to them. - They must face: - Unknown regions - Temptations and lures - High-stakes risks - They must balance: - Empathy (fellow-feeling, sensitivity to others’ needs). - Resilience/self-protection (not being exploited or misled). - Modern parallel: - We too face many competing promises about happiness. - We should combine: - Sympathetic understanding of

different views. - Healthy skepticism, especially toward authorities (religious, political, commercial) claiming the one true path.

So: - Happiness is something to be pursued and explored, not passively received or blindly accepted.

4.4 Historical and Contemporary Debates About Happiness

Bok situates current interest in happiness within a long history:

- "Axial age" (roughly 6th–5th centuries BCE):
  - Thinkers like Confucius, Buddha, Lao-Tse, Zoroaster, Socrates:
    - Challenged ordinary views of what's good.
    - Proposed new paths to true happiness or enlightenment.
- Early Common Era:
  - Competing claims from:
    - Christianity, Judaism, Greek/Roman religions,
    - Eastern cults, mystery religions,
    - Philosophers like Aristotle and Epicurus, who offered secular accounts of earthly happiness.

Parallels to today: - Massive migration and cultural mixing: - People encounter unfamiliar ideals of the good life. - Competing modern visions (religious, secular, consumerist, nationalistic, etc.) each: - Embed moral teachings about how to live. - Implication: - We need both openness and critical distance in evaluating these visions.

4.5 Bok's Project: Integrating Science and the Humanities

Bok's aims: 1. Synthesize new scientific work on happiness: - Self-reports of well-being. - Brain activity during happy states. - Interaction of heredity and environment. 2. Connect this with: - Philosophical and religious traditions. - Historical reflections, literature, poetry.

Goal: - Achieve a fuller, deeper understanding of happiness by: - Linking empirical research with longstanding human reflection. - She is not: - Offering a step-by-step self-help manual. - Claiming a single formula. - Rather, she explores: - The nature of happiness. - Its role in human lives. - The limits of what we can know.

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5. Connections Between the Readings

5.1 Luck and the Good Life

- Both authors acknowledge luck:
  - Bok: Existence itself is radically contingent; life is "a strange and unpredictable adventure".
  - Reading 1: Circumstances (illness, depression, imprisonment) can heavily affect how well we fare.
- Yet both resist fatalism:
  - Reading 1 stresses: you still largely control whether you act well.
  - Bok stresses: we shape ourselves by how we respond to accidents and pressures.

5.2 Happiness vs a “Good Life”

- Reading 1:
  - Emphasizes moral character and wise living over feelings of happiness.
  - Happiness and success are important but secondary.
- Bok:
  - Focuses on understanding happiness through multiple lenses.
  - Treats happiness as a complex, contested ideal intertwined with moral teachings.

Together: - Suggest that: - A good life is not the same as maximum pleasure or constant positive emotion. - It involves: - Moral integrity, - Meaningful relationships and activities, - Reasonable well-being, - And a realistic attitude toward luck and uncertainty.

5.3 Practical Orientation

- Reading 1 offers concrete priorities:
  - Connect, relax, avoid debt, live morally so it “comes out even”.
- Bok offers a framework for reflection:
  - See your life as a precarious but precious adventure.
  - Approach competing happiness claims with empathy plus skepticism.
  - Draw on both science and tradition to think about happiness.

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6. Key Exam-Ready Takeaways

1. Justified Affirmation Account:
   - A good life is one you can reasonably affirm:
     Well-lived + well worth living, combining sufficient well-being and reasonably good conduct.
2. Well-being vs Virtue:
   - Virtue is central but not enough on its own if suffering is extreme and unrelieved.
   - Some threshold of doing/faring “well enough” is required.
3. Everyday Good Lives:
   - Most people, through ordinary decency and small pleasures, likely have good lives by this standard.
4. Four Practical Priorities (Reading 1):
   - Connect with people and valued activities; resist materialism and distraction.
   - Relax in pace and emotionally; don’t overwork or overreact.
   - Avoid debt that compromises freedom and peace of mind.
   - Make it come out even morally: aim for a life you can morally defend to those affected.
5. Luck and Agency (Bok):
   - Our existence and circumstances are highly contingent, but we retain meaningful agency in our responses.
   - Happiness is a quest under uncertainty, not an entitlement.
6. Competing Ideals of Happiness:
   - Across history and cultures, visions of happiness embed moral teachings and often conflict.

    - We need understanding + critical scrutiny toward those claiming a single, guaranteed route to happiness.
7. Interdisciplinary Approach:
    - Best understanding of happiness comes from combining:
        - Empirical research (psychology, neuroscience, social science),
        - With philosophical, religious, and historical reflection.

These points capture the core ideas and arguments you should be ready to explain and connect in discussion or exams.