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Happiness, Well-Being, and the Good Life: A Primer

I understand the 'New Year' part, but what do they mean by 'Happy'?

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1. INTRODUCTION

There may be a philosophical topic more in need of clarification than happiness, but nothing comes to mind. So star-crossed is this territory that you will be hard-pressed to publish even an article on the subject without dedicating several pages to explaining what you are talking about. Whereupon you can count on a fair proportion of your audience to assume, nevertheless, that you are talking about something else. The trouble, we will see, is that the word has multiple meanings that are not easily distinguished, and which express closely related, and difficult, concepts. Thinking clearly about happiness requires mastering a number of subtle distinctions that frequently confound even professional philosophers. This chapter will lay out the conceptual and theoretical landscape, while the next explains the methods that will be needed to guide our inquiry into the nature and significance of happiness.

The first problem is that even the innocent query, "What is happiness?" frequently fails to be a well-formed question.

2. THE MEANINGS OF 'HAPPINESS'

Most scholarly work under the rubric of 'happiness' centers on two senses of the term.[1] The first usage treats 'happiness' as basically a synonym for 'well-being', or equivalently, 'flourishing', 'welfare' or 'eudaimonia'.[2] The concept of well-being is a normative or evaluative concept that concerns what *benefits* a person, is in her *interest*, is *good for* her, or makes her life *go well for* her.[3] The use of 'happiness' to discuss premodern philosophy almost always takes this meaning, as when it is employed to translate 'eudaimonia.' To ascribe happiness to people, in the well-being sense, is to say that their lives are going well for them. It is to make a value judgment about their lives. This is the most natural reading of talk

about leading a happy *life*, as opposed simply to *being* happy. For while being happy seems to be a property of the person, and can sensibly be regarded as a purely psychological matter, most people probably would not say as much about the idea of having a happy life, which plausibly involves non-mental states of affairs as well. Thus you might find it intuitive to say that Nozick's experience machine user could *be* happy, even if his life isn't a happy one at all. The abstract noun 'happiness' often evokes the well-being reading as well, as in "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." We will survey theories of well-being in Section 4.

More commonly, 'happiness' bears a purely psychological meaning, denoting some broad and typically lasting aspect of the individual's state of mind: *being happy*. (Note that the well-being and psychological senses of happiness refer to distinct kinds, not species of a common genus.) This is the standard usage in the subjective well-being literature, and the predominant usage in the vernacular. The dominant views of happiness in this sense are *hedonistic* theories, which roughly identify happiness with pleasure;[4] and *life satisfaction* theories, which equate happiness with an attitude of being satisfied with your life as a whole (this normally involves a global judgment about your life, as opposed to merely having a pleasant experience).[5] In this book I will be defending an *emotional state* account, which emphasizes a person's overall emotional condition, where this is not simply identified with experiences of pleasure.[6] Many empirical researchers employ the construct of subjective well-being as more or less equivalent to happiness; this is essentially a hybrid view combining pleasure, or emotional state, and life satisfaction.[7] I will discuss such views briefly in Chapter 5, but most of Chapters 4–7 will apply in various ways to subjective well-being.

Happiness in this psychological sense should be distinguished from the acute emotion or mood of *feeling* happy; we are talking rather about what is sometimes called the long-term psychological sense of the term. Many would argue that someone could be happy without ever feeling happy, say by achieving tranquility. Using the term in this psychological sense involves no more commitment to matters of value than the use of 'tranquility' or 'depression': one can coherently say that a person is happy even though her life is utterly pathetic. When parents say that they want their children to be "happy *and* healthy," they obviously aren't using 'happiness' to mean well-being. If you seek a friend's advice about your son's future, saying "I only want what's best for him," and your friend says, "then you should encourage him to do what makes him happy," your friend is probably not suggesting, most unhelpfully, that what's best for him is to do whatever is best for him. She is offering a substantive piece of advice. The psychological notion likewise occurs in many ordinary comparatives, as when a student asks herself, "will I be happier as a lawyer or a teacher?" Subjective well-being researchers often make claims about happiness: how happy people are and so forth. These researchers normally do not take themselves to be making value judgments about people's lives when describing them as happy; nor are

they in a position, *qua* empirical researchers, to make value judgments. They are simply attributing states of mind.[8]

It should be *patently* clear that much ordinary talk about happiness, even in matters of considerable gravity, concerns not well-being itself but a largely if not wholly psychological concept. To give this claim an informal empirical test, I surveyed 39 students at the start of two introductory ethics courses, before the first class began or any materials were distributed. These were undergraduates at a Catholic Jesuit university who in many cases had already taken philosophy and theology courses with readings in Aristotle and others in that tradition. I presented them with a case of "George," a man who doesn't realize that his family and friends secretly loathe him, and leads a full life in blissful ignorance, replete with pleasure and satisfaction.[9] Was he happy? All but 3 of the 39 students responded either "strongly agree" or "agree somewhat." Yet in six other questions employing terms philosophers tend to use as synonyms for well-being—"life went well for him," "had an enviable life," "was fortunate," "flourished," "had a high level of well-being," and "his life was a happy one"—a majority refused to give an affirmative response in all cases but the "life went well for him" question, the last probably reflecting a reading of the locution as meaning his life went well from his perspective. On the "fortunate" variant, for instance, 18 disagreed, 9 were neutral, and only 12 thought him fortunate. Importantly, on the "happy *life*" question, only 18 agreed, while 17 disagreed and 4 were neutral. That is, almost all students thought him happy, while a majority refused to ascribe well-being to him, and even—on the very same questionnaire—refused to call his *life* a happy one. Though only an informal survey, the results offer some support for my contention about the prevalence of the psychological sense of 'happiness', as well as for the difference between the notions of being happy and leading a happy life. (It also suggests that most of these students are not hedonists about well-being.)

The well-being and psychological senses of 'happiness' do not mark different conceptions of happiness, any more than definitions of river "banks," where frogs live, and the "banks" in which we keep our money, offer differing conceptions of the same phenomenon. They express different *concepts*, and concern different subject matters, altogether. It is likewise a mistake to refer to theories of happiness in the psychological sense as "subjective," in contrast to "objective" theories of happiness in the well-being sense, which again implies that they offer competing accounts of a single thing. When theorizing about happiness, it is essential to keep these issues straight. Just trying to account for undifferentiated intuitions about things called "happiness" is liable to breed monsters—accounts of happiness that address an amalgam of interests relating to different concepts without clearly answering to any coherent set of interests.[10] For example, you might get a theory of happiness as worthwhile enjoyment, where it is denied that this suffices for well-being. Such results can seem confused, like defining banks as places where frogs keep their money.

Summing up: The query "What is happiness?" is not, absent further cues to one's meaning, a well-formed question. One could be asking a variety of things, though in most cases the question will likely have one of two meanings.[11] Roughly:

1. What is this *state of mind* that so many people seek, that tends to accompany good fortune, success, etc.? (happiness in the long-term psychological sense)
2. What is it for my life to *go well* for me? (happiness in the well-being sense)

A crude test for determining what people mean by 'happiness' is given by the case of blissfully deceived George, from the survey noted above. Suppose you were persuaded that George is badly off, despite his pleasure and satisfaction: you feel sorry for him. *Would you nonetheless consider him happy?* If so, then you are very likely using 'happy' in the psychological sense. If not, then you are almost certainly using it in the well-being sense. (Note that it can make a big difference whether you put the question in terms of 'happy' or 'happy *life*'.)

Unless otherwise noted, I will use 'happiness' in the long-term psychological sense in this book. (The main exception being 'happy life' and obvious cognates, which I will use only in the well-being sense, but will generally avoid.)

3. WHY ARISTOTLE DIDN'T HAVE A THEORY OF HAPPINESS

Connecting these points to the philosophical corpus: in the sense of 'happiness' that concerns us, *Aristotle had no theory of happiness*. He had a theory of well-being. Compare the Epicureans, who held eudaimonia to consist solely in the pleasures of tranquility. Despite appearances, we should not translate their 'eudaimonia' as 'happiness' in the psychological sense. For when Epicurus espoused hedonism about eudaimonia, he was not simply making a psychological claim. He was making a claim about value, saying that what ultimately benefits a person is nothing other than pleasure. 'Eudaimonia' meant the same thing for Epicurus and Aristotle: a life that is good for the person leading it. The two philosophers did not have a merely verbal or conceptual disagreement about eudaimonia; they had a substantive ethical disagreement about what sort of life is best for human beings. And while it is possible to trace the history of thought about (well-being) "happiness" by noting that views of *well-being* have grown more subjectivist, such a history does not include contemporary work on "happiness" in the psychological sense, including my own. For that work is perfectly compatible with objectivist views of well-being. Aristotelians can readily agree with Sumner's life satisfaction account of happiness and the suggestion by subjective well-being researchers that most people are happy, since in calling people "happy" those authors make no value judgment about whether they are flourishing. At the same time, Sumner's

account of *welfare* as authentic happiness is explicitly subjectivist, and many subjective well-being researchers seem to hold subjectivist views of well-being.[12] On *that* point, and on the value of happiness, Aristotle would plainly disagree.

Obviously, the potential for confusion is great. Many contemporary philosophers use 'happiness' and 'pleasure' interchangeably, at least tacitly endorsing a hedonistic view of happiness. But most of those philosophers would firmly deny the Epicurean thesis that well-being consists solely in pleasure: welfare hedonism, or hedonism about well-being. To maintain a hedonistic view of happiness in the psychological sense does not commit one to hedonism about well-being. Accordingly, the philosophical literature can be singularly unhelpful at times: one writer might endorse hedonism about "happiness" while another denies hedonism about "happiness," without disagreeing at all. John Stuart Mill, for instance, seems to have used 'happiness' in the "well-being" sense, while Roger Crisp has employed it in the psychological sense, allowing that hedonism about happiness in the psychological sense may be false. Yet both authors defend welfare hedonism.

This is an unhelpful state of affairs, but it is easily managed once we recognize the necessary distinctions. It would be helpful if researchers used 'happiness' in the psychological sense where possible, employing 'well-being' or other terms for the well-being notion. While 'happiness' may be hard to avoid when translating historical works, it is possible to use it in translations while reverting to more standard terminology like 'well-being' elsewhere.[13] Confusion can be further minimized by exclusively reserving talk of "happy lives" for the well-being notion and talk of "being happy" for the psychological.

Connecting our discussion with empirical research: Since 'happiness' doesn't even translate *itself* in large swaths of contemporary English, the job of finding equivalents in other languages is bound to be difficult. A term in Chinese might translate 'happiness' in the well-being sense where it means well-being, but not in the psychological sense in which it is used when Americans are asked how happy they are. (I suspect this is the case with whatever word turns up as 'happiness' in fortune cookies.) Suppose you could take the American questionnaire and put it to ancient Greeks. How would you render 'happy'? Not as '*eudaimon*', and in fact it is not obvious that any equivalent existed in ancient Greek. *Euthymia*, roughly cheerfulness, or *ataraxia*, tranquility, may come close in certain ways, but probably neither gets the meaning entirely right. If you ask Americans how happy they are, and Greeks how *eudaimon* they are, you are asking two different questions, one psychological and one ethical. You might get a decent correlation in the answers, but that's because perceived happiness and welfare probably correlate pretty well.

4. THEORIES OF WELL-BEING

Our inquiry into happiness and its value will be clearer if we understand the debates about the nature of well-being. The best-known philosophical taxonomy,

offered in 1984 by Derek Parfit, divides theories of well-being into three types: hedonistic, desire, and objective list theories.[14] But since then an important new approach has entered the scene, and an ancient family of theories has gained substantially in prominence. We will, then, distinguish five basic approaches here:

1. Hedonistic theories.
2. Desire-fulfillment theories.
3. Authentic happiness theories.
4. Eudaimonistic ("nature-fulfillment") theories.
5. List theories.

Crudely, hedonism identifies well-being with pleasure.[15] A bit more precisely, well-being consists in a subject's balance of pleasant over unpleasant experience. The central idea is that what ultimately matters for welfare is the hedonic quality of individuals' experience, and nothing more. The chief attraction of this view is that it accommodates the plausible thought that, if anything matters for welfare, it is the pleasantness of our experience of life. And nothing else seems to be valuable in quite the same way. Despite its attractions, most philosophers have rejected hedonism and other mental state accounts, mainly because of experience machine-type worries.

As of now, the theory to beat is the *desire-fulfillment* theory of well-being, also called the preference satisfaction account; for brevity I will usually refer to it simply as the "desire" theory. The dominant account among economists and philosophers over the last century or so, the desire theory identifies well-being with the satisfaction of the individual's desires. Experience machines don't trouble such views, since many of our desires will go unfulfilled in an experience machine. Desire theories come in many varieties, the most important type being informed-desire theories, which restrict the desires that count to the ones we would have given full information (rationality, reflection, etc.).[16] These variants predominate, since many find it intuitively obvious that we don't gain from the satisfaction of desires that are grounded in ignorance or irrationality. Desire theories have a number of attractions, one being that they are extremely flexible, able to accommodate the full range of goods that people seek. But most importantly, they comport with the liberal sensibilities of modernity: what's best for me depends on what I care about, and on such matters I am sovereign. This seems appealingly non-paternalistic.

The third theory, L. W. Sumner's *authentic happiness* view, is meant to rectify the most serious difficulties with hedonistic and desire theories while retaining their emphasis on subjective experience and individual sovereignty.[17] His view identifies well-being with being authentically happy: being happy, where one's happiness is both informed about the conditions of one's life and autonomous, meaning that it reflects values that are truly one's own and not the result of manipulation or oppressive social conditioning. "Happiness" here is something

like subjective well-being, involving both global attitudes of life satisfaction and positive affect, though Sumner calls his view a "life satisfaction" account. The root idea is that one's happiness should reflect a response *of* one's own, *to* a life that is one's own, ostensibly ruling out objections about experience machines and happy slaves.[18] And whereas desire theories face the problem of how seemingly irrelevant desires, or fulfillments that don't impact my experience, can affect my well-being, the authentic happiness view incorporates an experience requirement: only what affects my happiness can benefit me.

We turn now to our fourth family of theories, *eudaimonistic* views of well-being. The most prominent variety of these, Aristotelian theories, have stirred considerable interest since the revival of virtue ethics and the rise of the Sen–Nussbaum capabilities approach in political theory.[19] In broad terms, Aristotelian theories identify well-being with "well-functioning," which is to say functioning or living well as a human being: the fulfillment of human nature. This consists, in the first instance, in a life of excellent or virtuous activity, though this is sometimes put less astringently, as a "fully" or "truly" human life. The idea is that we flourish by fully exercising our human capacities. It is not simply a matter of being morally virtuous, although moral virtue is essential to well-being as Aristotelians see it. Aristotelian theories address widespread intuitions about the importance of personal development and leading a "full life" replete with the essentials of a normal human life.

Aristotle's writings are so influential that commentators often use terms like 'eudaimonistic' or 'eudaimonic' simply to denote Aristotelian theories of well-being, or views that emphasize perfection or virtue. But Aristotelians formed only one of the schools of Hellenistic ethics that scholars denote, collectively, as eudaimonistic. Definitions vary, but (ethical) eudaimonism tends to refer to ancient theories that ground ethics in the notion of eudaimonia—the idea being that this is our agreed-upon goal that properly structures our deliberations about how to live, and the theory's job is to determine the nature of this goal.[20] And some ancient eudaimonists, like the Epicureans, denied that eudaimonia consists in perfection. If there was an important feature that eudaimonistic accounts of well-being shared in common, it was the teleological idea that well-being consists in *nature-fulfillment*. Epicureans arguably agreed with Aristotle that well-being involves the fulfillment of our natures as human beings; but they believed that we fulfilled our natures by achieving pleasure.

Thus we might usefully identify welfare eudaimonism as a distinctive approach to well-being, where we start with a conception of human nature or—if we are specifically interested in *self*-fulfillment—the self, and take well-being to consist in the fulfillment of that nature. This sort of approach is not limited to the ancients, and versions of it arguably inform the work of Thomists, Marxists, Hegelians, Mill's discussion of individuality in *On Liberty*, "eudaimonic" approaches to the psychology of well-being, and the work of many other

moderns.[21] A eudaimonistic account incorporating a form of authentic happiness as a central element of self-fulfillment is sketched in Chapter 9.[22] It is even possible to found desire accounts and other subjectivisms on a eudaimonistic framework: perhaps the self is defined by one's desires, and thus we fulfill our selves by fulfilling our desires. Eudaimonism merits classification as a distinct family of theories, however, because all share the same fundamental motivation: the idea that well-being consists in nature-fulfillment. Differences arise in their views of a person's nature, and of what it means to fulfill that nature. Subjectivists like Sumner and most desire theorists start from very different foundations, such as the ideal of individual sovereignty.

Finally, we have *list theories* of well-being, which identify well-being with some brute list of goods, such as knowledge, friendship, accomplishment, pleasure, etc.[23] Their appeal derives from the fact that other approaches seem incapable of encompassing a broad range of intuitions about well-being. The elements on most proposed lists do strike many as intrinsically beneficial, so it can make sense to incorporate them in your theory.

5. WELL-BEING VERSUS THE GOOD LIFE

When assessing theories of well-being, it is essential to distinguish well-being from the broader notion of the *good life*. While we sometimes use 'the good life' simply as a synonym for 'well-being', it seems we usually mean a life that is desirable or choiceworthy on the whole: not just morally good, or good *for* the individual leading it, but good, all things considered—good, *period*. To give a theory of the good life is not to characterize some special kind of value, but simply to specify all the things that ultimately matter in life, whether they benefit the agent or not. THE GOOD LIFE functions as an umbrella concept encompassing the domain of values that matter in a person's life, and can be employed within any ethical framework. Since almost no one would deny that it is a good thing both to flourish and to be virtuous, all respectable ethical doctrines will maintain that the good life involves both virtue and well-being, and perhaps aesthetic or other values as well. Kant, e.g., *agreed* with Aristotle that the good life involves both morality and well-being: both values are worth seeking. But unlike Aristotle, he saw these as distinct, and often conflicting, aspects of the good life. Thus Kant allows, along with the Utilitarians and most commonsense thought today, that bad people can sometimes flourish. But being bad, they would not have good lives. We will see in Chapter 8 that Aristotelian and related theories of well-being probably rest on a failure to distinguish the notions of well-being and the good life.[24]

Interestingly, modern theorists tend not to have devoted much effort to comprehensive theories of the good life (at least as such), and indeed the very concept of a good life, in this broad sense, is rarely even distinguished.[25] Usually

philosophers employ 'good life' more narrowly, to denote just a morally good life, or a life of well-being. Yet this is not how we normally think about it, say when contemplating whether a deceased friend had a good life. At such times we consider all the values that seem to us to matter in life, whether we are Kantians, Utilitarians, Aristotelians, etc. The relative silence of modern philosophers on the good life, *per se*, may be partly a reflection of liberal optimism: most modern theories focus narrowly on what morality demands of us, leaving the other aspects of the good life up to the individual, whose judgment is presumed to be authoritative in that realm.

6. MAPPING OUT THE CONCEPTS

To get a clearer sense of the relationships among the various concepts discussed here and later, see Figure 2.1 below. The diagram is meant to be as uncontroversial as possible, and should be compatible with all ethical theories and approaches to value. It involves no attempt to depict relative weights or connections between the various values, and any given ethical theory may recognize only some of the goods pictured. Aristotelians will think that one achieves well-being *by* exercising virtue, so that the well-being and virtue aspects of the good life are in fact inseparable. But they should still grant that these are distinct *concepts*, and so the diagram should not offend them. Kantians and Utilitarians should also be happy with the diagram. Finally, note that the chart is divided between "evaluative" and "descriptive" concepts. This way of segmenting matters is not without controversy, but it will serve well enough here. In particular, concepts above the line, evaluative concepts, rest squarely within the domain of ethical or value inquiry. "Normative" theories of their subject matter, such as the theories of well-being depicted, straightforwardly entail value judgments about what *matters*, is *good*, or we have *reason* to do. The "descriptive" concepts below the line seem not to involve values in this way. The nature of a psychological state like excitement seems an empirical matter, not an ethical question. (Health is a trickier case and a matter of ongoing dispute.)

7. WHAT KINDS OF CLAIMS ARE INVOLVED IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HAPPINESS?

The literature on happiness and well-being often suffers from confusion about the nature of the assertions being made, so we would do well to get clear on these matters before proceeding. The least interesting sort of claim is *linguistic*, concerning the meanings of words. Substantive-seeming disputes are sometimes

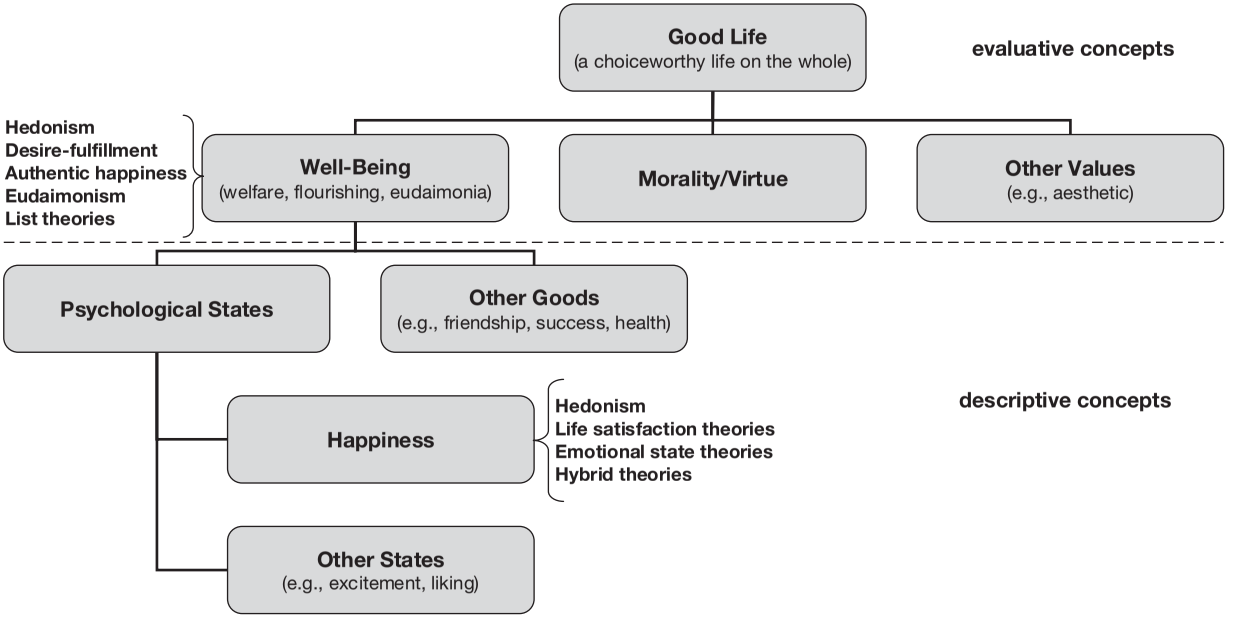

Fig. 2.1. The good life, well-being, happiness, and related concepts, with major theories of well-being and happiness.

merely linguistic. For example: Sumner roughly identifies happiness with life satisfaction; a fan of Aristotle might object that Sumner's account fails to capture much of importance in life—better, instead, to think of happiness as the exercise of virtue or excellence. Is this a substantive objection to Sumner's account of happiness? No: as we saw above, Sumner account of happiness involves no claim at all about what's good for people. So his identification of happiness with life satisfaction in no way conflicts with anything Aristotle said about eudaimonia, and indeed Aristotle could accept Sumner's view of happiness. It is only Sumner's theory of well-being, as *authentic* happiness, that clashes with Aristotle's views.

If an Aristotelian wants to set up an opposition between Sumner's account of happiness—or my own—and Aristotle's account of eudaimonia, she can *only* be making a linguistic claim: that is, arguing that 'happiness' in contemporary English is not really a psychological term after all, but rather a rough synonym of 'well-being'. This point could be defended by noting various facts about the language, and is a perfectly legitimate sort of claim to make (though one I argued against above). But it is still only a linguistic claim.

One reason for the persistent confusion here may be a failure to appreciate the significance of the fact that 'happiness' in its psychological and well-being senses expresses different concepts, not just different conceptions of the same thing. It means that theorists using the term in the different senses cannot be talking about the same thing, so any disagreement they might have about "happiness" could only be verbal. Yet philosophers who clearly *do* have substantive disagreements about a common subject matter are sometimes taken to be using different concepts. Thus, for instance, Aristotle's claim that well-being consists in virtuous activity is sometimes said to be a conceptual claim and, if true, to be conceptually necessary. Whereas Sumner's contention that well-being consists in authentic happiness would likewise be said to be a conceptual thesis. Thus it might be thought that Sumner and Aristotle, given their different views about human welfare, thereby have different "well-being" concepts. Nonetheless, the thought goes, there is some common subject matter—given perhaps by a shared "conceptual core"—about which they have a genuine disagreement. If this were right, then one might similarly infer that, while Sumner's 'happiness' and (the translated) Aristotle's 'happiness' express different concepts, they nonetheless share a common subject matter, about which the two authors disagree. It would thus make sense to weigh their respective merits as competing conceptions of happiness. That this would be the wrong conclusion to draw should, by now, be obvious.

In any event, the "conceptual" reading of the debate over well-being seems itself to be a mistake: neither Aristotle nor Sumner appears to be making a merely conceptual claim about the notion of personal benefit, talking only about ideas. Rather, each makes a quite substantive *value judgment* about what, in fact, benefits a person. The import of this difference is apparent when we reflect on the fact that conceptual claims, unlike value claims, raise no deep metaphysical questions

about how they could possibly be true. (At least, no deeper than the sorts of mysteries posed by logical or mathematical claims.) Concepts are just vehicles for thought; by and large, we can take them or leave them. If you don't find it helpful to employ the concept of well-being, then don't use it. But if Sumner's account of well-being is true, then we appear to have an inescapable *fact* about the way things are: what benefits a person, ultimately, is being authentically happy. And the authentically happy person appears to have a certain property: flourishing or being well-off. These appearances might be misleading, but they are nonetheless appearances about *the way things are*. And changing your concepts won't make them go away. Theories of well-being, including Aristotle's and Sumner's, are usually not mere conceptual doctrines; they make substantive normative claims about the nature of a certain sort of value.[26]

Stephen Darwall recently did the field a great service in sharpening the contrast with a book that defends both conceptual and substantive theses about well-being. His conceptual thesis is the "rational care" theory of welfare: roughly, the concept of welfare is the concept of what it is rational to want for someone *insofar as one cares for her*.[27] Well-being ultimately concerns the appropriate objects of sympathetic concern. Thus we can think of the concept of well-being as being given by a conceptual role; i.e., the concept is defined by the role it plays in governing attitudes of caring. Note that the rational care theory tells us nothing about what in fact benefits people; it embodies no value judgment, but merely specifies the character of a concept. Any of the major theories of well-being described earlier could be compatible with the rational care theory. Thus one might agree with Darwall this far, and then ask *what* one ought to want for a person insofar as one cares for him. The desire theorist answers: the satisfaction of his desires; Sumner: authentic happiness; the Aristotelian: a life of virtuous activity; and so forth. Darwall offers a partial answer to this question, arguing for an "Aristotelian thesis" that the best life for a person involves engagement with merit or worth. These are all substantive theses about value.

Notice that Darwall's conceptual claim seems metaphysically rather innocent: few people are likely to puzzle about how such a concept could exist. Just make up a word, stipulate that it means "what one ought to want for someone insofar as one cares for her," and there you go. Things are rather different for the substantive claims: they seem not to be metaphysically innocent at all. For what's to say that there's *anything* one ought to want insofar as one cares for a person? What's to say there are any oughts at all? Maybe the concept applies to nothing, just as nihilists have been trying to tell us. Not so, say the substantive theorists of well-being: the hedonist says that in fact there is something answering to the concept of welfare, namely pleasure. The Aristotelian, by contrast, takes the concept to apply to lives of virtuous activity. Most of us think that some theory, perhaps as yet unheard, has to be correct: some things really are good or bad for us, and the right account will tell us what those things are. (Note that *all* substantive theories of well-being are metaphysically problematical in this way. Even if desire theories cash out

well-being in purely naturalistic terms as the satisfaction of desire—revealed preference, etc.—they still involve the value judgment that the satisfaction of desires is *good*, gives us *reasons* to do things, and *ought* to be promoted. And explaining how putative facts like these could fit into a naturalistic worldview is just as hard as explaining objectivist welfare or moral values.)

Call the correct substantive theory of well-being W. The question is, *what makes it the case that W is true*? Clearly, defining words and analyzing concepts won't get us anywhere in dealing with this question. Judging purely by appearances, we seem to be asserting the existence of a property, *being good for*, that applies to whatever things W says it applies to, such as instances of pleasure or authentic happiness or desire satisfaction or virtuous activity or. . . . And this property is *pushy*: it places demands on us, telling us what to do. This is a funny property ("queer," as Mackie put it[28]), and it is reasonable to wonder whether any such property really exists. Alternatively, one might affirm W but try to explain its truth without appeal to funny properties. Maybe pleasure really is what's ultimately good for us, but saying this amounts to nothing more than expressing our acceptance of certain norms—no suspicious properties required.[29] Whatever the correct treatment of the matter, the important point for our purposes is just to see that the nature of well-being really is a *substantive* issue concerning the existence and character of a certain sort of value. Dissecting concepts is not likely to settle it. (The reader might ask just what sort of claim a "substantive normative claim" such as a theory of well-being could be, if not a merely conceptual or empirical claim. An excellent question, which I defer, noting lamely that this is not really meant to be a text in metaethics.)

Let me sum up by returning to Aristotle and Darwall. An example of a linguistic claim here would be to say that 'eudaimonia' and 'well-being' express the same concept. We explain what the concept WELL-BEING is via a conceptual claim, such as Darwall's contention that the concept of well-being is the concept of what one ought to want for a person insofar as one cares for him. Whereas the Aristotelian account of well-being that we know best involves not a linguistic or conceptual claim, but a substantive normative claim to the effect that what ultimately benefits a person is a life of virtuous activity.

Beyond linguistic, conceptual, and substantive normative (or evaluative) claims, we will also be dealing with metaphysical and empirical propositions. Empirical claims—for example, "the sky is blue"—need no explanation. Metaphysical claims are a little trickier; the basic idea is that they concern the true natures of things, and are substantive claims about what the world is like. In giving an account of happiness, my ultimate concern will be metaphysical: the nature of a certain psychological condition, happiness. But most of my discussion will focus on the concept of happiness, the goal (as we will see in Chapter 3) being to reconstruct it in a form that enables us to focus on the psychological states within the extension of the term's ordinary use that answer most closely to our interests in happiness. This will give us a general picture of happiness's nature, the concept

serving as a pointer to certain psychological states. But a full account of the nature of those states seems to me substantially to be an empirical question, to be taken up in future investigations. What exactly moods are, for instance, seems impossible to say without leaving the armchair. For even a refined version of the folk concept of happiness, stated only in familiar terms, seems unlikely to specify the relevant psychology with much precision or accuracy. It would be surprising if the folk concept of happiness refers to psychological states that can be adequately characterized using only the crude apparatus of other folk psychological concepts, like belief, desire, etc. A review of the philosophical literature on emotion should illustrate the worry, as much of it attempts to analyze emotions purely in terms of familiar propositional attitudes like beliefs and desires. Such accounts tend to have a distinctly Procrustean air about them, trying to force the psychology into a conceptual framework that, though familiar, may not be well suited to the phenomena. But someone drawn to such a view might argue that it at least offers a crude but useful first approximation of the truth, admitting that a more exact account of emotion would have to be framed in terms that reflect a more nuanced, empirically informed understanding of the psychology.

The emotional state theory of happiness sketched in Chapters 6 and 7 might be regarded in similar terms—essentially as an elaborate form of ostension, pointing to the phenomenon without fully elucidating it—though for the most part it already dispenses with the traditional suite of folk psychological notions. I will take up such questions further in the next chapter.

28. Miller Jr. 2002, p. 333; the measures are actually in kilocalories. For the footprint figures, see the *Living Planet Report 2006*, by the WWF.
29. Thermally reconstituted: Moore 2005. Weeds: Quammen 1998. Dust: Bissell 2002.
30. I am not entirely comfortable relating my experiences on the island in this book, for several reasons. Most importantly, personal anecdotes tendered by a philosopher with an axe to grind don't make very strong evidence for anything. Despite these reservations I discuss the island, mainly because I don't know how else to direct the reader's attention to certain kinds of points.
31. Cf. Scitovsky 1976.
32. I learned of this story from Slouka 1996.
33. This take on junk food, and the quote, I owe to Michael Pollan, "Unhappy Meals," *The New York Times*, January 28, 2007.
34. For an interesting variation on the experience machine theme, see Banks 1963, which depicts a future in which people wear hearing-aid-like virtual reality devices, "ear friends," that provide pleasant illusions while they go about their business. Only about ten percent of the time are they fully connected with their surroundings. I am grateful to Bill Rehg for referring me to this story.
35. I am of course trading in crude generalizations, with plenty of exceptions.
36. Though they are hardly eccentric. See, e.g., Carlson 2005, Raphael 1976. Carlson's book gives a taste of a community much like the island I've referred to, but at a far more advanced stage of development.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. On the senses of 'happiness', see Haybron 2000, 2003, as well as Thomas 1968, Goldstein 1973, and Davis 1981b.
2. In this book I will use these terms interchangeably. Some would object to this practice, for instance believing 'welfare' too closely aligned with Utilitarian doctrines. But theories of "welfare" and "flourishing" seem clearly to concern a common subject matter—what benefits a person, is in her interest, makes her life go better for her. Reserving different terms for different theories simply obscures the issues.
3. In earlier work I called this "prudential," as distinct from "psychological" or "perfectionist" happiness (2000). But these usages suggest that these are different species of a common genus, so I will refer to the "well-being" and "psychological" *senses* of 'happiness.' The "perfectionist" usage, which corresponds to the notion of a good life discussed later, is sufficiently marginal that I will not discuss it. I suspect it results from the sort of confusion discussed at the end of Chapter 8. (As well, the use of 'perfectionist' for it now seems to me very misleading.)
4. Recent philosophers who appear to accept hedonism about happiness include Brandt 1959, 1979, 1989, 1992; Campbell 1973, Carson 1978a, 1978b, 1979, 1981; Davis 1981b, 1981a; Ebenstein 1991, Griffin 1979, 1986; Mayerfeld 1996, 1999; Sen 1987a; Sprigge 1987, 1991; and Wilson 1968. Fred Feldman is developing a hedonistic account of happiness to complement his theory of well-being (2004). Casual references to happiness in the philosophical literature frequently assume it

to be hedonistic. Hedonism has adherents in psychology as well, such as Allen Parducci 1995 and Daniel Kahneman 1999.

5. Philosophical proponents of views making life satisfaction central to or exhaustive of happiness appear to include Barrow 1980, 1991; Benditt 1974, 1978; Brülde 2007, Buss 2004, Campbell 1973, Montague 1967, Nozick 1989, Rescher 1972, 1980; Sumner 1996, 2000; Telfer 1980, and Von Wright 1963. Those making life satisfaction central or identical to well-being (often using the word 'happiness' for it) appear to include Almeder 2000; Kekes 1982, 1988, 1992; McFall 1989; Meynell 1969; Scruton 1975; Tatarkiewicz 1976; Thomas 1968; and Tiberius and Plakias forthcoming, among others. Empirical researchers often identify life satisfaction and happiness—notably, Ruut Veenhoven 1984, 1997.
6. The view has not, to my knowledge, been explicitly defended in the literature prior to Haybron 2001b, 2005 (though see Wilson 1968, and many informal references elsewhere). But affect-based empirical research on "happiness," which has typically been viewed as hedonistic, may be better characterized in terms of an emotional state theory (e.g., in the focus on moods and emotions versus physical pleasures and pains). See, e.g., Kahneman 1999, 2000b, Michalos 1980. Thanks to Anna Alexandrova for pointing out the connection with Kahneman's work.
7. Schimmack 2008, Diener, Scollon et al. 2003. See also the references to this literature in Chapter 1. Among philosophers, Sumner 1996 and Brülde 2007 defend hybrid views (Sumner calls his a "life satisfaction" account).
8. An exception is Seligman 2002. His 'authentic happiness' view of well-being seems unrelated to Sumner's and mine, though Seligman's view and mine accord emotional states, notably flow, a central role in well-being. His "meaning" component may resemble the (conjectured) "narrative role fulfillment" aspect of my view (Chapter 9).
9. This is just a variant of Nozick's experience machine case. The description of the case was: "George is generally very cheerful, highly satisfied with his life, and feels deeply fulfilled. He enjoys his life greatly and has a very pleasant experience on the whole. But he does not realize that his wife, children and friends can't stand him, ridiculing him behind his back. They pretend to love him only because he is wealthy. If he knew these things, he would be devastated. But he remains ignorant of the facts even into old age, and feels completely satisfied through the end of his life. He never learns the truth." Earlier variants of this survey, with 18 respondents, yielded similar results.
10. Likely examples include Austin 1968, Hare 1963, Nozick 1989, and Smart 1973.
11. There are exceptions. Chekola 2007 and Murphy 2001, for instance, appear to use 'happiness' as a descriptive term for a life that is successful from the agent's point of view.
12. On the aforementioned claims, see Sumner 1996 and Diener and Diener 1996. For a possible example of subjectivism, see Diener, Sapyta et al. 1998. The authors do not claim that subjective well-being suffices for well-being. For an acknowledgement that there are other values besides subjective well-being, see Diener and Scollon 2003.
13. For a helpful example, see Kraut 1979, 2002, 2007. We might wish to make an exception for accounts that focus on *ideal* states of well-being: well-being conceived

as a goal in life. 'Happiness' seems apt for this notion. But note that this sort of project risks confusion with inquiry into the good life more broadly (see Chapter 8, §2.5).

14. Parfit 1984. Excellent surveys of the philosophical literature appear in Sumner 1996 and Crisp 2005.
15. Hedonists about well-being include, among many others, Epicureans and classical Utilitarians. Recent defenses include Crisp 2006a, 2006b; Feldman 2004, Heathwood 2006, Mendola 2006, Sprigge 1987, and Tännsjö 2007.
16. Such theories include, to name a few, those of Brandt 1979, Hare 1981, Harsanyi 1982, Rawls 1971, and Sidgwick 1907/1966. For related views, see Carson 2000, Darwall 1983, Griffin 1986, 2000; Keller 2004, and Railton 1986a, 1986b. (Griffin is probably better classified as a list theorist, below.)
17. Sumner 1996, 2000; see also Brülde 2007.
18. "Happy slave" worries, directed against hedonistic and desire theories, concern adaptation: desires adapt to the possibilities people face. So, e.g., oppressed individuals may content themselves with impoverished lives. See, e.g., Elster 1983, Nussbaum 2000b, Sen 1987b.
19. For broadly Aristotelian views see, e.g., Foot 2001, Hurka 1993, Hursthouse 1999, Kraut 2002, 2007; MacIntyre 1999, Nussbaum 1988, 1992, 1993, 2000b, 2000a; and Toner 2006. The Aristotelian literature has yet to integrate fully with the contemporary literature on well-being, so it is often difficult to tell where an author stands on well-being. (Hurka, e.g., rejects a "well-being" interpretation of his view, yet there is considerable overlap in concerns.) For related views, see Darwall 2002, Finnis 1980, LeBar 2004, Murphy 2001, Raz 2006, and Sher 1997. Other accounts sharing much in common with Aristotelian views include Stoic and Platonic theories. On Stoic views, see Annas 1993, 1998, 2003, and Becker 1999. Broadly Platonic views include Adams 2002 and Gentzler 2004.
20. See, e.g., Annas 1993.
21. For general discussion, see Gewirth 1998 and Feinberg 1992a. See also Brink 2003. For a review of eudaimonic psychology, see Ryan and Deci 2001.
22. For a related view, see Warner 1987.
23. Likely examples include Arneson 1999, Brink 1989, Gert 1998, Griffin 1986, 2000, 2007; Hooker 2000, Scanlon 1993, 1999; and Slote 2001. Scanlon's view might be considered broadly Aristotelian (Raz 2006). Finnis 1980 and Murphy 2001 offer lists grounded in a broadly Aristotelian Natural Law framework. For discussion of list items, see Becker 1992.
24. There is some question whether the concept of well-being really denotes a single category, or whether any single concept can do all the work expected of the concept of well-being (Griffin 2007, Raz 1986, 2004; Scanlon 1999). We may want to distinguish multiple concepts of well-being, for instance a concept of how the *person* is doing, versus how the person's *life* is going for her (Kagan 1992, 1994; Griffin 2000). Or even conclude that we don't need a distinct concept of well-being at all (Hurka 1993). While I am sympathetic to some of these concerns, I will not try to sort them out in this book. If anything, I expect they will resolve in favor of the views defended here.
25. Among those who have taken the distinction seriously, see Kekes 1988, 2002; Simpson 1975, and Swanton 2003, pp. 57, 59. Valerie Tiberius discusses something

similar in a wonderful new book, offering a theory of the good life from the individual's point of view (forthcoming). This is not strictly an account of either well-being or the good life. This seems to me an important innovation, and it represents a version of the "methodological eudaimonism" that informs this book (see Chapter 3).

26. See Rawls and Korsgaard on the "concept/conception" distinction (Rawls 1971, Korsgaard 1996, pp. 113–14). In philosophical parlance, 'normative' is basically synonymous with 'evaluative'. The major moral theories, like Utilitarianism, also involve substantive normative claims, so much of this discussion applies to that literature as well.
27. Darwall 2002.
28. Mackie 1977.
29. E.g., Gibbard 1990.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. For the reader not fluent in American rural vernacular, there is an expression for futility, "That dog won't hunt."
2. I have paraphrased the original statement. Thanks to Jerry Fodor for this. His comments on a related paper largely stimulated me to write this chapter.
3. For a review of most of the literature of this sort, see Den Uyl and Machan 1983. With a few exceptions, philosophers pretty much gave up on the theory of happiness after this.
4. For convenience, I shall often write as if there is a single long-term psychological folk concept of happiness. Perhaps there isn't; there does not, at any rate, seem to be a single *well-defined* concept.
5. Block 1995.
6. See Sumner 1996 on normative adequacy.
7. This proposal is analogous to the approach Paul Griffiths takes towards the emotions (1997).
8. A nice brief summary of the approach appears in Nichols 2006.
9. I use terms like 'kind' and 'category' very loosely here, with no particular metaphysical commitments in mind.
10. I borrow the term 'philosophically primary' from L. W. Sumner 1996.
11. For discussion, see Nichols 2006. The terminology of paraphrasing hails from Quine.
12. Justin Fisher has been developing a related approach, "pragmatic conceptual analysis," in much greater detail. For further discussion and references, see Fisher 2006a, 2006b.
13. A forceful challenge to this claim relates to the phenomenon of adaptation, which has led some to suggest that happiness functions to track *changes* in well-being, not well-being itself. This important argument deserves a more extensive response than I will offer in this book, but I discuss some reasons for skepticism in Chapter 6, as well as Chapters 5 and 10. I do not claim happiness can serve as a proxy for well-being in *all* contexts.
14. Haybron 2003.
15. Sumner 1996.