SPECIAL ISSUE

Felicitators

Edited by John F. Helliwell, Dan Weijers, Nattavudh Powdthavee, and Aaron Jarden

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"Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared."

– Buddha

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Introduction

This symposium is the result of our efforts to collect and present what we know about the creation and distribution of happiness. Our aim is to help shift the focus of wellbeing research from the 'I' to the 'we' by celebrating people and places, ideas and institutions, that have made and can make the world a happier place. We call them 'Felicitators' – producers of happiness. This has echoes of Bentham's felicific calculus, and reminds us that GNH, the Gross National Happiness concept, is rendered in Brazil as FIB, Felicidad Interna Bruta.

Our unusual partnership is thanks to Jean Timsit, who two years ago invited a range of happiness researchers to pool their diverse skills and interests to expand and enrich what is known and can be used to improve lives. We are enormously grateful for his initiative and continued support. In January 2010, in the course of project discussions in Tulum (Mexico), we fell upon two ideas at once. The first was to use particular stories and examples as a way of assembling and explaining important results. The second was to encourage the spread of wellbeing by celebrating felicitators, and especially those whose ideas and actions have broad or universal applicability. We think that our eight papers, created collaboratively and gathered together in this symposium, are ideally placed in the *International Journal of Wellbeing*, whose mission, like ours, is to develop and freely exchange ideas that deserve and need to cross geographic and disciplinary borders.

We will not attempt to stitch our papers too tightly together, or to claim any sort of completeness. We opted for examples, and examples are what you get. What, you might ask, following the alphabetical order of our names, could Dr Seuss, Maria Montessori, Bruder Klaus, Central Park, Singapore prisons, Moses, the Dalai Lama and music have in common? Read on and see. You may, like us, be surprised to see how many common themes there are, and how very specific examples can open up very large discussions.

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Forward on Project +

Jean Timsit

This symposium on Felicitators contains the first collective output of an interdisciplinary group of wellbeing researchers invited to contribute and combine their efforts to synthesize and expand what can usefully be learned from the rapidly enlarging science of wellbeing. The two main goals of Project +, as the collective effort has been named, are:

1) To produce a synthesis of what is known about the ways one can or cannot achieve human fulfillment, personal wellbeing and happiness, and
2) To investigate the consequences of these findings at the collective level of countries or societies, including those at very different stages of material development.

Project + researchers were invited to consider the following questions, amongst others:

- How do recent discoveries and methodologies help answer very old and traditional questions relating to the "good life"?
- What are the paths to personal wellbeing, life satisfaction, contentment or happiness?
- Which paths are counterproductive?
- What are the conflicting forces in place, or contradictions, the "dark points"?
- What do we need more of? Less of?
- Are current approaches delivering the expected progress for civilization?
- Can sustainable paths to personal happiness be generalized to the societal level?
- How can one balance the outside/in and the inside/out approach?
- How might paths to personal happiness affect public policies?
- How can we redefine "progress" and the goals of economic development?
- How can we release the energies of altruism and generosity (rather than selfishness and carelessness)?
- Could a clarified path towards wellbeing and happiness be the "missing link," or the motivation, to challenge our contemporary way of life and allow a paradigm shift that might lead to a better world?

Answers to these questions could provide a new framework for how decisions are made on many different levels – individual, collective, organizational, institutional and governmental. It would enable a person wishing to live a 'good life' to have a more precise idea of how to achieve it as well as enable policy makers, in education, health, government, and businesses, to make decisions that facilitate personal and social wellbeing instead of relying exclusively on a narrower range of objectives, often defined in purely material terms.

The project reflects the perspectives of several different disciplines, and is based on dialogues among scientists who otherwise may not have the opportunity to work closely together. Multiple disciplines' perspectives on happiness are represented, including

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contemplative studies, religious studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, ecology, history, philosophy, and neuroscience.

The aim of the project is to use dialogues among experts to facilitate breakthroughs in how we think about happiness and what we have traditionally believed leads to happiness. Whereas these topics are often studied by isolated individuals, each working from a single perspective, Project + is unique in its emphasis on creating small-group collaborations for the purpose of generating new ideas about happiness. Too often the individuals who conduct basic science and/or who publish in philosophical or scientific journals do not share their knowledge across disciplinary boundaries, or with the general public, leaving to others the task of reaching practical conclusions and communicating them to a lay audience. An important aspect of Project + is its goal to share accessible, applicable models of happiness that protect the planet's resources.

These are complex and controversial topics, but bringing in the best of contemporary science and multi-disciplinary methodology offers an extraordinary opportunity to address some of the current challenges facing modern societies.

Author

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ARTICLE

Dr. Seuss, felicitator

Aaron Ahuvia

Abstract: This article uses the life and work of Theodor Geisel (aka Dr. Seuss) to discuss certain aspects of what it means to be a 'felicitator', i.e. a person who brings happiness to others. The focus is particularly on his promotion of creativity and social inclusion, and his critique of materialism.

Keywords: happiness, subjective well-being, subjective wellbeing, materialism, social status, fashion, creativity

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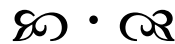
> If people become the books they read and if 'the child is father to the man,' then
> Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel) is the most influential author, poet, and artist
> of modern times.
>   - John Granger (2004), from his review of Dr. Seuss: American Icon

1. Introduction

The obvious hyperbole of Granger's quote (above) notwithstanding, his underlying point that children's book authors potentially influence many lives is certainly sound.[1] Theodor (Ted) Seuss Geisel (1904-1991), better known as Dr. Seuss, had a long and varied career. But it is as the author and illustrator of some of the most beloved children's books of the twentieth century that he will be long remembered, and, I will argue, through which he became a felicitator *par excellence*.

A felicitator[2] is a person or thing which brings happiness to others. As with most good authors, Dr. Seuss was a felicitator in part through the enjoyment people derived directly from his work. But he was a felicitator in a more profound sense as well, because he has helped teach a particular set of values and outlook on life to hundreds of millions of children. Geisel disliked the heavy-handed moralism which was endemic to the children's literature of his day, but many of his works nonetheless taught a moral point of view. Like that of many children's authors, his work emphasized honesty and our responsibility to protect those weaker than ourselves. But somewhat less typically, especially for an author of his generation, his work championed personal creativity while rebuking snobbery, materialism, conformity and

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[1] This paper focuses in particular on materialism and happiness. In this regard it is worth noting that the ideas children are exposed to through the media have been shown to have a significant influence on their levels of materialism (Bottomley, Nairn, Kasser, Ferguson & Ormrod 2010).

[2] I coined the term "felicitator" in 2010 as part of the work of Project+.

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prejudice. It is the values that underlie Seuss's stories, and not just the memorable rhymes and funny illustrations, which gave his work the classic status it has today. And it is these values which form the foundation of my argument that he was a felicitator. Specifically, I argue that his books had a modest but nonetheless real influence on millions of children, encouraging their imaginative creativity and discouraging snobbery, social exclusion and materialism. I also review research showing the positive connection between creativity and happiness and the negative connections between snobbery, social exclusion, materialism on the one hand and happiness on the other. So to the extent that "people become the books they read" (Granger 2004), children raised on Dr. Seuss had improved odds of growing up to be happy adults.[3]

2. Theodor Seuss Geisel

As an undergraduate at Dartmouth College (class of 1925), Geisel was editor of the school humor magazine, *The Jack-O'-Lantern*. He held the editorship until he was forced to resign by the university administration as a penalty for a party in his room that was raided by the police, who, despite Prohibition, found alcohol there. To get around his official banishment from the magazine, Geisel continued to write for *The Jack-O'-Lantern* using a variety of aliases including Seuss, his middle name and his mother's maiden name. Some years later he appended "Dr." to his pseudonym "as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the doctorate in literature he blew off when he dropped out of (a PhD program at) Oxford" (Schulman 2004, p. 6). "Dr. Seuss" became his primary pseudonym from that time on, although he also published over a dozen books under the name Theo LeSieg (LeSieg is Geisel spelled backwards).

Ted Geisel was 53 years old before his career as a children's author really took off. Years before that, he had achieved minor celebrity status for his work as a humorous advertising copywriter. Geisel never had an ambition to be an ad man, but after he included the brand name Flit in one of his early cartoons, he was asked by Flit insecticide to create an ad campaign. The resulting ads were a huge hit – Fred Allen and Jack Benny referenced the ads in their comedy routines, and there was even a song based on them. Geisel produced the Flit and other advertisements for 17 years, during which he used advertising as an economic base from which to explore other opportunities. He found some success as a humor cartoonist and as a liberal political cartoonist where he advocated US involvement in WWII, prior to Pearl Harbor (see Figure 1 below). Writing and illustrating children's books started out as just another sideline in Geisel's attempt to cobble together a career. He published his first children's book, *And to Think That I Saw it All on Mulberry Street* in 1937, in part because writing children's literature was one of the permitted side activities in his advertising contract.[4]

After the United States entered World War II Geisel enlisted and served a seven-year stint in the US military, where he scripted training and propaganda films under his commanding officers Frank Capra (the legendary film director) and Jack Jones (the animator who created Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck). After the army, he tried his hand at Hollywood script writing. Over the course of his work in the military and in Hollywood, he wrote three Academy award-winning documentaries. But he found working in Hollywood as part of the studio system very

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[3] This quotation comes from John Granger's (2004) online review of *Dr Seuss: American Icon.*
http://www.amazon.com/Dr-Seuss-American-Phillip-Nel/dp/0826414346/ref=cm_cr_pr_orig_subj

[4] This is sometimes presented as a coincidence, as if the contract had just happened by chance to permit authoring children's books, which led him to this work. But how did that clause find its way into his contract to begin with? It is quite plausible that he had an interest in this occupation and requested that his advertising contract allow him to work in children's literature. If so, this would fit a pattern throughout his life of recasting his past as a series of happenstance serendipitous events, when in fact he played an active role in bringing those events about.

unpleasant. When it came to his creative work Geisel was perfectionistic, uncompromising, and did not, as the expression goes, 'play well with others'. Being a self-employed author suited him much better. So, having determined that he and his wife could live on $100 per week, in 1953 he asked his agent, "if I drop everything else (to focus exclusively on writing children's books), do you think I could count on royalties of $5000 a year?" (Morgan & Morgan 1995, p. 140). Although he had previously published seven children's books, some of which had been fairly popular, his royalty payments were modest. So his decision to give up his advertising and scriptwriting work was no small economic risk.

Figure 1: Political cartoon for PM Magazine satirizes Mussolini

There is a saying among product designers, that 'it takes 20 years before a product becomes an overnight success'– so too with Dr. Seuss. In 1957, 20 years after his first children's book, he published *The Cat in the Hat* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, both of which were wildly popular and transformed Dr. Seuss into a children's literature superstar. In total, Geisel authored 44 books, which have collectively sold over one half *billion* copies.[5]

3. Imagination and creativity

Dr. Seuss's first book, *And to Think That I Saw It All on Mulberry Street* (1937) was rejected by as many as 43[6] publishers before a chance meeting on the street between Geisel and an old college friend, who had just entered the publishing business, led to its production. While utterly unremarkable today, what made *And to Think That I Saw It All on Mulberry Street* a tough sell to publishers in the 1930s was the fact that it took the perspective of a creative child who was frustrated by his father's preference for the dry truth over the child's imaginative stories. Many

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[5] Some of my personal favorites not mentioned so far include *McElligot's Pool, Horton Hears a Who!, Green Eggs and Ham, Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories*, *The Sneetches and Other Stories*, *The Lorax*, and finally *Oh, The Places You'll Go!*; which, interestingly, has since become a common gift from parents upon their children's graduation from college.

[6] The number of publishers, like so many other things in Geisel's life, got larger with each retelling and isn't conclusively known. The source of the number 43 used here is Lurie (1990).

publishers saw this empathy for the child's perspective as anti-authority (Lurie 1990). And in a way it was, since our creative imagination allows us to see beyond the existing social structure and towards the possibility of a different and better way of life. Indeed, it has oft been noted that Dr. Seuss's characters "express a kind of freedom from conventional ways of thinking" (Renthal 1962) and in "many of his books there is a strong liberal, even anti-establishment moral" (Lurie 1990, p. 51).

From his first book on, Dr. Seuss was always allied "with the child's free spirit" (Lanes 1971, as cited in Nel 2004, p. 251) as he celebrated "the wildest flights of fantasy" (Lurie 1990, p. 51). Seuss goes so far as to suggest that a child's creativity needs protection from small-minded authority figures, a view formed in part by his experience in his high school art class. As Geisel recounts the story:

> Our model that day was a milk bottle containing few scraggly late autumn daisies. I was having a real bad time trying to capture the beauty of this setup and immortalize it with a hunk of charcoal in a sheet of paper. To add to my frustration, my teacher kept fluttering about them giving me hell for turning my drawing board around and working on my picture upside down. "No, Theodor," she said. "Not upside down! There are rules that every artist must abide by. You will never succeed if you break them."[7]

At the end of the hour Geisel transferred out of the class, and so ended his first and only encounter with formal art education (Morgan & Morgan 1995). Traces of this experience can be heard in Geisel's warning that if "you don't get imagination as a child, and probably never will [. . .] because it gets knocked out of you by the time you grow up" ("Logical Insanity of Dr. Seuss" p. 58, as quoted in Nel 2004, p. 123).

Seuss's child characters often modeled a strategy for retaining their imaginative free spirit by keeping it hidden from adults (Lurie 1990). For example, in *And to Think That I Saw It All on Mulberry Street*, Marco, the child protagonist, uses his imagination to turn a simple horse and buggy into a magnificent parade. But Marco then conceals this fantasy from his father, who had previously admonished him to "stop telling such outlandish tales."

Imaginative and frequently zany characters often play the role of felicitator in Seuss's work, bringing happiness to those around them. As Nel (2004, p. 123) writes:

> The *Cat in the Hat*, *Sam-I-am*, and the narrator of *On Beyond Zebra!* are all
> characters who use the imagination to create possibility… So, instead of
> remaining secure behind social or linguistic norms, these characters encouraged
> us to explore what happens when we break the rules. In so doing, Harold Hill
> brings joy into River City, the Cat brings excitement into a dull suburban home,
> and Sam-I-Am invites us to taste the unexpected.

Seuss also noted the way imaginative creativity is an intrinsically rewarding activity. For example, while Marco never told his father about his imaginative reverie, the creative process left Marco energized and full of joy:

> I swung 'round the corner
> And dashed through the gate,
> I ran up the steps
> And I felt simply GREAT!

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[7] Morgan and Moran (1995), p. 21.

No one would deny that creative expression can often feel good, but so can any number of activities that are nonetheless in the long run deleterious to one's happiness. Even if one accepts the premise that at least some of those one half billion Dr. Seuss books influenced children to value and participate in imaginative creativity, does this increase in creative behavior make Dr. Seuss a felicitator? What does the scientific research have to say on the subject of imagination, creativity and happiness?

There is a significant body of literature showing that – contrary to the stereotype of the brooding artist – being happy increases creativity (Argyle 2001, Davis 2009, Gasper 2004). Happiness boosts creativity primarily because positive moods increase mental arousal (Filipowitz 2006), and also because happy people are "more relaxed and more open to new experiences; therefore, they can make more diverse associations, generate more ideas as the thoughts flow freely without the restraint" (Pannells & Claxton 2008, p. 71). Nonetheless, two caveats are in order. First, positive moods help people generate new ideas, but negative moods can actually be more helpful in evaluating the merit of those ideas (Davis 2009). Furthermore, there can be too much of a good thing, and as people reach the very highest possible levels of happiness creativity diminishes (Davis 2009).

Cohen-Meitar, Carmeli and Waldman (2009) provide findings which suggest a virtuous circle may exist for creativity and happiness in the workplace (see Figure 2 below). This study revealed that employees who found their work to be meaningful (i.e. personally important to them in some larger intrinsic sense) identified more strongly with the organizations which employed them, and also felt happier at work. Furthermore, employee happiness was associated with increased productive creativity at work, *as assessed by the employees' supervisor*. Since supervisors usually convey their evaluation of employees to those employees, it's reasonable to assume that employees whose supervisors believe them to be highly creative and productive should on average come to see themselves as relatively more successful at work. Other research has shown that feeling successful at work is strongly linked to happiness (Warr 1999). Combined, these findings suggest a positive feedback loop whereby employees who experience work as a meaningful and happy activity become more creative in productive ways, which is in turn noted by their supervisors, and thus increases the employees' assessment of their own professional success, which finally produces yet more happiness for those employees.

Figure 2: Employee Creativity and Happiness

In contrast to the robust literature on the effect of happiness on creativity, there are relatively few studies which look at the impact of personal creativity on one's own, or others', happiness. Nonetheless, what data do exist support the claim that encouraging creativity and self-expression also encourages personal happiness and has positive spillover effects for society at large.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) documents in detail the role creativity plays in flow and optimal experience. At the other end of the emotional spectrum, Grieves (2009) conducted a controlled experiment with patients suffering from clinical depression, and found that increased creative activity was therapeutic and led to decreased depression.

A recent study by Georgellis, Tsitsainis, and Yin (2009) shows that, across Europe, valuing creativity is positively correlated with happiness. This study analyzed data from the European Social Survey (2002 & 2004). Respondents were asked how important it was for them to (a) think of new ideas and be creative; (b) be rich and own expensive things; (c) show abilities and be admired; (d) seek respect from others; (e) help people; and (f) follow traditions and customs. The answer most consistently and positively associated with happiness was the importance of thinking of new ideas and being creative.

Creativity is also linked to happiness at the community level. Di Giacinto, Ferrante, and Vistocco found that "access to creative environments appears to have a positive impact on happiness" (2007, p. 1). Specifically, their study used Florida's creativity index (Florida & Tinaglia 2005) to assess the creative output, embrace of diversity, and tolerance for individual eccentricity, for various geographic regions in Italy. After controlling for income and other demographic factors, they found a positive correlation between a community's creativity index, and the happiness of the people who live there. Shifting our focus from geographic communities to organizations, similar results were obtained by Rasulzada and Dackert (2009), who found that fostering a creative organizational climate leads to higher levels of perceived creativity and innovation by employees, which in turn leads to greater happiness, enthusiasm and optimism amongst those employees.

4. Conspicuous consumption, materialism and social exclusion

As a child growing up in Springfield Massachusetts during World War I, Ted Geisel was pelted with coal by other schoolchildren because of his German heritage. He recalled in an interview how, prior to WWI, his German-American relatives "did get into some clubs like the Elks, and they took us kids to Elks clam bakes where we ate lobsters and Quahog clams and corn-on-the-cob and our fathers drank beer until our mothers made them stop and we all came home on the trolley car singing and wildly happy" (Morgan & Morgan 1995, p. 18). But the good relations between Geisel's childhood German-American ethnic community and the majority population of his home town ended when America entered WWI. Later, as a freshman at Dartmouth he would have a similar experience of social exclusion as he was not invited to join any of the fraternities, this time not because of his German heritage but because of a false rumor that he was Jewish. Thus, in a plot twist worthy of one of his own books, Geisel, a third-generation American and Christian from birth, managed to suffer both from anti-German bigotry and anti-Semitism. In interviews Geisel would cite these experiences when explaining the origins of his story *The Sneetches*, a parable about the hoity-toity Star-Belly Sneetches and their hoi polloi brethren the Plain-Belly Sneetches. And it's easy to hear Geisel's experience of being excluded from the clam bakes as a child and later from Dartmouth fraternities in verses from *The Sneetches* (1961) like:

But, because they had stars, all the Star-Belly Sneetches

Would brag, "We're the best kind of Sneetch on the beaches."
With their snoots in the air, they would sniff and they'd snort
"We'll have nothing to do with the Plain-Belly sort!"
And whenever they met some, when they were out walking,
They'd hike on past them without even talking...

When the Star-Belly Sneetches had frankfurter roasts
Or picnics or parties or marshmallow toasts,
They never invited the Plain-Belly Sneetches.
They left them out cold, in the dark of the beaches.
They kept them away. Never let them come near.
And that's how they treated them year after year.

The Sneetches began as a short illustrated poem published in Redbook magazine in 1953, which satirized racial, religious or ethnic prejudice and animosity. But when Dr. Seuss expanded the 1953 poem to create the illustrated story *The Sneetches* (1961), the topic also shifted toward class-based prejudice and the role of luxury goods as status markers. The 1953 and 1961 versions start out much the same, but the 1961 version departs from the earlier poem when a pitchman named Sylvester McMonkey McBean arrives on the scene. McBean unpacks an enormous contraption – a Star-On Machine – which prints stars on the Plain-Belly's bellies to make them indistinguishable from Star-Belly Sneetches (see Figure 3 below). McBean sells trips through the Star-On Machine to the Plain-Belly Sneetches. The idea that one could buy an upgrade in one's social status doesn't fit well with a satire of bigotry based on race or religion; but it fits quite well as a metaphor for class-based bigotry and the role of conspicuous consumption in facilitating class snobbery.

Figure 3: McBean and his Star-On Machine

The Sneetches presents a succinct illustration of the 'trickle-down' (Simmel 1904, Veblen 1899), a.k.a. 'chase and flight' (McCracken 1985) theory of fashion, according to which fashion items such as designer brands are used by elites to mark their superior status and differentiate them from the rest of us. These same fashion brands then become attractive to wannabe elites who seek to emulate the fashion leaders and perhaps even join the elite group. Since the whole value of the status brand to the elites was that it distinguished them from the non-elites, once the brand becomes too popular with non-elites it loses its value to the original elite group. As Dr. Seuss would put it, "from then on, as you've probably guessed. Things really got into a horrible mess" (1961, p. 19). The elites drop the now passé status symbol, and opt for a new brand or style. Eventually, the non-elites catch on to the fact that the elites have abandoned their former status marker, and the fashion cycle keeps relentlessly chugging along.

Lest the role of fashion in this whole process of elitism and exclusion be missed by the reader, Dr. Seuss spells it out quite explicitly. Once the Plain-Belly Sneetches acquire stars, the Star-Belly Sneetches become furious that the riffraff now have their status markers. McBean, it turns out, also has a solution to the Star-Belly's status problem. "Belly stars are no longer in style" says McBean "what you need is a trip through my Star-Off Machine"! As the book continues, McBean whips both groups into a fashion-fueled status symbol-buying frenzy:

> All the rest of that day, on those wild screaming beaches,
> The Fix-it-Up Chappie kept fixing up Sneetches.
> Off again! On again!
> In again! Out again!
> Through the machines they raced round and about again,
> Changing their stars every minute or two.
> They kept paying money. They kept running through.

In the story, this continues until "every last cent of their money's been spent." For many, this fate is hardly fictitious, as conspicuous status consumption has been linked to problematic consumer debt (Lea, Webley, & Walker 1995), and the compulsive consumption which can lead to that debt (D'Astous, Maltais & Roberge 1990).

Since *The Sneetches* was published several developments have dramatically expanded the percentage of the population "running round and round-bout again" in this status game (Patrick & Hagtvedt 2009). First, the development of designer labels made it easier for non-elites to play the game. Previously, in order to play one needed to devote enough time and energy to developing a connoisseur's eye for fashion and luxury goods, that one could distinguish what was hot from what was not, based on the aesthetic properties of the object in question. Visible designer labels have made the process of identifying status goods much simpler and hence made the status game accessible to a much larger audience. This change corresponded to the development of what people in the luxury goods business call 'accessible luxuries.' These are products like a $150 Gucci keychain, which while much more expensive than comparable non-designer products, are still priced low enough to be affordable to a highly motivated middle-class consumer. The combination of visible labels and accessibly priced products has led to the spread of this status game to the mass public.

The image of the Sneetches getting stars popped onto and off of their bodies is readily translatable into designer logos on clothing. But this competitive consumption status system extends far beyond designer clothes. The car one drives, beverages one drinks (from wine and liquor, the beverage status game has spread to beer, coffee, tea and even bottled water), the home one lives in, golf clubs (both the kind one plays with and the kind one plays at), etc., are all common consumption domains where this status competition takes place. Nor are tangible

products inherently more status oriented than services or experiences. For example, the ad for vacation travel is based on the premise that the resort others haven't been to yet (and are hence dreaming about) allows you to score more status points than does going to a resort which is more *common* (note the double meaning of 'common' as *frequent* but therefore inherently *not elite*).

Seeing this status competition as a 'game' is a useful metaphor. In the Sneetches story, the game was primarily a team sport (the Plain-Belly vs the Star-Belly), but in real life the game has qualities both of a team and of an individual competition. It is perhaps unsurprising that if given their druthers, the elites wouldn't want to even play in the same league as the masses – and so they don't. The fashion-based status symbol game has developed what I call three 'leagues' – which I will dub the 'C' league, 'B' league, and 'A' league – hierarchically organized of course! The C league is the most widely accessible and therefore least elite. It is a hallmark of low sophistication consumers who play in the C league that, by and large, they do not even know that the other two leagues exist. C league players compete by purchasing major designer label products with visible designer logos (Han, Nunes & Drèze 2010). The bigger the product and the bigger the logo, the more it costs and hence the more 'points' a consumer scores for displaying it. Therefore, winning in the C league is largely just a function of how much money one spends. Or at least, this used to be the case before 'cheating' (buying counterfeits) became an easily accessible option. The FBI calls counterfeiting "the crime of the 21st century" (Chow 2003, p. 9) because counterfeiting designer luxury goods is a business of staggering proportions (Gistri, Romani, Pace & Ahuvia 2010).

Counterfeiting is less of an issue in the B league, and hardly occurs in the A league at all. This is because counterfeiters rarely find it profitable to create imitation versions of the products favored in these higher leagues. The B league competes mainly through the use of the same designer *brands* purchased by participants in the C league, but B leaguers prefer products within those brands which have less conspicuous or even non-visible designer logos (Han, Nunes & Drèze 2010). Thus success in this league requires more knowledge of the designer product lines and of fashion trends, than does success in the C league. Participants in the B league generally have higher incomes and are more broadly immersed in the world of fashion than are C league competitors.

The A league is a small group of generally quite wealthy people who live in culturally elite cities such as New York, London, Milan or Paris; and fancy themselves as not only the economic elite but the cultural avant-garde. They typically reject the well-known designer labels altogether, and prefer lesser known small-production designers. If brands move between leagues, the typical pattern is for them to start in the A league and then gradually move down market, where the possibility of much greater sales volume allows for higher profits. In some cases though, such as Coach handbags, brands may start out as mass market brands and then move up into the B league.

5. Happiness, Money and Status Games

One might reasonably ask, what's wrong with playing this particular game? All competitive games have winners and losers; that's part of what makes them fun. Couldn't one argue that 'this is a fun game and fun games make us happy'? Certainly many postmodernist 'liberationist' thinkers would argue along those lines (Campbell 1991, p. 62-63). Furthermore, people need to form a coherent sense of identity to be happy (Ahuvia 2005, Burroughs & Rindfleisch 2002). The products we choose are an important part of this identity creation

process (Ahuvia 2005, Ahuvia *et al.* 2009, Belk 1988). So, as Twitchell (1999) argues, shouldn't we just get over it and let people enjoy their status games?

It would be foolish to deny the importance of creating a coherent sense of personal identity, or to deny that shopping for, buying and using all sorts of stuff can be fun. But research shows that there are different ways of relating to money and consumption, different ways of creating a sense of identity, and different ways of having fun, some of which produce longer lasting happiness than others. And unfortunately for avid players of the remarkably popular status game satirized in *The Sneetches*, the data on happiness recommend other hobbies. Nonetheless, before exploring the research in greater detail, I should caution against two common prejudices that can lead people to draw incorrect inferences. The first of these prejudices stems from gender stereotypes. The word 'fashion' refers specifically to clothing and accessories, but it also refers to a much wider phenomenon where all kinds of things go in and out of style; e.g. cars, furniture, music, food, architecture, the arts, political beliefs, academic theories, investment strategies. Because designer clothing and accessories provide such handy illustrative examples of status-driven fashions, many people incorrectly equate conspicuous consumption with the purchase of these particular goods. And since designer brands are more popular with women than with men (although interest by men is increasing), this misleads some people to think of conspicuous consumption as a particularly female problem. But there are plenty of publicly visible consumer goods, such as cars, through which even the least metrosexual male can conspicuously display his status.

The second prejudice is intellectual and/or counter-cultural snobbery. Although intellectuals love to poke fun at the status games where money is used to score points, wealth is just one 'field' on which this game is played (Bourdieu 1984). Academics score points in the 'I'm smarter than you' competition through their publications. Cultural elites score points in the 'who's more sophisticated' contest through having 'better' taste in food, wine, art, music, etc.[8] Tattoos are perhaps the most direct analogy to the belly stars, and tattoos were widely used to score points in the 'I'm cooler and more counter-culture than you are' competition between about 1990 – 2005, when they finally became so mainstream that they went out of style. Most of this article will focus on luxury goods as conventional status symbols in part because they fit with the Sneetches story, and in part because they are by far the most widely researched. But I would stress that many of the psychological problems associated with materialistic status consumption may well apply to these other status games as well.

5.1 Sneetchie behavior is an aspect of materialism

As discussed above, it was easy for Dr. Seuss to transform his story, originally about racism and anti-Semitism, into a story about the folly of fashion, conspicuous consumption and materialism. This is because these phenomena are more closely linked than one might first think. When a privileged status is assigned (or denied) based on groups one is born into, we call this racism, etc.; but when a similar status claim is made through the things money can buy, we call it materialism. In fact, Roets, Hiel and Cornelis (2006) have found that materialism is one of the primary psychological predictors of racist attitudes, thus suggesting that there is an underlying psychological connection between these two mechanisms for assigning ingroups and outgroups.

In *The Sneetches*, Dr. Seuss focuses on how materialism, through the purchase of status symbols, is used to shape relationships between people (or Sneetches, as the case may be). In

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[8] See the literature on 'cultural capital' for much more on this topic.

particular, the materialistic use of status symbols is embedded in competitive and antagonistic social relationships. Research confirms this connection, finding that materialistic people tend to view their social relationships in competitive and hierarchical ways (Christopher _et al._ 2005). For example, materialistic people are more likely to compare their incomes to their co-workers' (Clark & Senik 2010), value power over others more than a benevolent concern for others (Richins 2004), and value purchases that allow them to gain social status rather than those purchases that facilitate warm relationships with others (Richins 1994, 2004). As Kasser (2008, p. 176) put it, an orientation towards "materialistic goals is associated with being less agreeable and empathic, and with being more Machiavellian, socially dominant, and competitive (vs. cooperative) in social dilemma games." Claxton, Murray and Janda (1995) found that these patterns applied in one's home life as well, as materialists were disproportionately likely to have 'cool' rather than 'warm' marital relationships (see also Kasser & Ryan 2001). Similarly, Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002, p. 365) conclude that materialists seek "mastery and control over others. Thus, materialistic individuals appear to be not only hedonistic pleasure seekers but also power-hungry control seekers." In sum, materialism is often less about a person's excessive focus on material objects, than it is about using money and the things it can buy to gain power over, or win status competitions against, other people. Since having warm and positive social relationships has been shown to be such an important predictor of happiness (Myers 1999), this competitive interpersonal orientation may be one reason why materialism is so frequently associated with unhappiness.

5.2 Materialism is linked to unhappiness

In _The Sneetches,_ Dr. Seuss's primary criticism of the elite Star Bellies is that their snobbery and exclusionary social practices caused harm to the Plain Bellies. In this respect, his book understates quite significantly the problems associated with the behavior Dr. Seuss satirizes. It is not just that the Plain Belly Sneetches are harmed because they can't go to the Star Belly's frankfurter roasts. Rather, the socially competitive frame of mind that underlies why the Sneetches "kept paying their money" and "kept running through" McBean's Star On and Star Off machines, is itself the source of unhappiness and other psychological problems. These problems would afflict the Star Bellies and the Plain Bellies alike.

One of the first scientific scales to measure materialism came from Belk (1985), who saw materialism as consisting of three parts: envy, non-generosity, and possessiveness. Using these measures, highly materialistic people were shown to be less happy in life, and less prone to helping others, when compared with less materialistic people (Belk 1985). Later, Richins and Dawson (1992) developed a materialism scale which defined materialists as people who (a) believe their success and the success of others can be judged based on a person's possessions, (b) that possessions are needed for happiness, and (c) for whom possessions play a central role in their life. Although Richins and Dawson's scale conceptualizes materialism somewhat differently from Belk (1985), materialists have fared no better in research using this scale. Roberts and Clement (2007) found that when materialism was measured in this way, it was associated with lower overall life satisfaction as well as lower satisfaction with family, friends, self, place of residence, health, fun and enjoyment, one's financial situation, and one's job. Similar findings are quite common (e.g. Nickerson _et al._ 2003, Ryan & Dziurawiec 2001, Swinyard _et al._ 2001, Wright & Larsen 1993).

The third major theory of materialism comes from Kasser (Kasser 2002; Kasser _et al._ 2002, c.f. Emmons 1996, Stutzer 2004), and is an extension of self-determination theory. Kasser sees materialism as a particular instance of a larger personal value system which prioritizes

'extrinsic' over 'intrinsic' life goals. Extrinsic goals include financial success, attractive appearance, and social popularity. These goals are called 'extrinsic' because they "focus on external rewards, praise, and the evaluations of others" (Sheldon & Kasser 2008, p. 37). On the other hand, intrinsic goals include the desires for self-acceptance and personal growth, affiliation with others, and making a contribution to the larger community. These pursuits "are typically inherently rewarding and…tend to satisfy innate psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness" (Sheldon & Kasser 2008, p. 37). This theory of materialism links the desire for wealth and conspicuous consumption to the psychologically-related goals of physical attractiveness and social prestige. The interconnections between these extrinsic goals can also be seen in Geisel's creation of *The Sneetches*, in which social prestige is linked both to the materialistic purchase of status goods, and, through his earlier cosmetics advertisement, to the fashion and beauty industries.

Self-determination theory sees lasting happiness as dependent on prioritizing intrinsic over extrinsic life goals. This theory may be most easily understood through an analogy to what I call 'psychological nutrition.' In this view, the mind has certain 'psychological nutrition' needs, and intrinsic goals are those goals which, when met, fulfil these psychological nutrition requirements. Lasting happiness, in this view, is not the result of any particular pleasant experience but rather an outcome of psychological health. Extrinsic goals such as gaining social prestige through conspicuous consumption are the equivalent of mental desserts – attractive and momentarily pleasing, but lacking in psychological nutrition. Obtaining these mental desserts does not promote psychological health and hence does not create long-term happiness. In fairness to desserts, whether chocolate or metaphoric in nature, they can be fun and are dependably pleasurable. Desserts aren't inherently bad, but if they play too large a role in one's life, that can cause real problems. In the case of meeting one's psychological needs, an excessive emphasis on extrinsic goals (psychological desserts) has been empirically associated with "a host of maladies including anxiety, depression, neurotic physical symptoms, unpleasant emotions, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, behavioral disorders, lower levels of self-actualization, less vitality, less life satisfaction and fewer pleasant emotions" (Ahuvia & Izberk-Bilgin forthcoming). Finally, as if things weren't already looking bad enough for highly materialistic people, it turns out they don't even enjoy their desserts as much as less materialistic people do. That is to say, as compared to people who are low in materialism, high materialists are less satisfied with the products they own in potentially status-signaling product categories, and experience more guilt from splurge purchases (Wang & Wallendorf 2006).

Self-determination theory is quite different from the typical models of consumer decision-making which assume people maximize their self-interest over the long run. These models hold that what makes a goal attractive is the fact that achieving that goal maximizes a person's long-term wellbeing. In contrast, self-determination theory holds that a goal can be highly attractive and motivating, and yet achieving that goal would not provide long-term psychological wellbeing, just as attractive foods don't always provide long-term physical wellbeing. Furthermore, in self-determination theory people rarely learn from this mistake and repeatedly chase after shiny extrinsic goals even though past achievements in these areas have not produced lasting happiness. Puzzling as this failure to learn from experience may sound, it is now a well documented aspect of human decision-making that we consistently mis-estimate how much lasting happiness or unhappiness future events in our lives will bring us (Wilson & Gilbert 2003). And perhaps even more bizarrely, we seem to have a limitless appetite for repeating these mistakes (Ahuvia 2008).

5.3 Is materialism always linked to unhappiness, and why?

There is quite compelling evidence from a very large number of studies conducted with different populations around the world that materialism in general, and status consumption in particular, are *usually* linked with unhappiness and a range of other problems. However, there is still legitimate debate based on conflicting evidence as to whether there are important exceptions to this general rule. And these possible exceptions are based on reasons materialism would, or would not, be linked to unhappiness.

Although high income aspirations (i.e. wanting more money) are certainly an aspect of materialism, and have been strongly linked to unhappiness (Johnson & Krueger 2006, Stutzer 2004), these statements are generalizations which have been shown not to hold true in every case. Desiring more money so as to pursue extrinsic socially competitive goals (e.g. one's next trip through the Star On machine) is quite deleterious to happiness. But wanting money to pursue more prosocial intrinsic goals (e.g. supporting a social cause) or even to fulfill much more neutral personal responsibilities (e.g. saving for retirement) have been found to be unrelated to happiness (Carver & Baird 1998, Srivastava, Locke & Bartol 2001).

One of the reasons materialism may be associated with unhappiness is that it leads people to compare their financial status to that of others. The more prone people are to make these financial comparisons, the less happy they tend to be, in part because people tend disproportionately to compare themselves to others who have more than they do (Clark & Senik 2010). Interestingly, even upwards economic comparisons need not always lead to unhappiness. In some cases, people can be inspired by the successes of others, so seeing others who have been highly successful can lead to a sense of hope and optimism about one's own future. But these positive responses to others' good fortune are, unfortunately, generally outweighed by negative, more competitive responses (Clark & Senik 2010). In any case, materialism has been shown to exacerbate the negative consequences of upward social comparison (Carver & Baird 1998). Lyubomirsky (2001, p. 242-243) finds the type of socially competitive orientation typical of materialists to be at the heart of what makes for an unhappy existence:

> Our research paints a portrait of unhappy individuals who are deflated rather than delighted about their peers' accomplishments and triumphs and are relieved rather than disappointed or sympathetic in the face of their colleagues' and acquaintances' failures and undoings... One striking finding was that unhappy students reported feeling happier and more self-confident when they had received a poor evaluation (but heard their peer receive an even worse one) than when they had received an excellent evaluation (but heard their peer receive an even better one). Happy students, by contrast, did not show this pattern of sensitive responding to comparisons with peers.

Nonetheless, it still follows that the richer you are the more likely you are to feel good about the economic comparisons you make. And indeed, some studies have found that materialism is not associated with unhappiness among very high income individuals (La Barbera & Gerhan 1997, Nickerson *et al.* 2003). However, other studies have found positive correlations between materialism and unhappiness even among affluent individuals (Stutzer 2004). These conflicting findings have yet to be reconciled.

Materialism has also been shown to create unhappiness because materialistic aspirations can conflict with other more community-focused aspirations based on religious and/or family values, thus causing psychological stress. However, among people devoid of family values or

concern for their community, materialistic values don't cause internal psychological tension and are hence not associated with unhappiness (Burroughs & Rindfleisch 2002). While this may be good news for those materialists freed from a troubled conscience by having no conscience, it hardly represents a recommendable strategy for achieving happiness on a societal scale.

6. Conclusion

This paper has made the argument for Dr. Seuss as a felicitator. Beyond the obvious pleasure his books brought to children and parents alike, his work championed the importance of imagination, creativity, and not just tolerance, but inclusion and the enthusiastic appreciation of difference. While this paper has explored some of his criticisms of consumer society, it should be noted that in his life and work he was a 'flaming moderate' on these issues. In *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*, he attacked the way consumption in a commercialized Christmas can supplant the more nourishing and nurturing pleasures he remembered from his youth. But in the end of the story, once the Grinch sees the deeper values and experiences underlying the holiday, Christmas goes ahead with both singing *and* gifts. In *The Lorax* Dr. Seuss sounded an alarm about the ecologically destructive effects some forms of commercial production can have. But Seuss loved creativity, and he knew that creativity often involved creating *things*. So his books also contained fabulous cars, colorful costumes and splendid palaces. Yes, he pointed out the folly of the Sneetches, but it was the fact that the Plain-Bellies weren't invited to the frankfurter roasts, not the fact that people like frankfurters, that he inveighed against. Ever the optimist, after "every last cent of their money's been spent" on status symbols, Dr. Seuss has the now-destitute Sneetches finally see the folly of their ways.

> That the Sneetches got really quite smart on that day,
> The day they decided that Sneetches are Sneetches
> And no kind of Sneetch is the best on the beaches.
> That day, all the Sneetches forgot about stars
> And whether they had one, or not, upon thars.

Surely, this is felicitous advice for us all.

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Manipulating happiness: Maria Montessori

Robert Biswas-Diener

Abstract: Maria Montessori is best known for her legacy as an educator. She is the founder of a system of schools that has achieved worldwide success. Instrumental to her teaching method is the idea of fostering engagement by offering children individual choice and harnessing intrinsic motivation. For this reason, she is nominated as a noteworthy felicitator or happiness-enabler. In this article, I discuss Montessori's life with a special emphasis on her teaching philosophy and methods. I briefly discuss psychological research as it relates to choice-related topics such as perceived personal control and autonomy. I also discuss some limitations of choice as an avenue toward happiness.

Keywords: Montessori, education, happiness, subjective wellbeing, subjective well-being, self-determination theory

1. Introduction

Imagine yourself in a different job from the one you currently have. Instead of going into computers, or social sciences, or marketing, or whatever your current profession is you instead chose to go into a field that flies in the face of all convention. Bullfighting, perhaps. Picture what it would be like as a newly minted college graduate to tell your parents that you were going to become a bullfighter. Imagine the humored and horrified reactions of your friends, the difficulties in finding a good bullfight school, and the hardship in acquiring funding to learn your new art. Entering a non-traditional profession is nothing short of courageous, and certainly also calls upon strengths such as perseverance, tolerance and patience. Think of the type of person who has the sense of adventure, spirit of single-minded purpose and willingness to undertake hardship that would enter such a non-traditional profession as bullfighting. Maria Montessori, founder of the well-known Montessori system of schools, is exactly such a person. She may not have been a matador, but she chose an unusual profession in which she could reasonably expect a great deal of criticism: medicine. Montessori was a professional pioneer: the first woman in Italy to receive training and a degree in medicine. It was her experiences in school—including the hostile hallways of her medical academy—that gave Montessori the initial insights into pedagogy, learning styles and cognitive development that would later form the seeds of her famous curriculum embodied in Montessori schools. Due to the worldwide proliferation of this school system, the unique methods at the heart of the so-called 'Montessori Method', and the documented success of graduates of these schools, I nominate Maria Montessori as an important felicitator or happiness-enabler.

I will present a brief overview of Montessori, the woman, as well as discuss her educational legacy. More crucially, however, I will focus on the intellectual heart of her pedagogy—free will and the intrinsic desire to grow—and link these to interdisciplinary happiness research and the topic of happiness in general.

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The legacy of Maria Montessori is far more than it might have been given the historical time in which she lived (1870-1952). As the first woman doctor in Italy she could have been confined easily to the annals of history as a landmark feminist. She could be noteworthy as a kind of medical Amelia Earhart; daring to tread where women had not gone earlier. If that had been the extent of Montessori's impact, that alone would have been interesting and important. But what makes the Maria Montessori story so special is that she turned her ambition toward others. Because of her personal experiences with educational hardship, Montessori dedicated herself to a lifetime of creating institutions that would help young people enjoy learning and, ultimately, become happier, more fulfilled, adults. In this sense Montessori was a sort of factory owner—although she would likely have been appalled at the metaphor—and her great machines rolled out civic-minded, creative and happy young people.

2. Research on Montessori schools

If you are anything like me you are probably reluctant to believe stories about one school system or another being the magic solution to everyone's educational needs. Indeed, it is in their desire and ability to look critically at educational policy and outcomes that professional education researchers differ from proud parents of schoolchildren. Montessori schools, like many educational systems, particularly those built around a charismatic leader, are often touted by the initiated as fresh, effective and beneficial in the long term. But these kinds of claims are commonly opinions and must be evaluated both systematically and scientifically. There is little question that Montessori was a pioneer, but can we really claim that her schools are better than those created by other charismatic educators, or even better than traditional public schools? To get a better sense of the actual differences between Montessori schools and their counterparts we have to look beyond the teachers, who might be biased, and the parents, who are similarly invested. We have to turn to science. Fortunately, there is research on the effectiveness of Montessori programs. In one study of a Montessori school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (USA), for example, Lillard and Else-Quest (2006) were interested in both the academic and social outcomes of Montessori education. To investigate these outcomes they examined children who had participated in a school lottery; approximately half of whom were randomly selected into the Montessori system and the other half ended up in other types of schools. By using the lottery as a means of selection the researchers were able to rule out the pesky problem that educational benefits might have more to do with the types of families who enroll in Montessori schools rather than with the school itself. The researchers found that the young children in the study—5 year olds—showed equal performance as their control group peers on some tests of cognitive ability, and superior performance on others, such as recognizing letters and words. The Montessori kids also outperformed their counterparts on social and behavioral measures, and were better able to solve hypothetical social problems through the use of fairly sophisticated reasoning, such as discussing principles of justice and fairness. These results were not confined to the youngest pupils. Stories written by the Montessori 12 year olds who participated in the study were similar to those created by children in the control group in terms of spelling and grammar; however, they were judged as significantly more creative compared to the control 12 year olds. The real gains at the older age did not appear to be in academic prowess but in social ability. The Montessori 12 year olds were more likely to exhibit appropriate assertiveness and report feeling a stronger sense of community than kids in the control group. Lillard and Else-Quest conclude their study by pointing out that—at least in this single instance—the performance of Montessori children is comparable to that of children in other schools or, in many cases, superior.

This conclusion dovetails with the least scientific study ever conducted of Montessori: I interviewed a single 4-year-old Montessori student, Ella. When I asked her "what makes you happy at school?" she answered, "Everything!" When I pressed her for specifics she was able to articulate a list of three happiness-producing aspects of her Montessori curriculum: playing, hot lunch, and work. That's right, work. "Work" is the name that the Montessori students and teachers give to a wide range of educational activities, from feeding and playing with classroom animals to washing dishes to manipulating shape and color blocks. One Montessori teacher I interviewed told me that using the term 'work' to describe the children's activities lends a sense of dignity and importance to what they do, and set up kids for a lifetime of believing that work can be fun, rewarding, and educational. "Adults," the teacher told me, "tend to work to manipulate their environment while children tend to work to manipulate themselves. It is a developmental process." When I asked Ella what, specifically, she enjoyed about "work" her answer was immediate, "I like that it is challenging."

Either Ella is being fed some excellent propaganda or she is participating in a school system which fosters enjoyment alongside learning. Which begs the tough question: Was Maria Montessori a happiness-enabler? Despite her many personal achievements we cannot simply take for granted that she has substantively increased the happiness in the world. She's made a contribution in the form of helping kids learn, but has she actually made anybody happy? We have strong evidence that Montessori created positive reforms within education, and established an educational infrastructure that fosters an on-going and active learning community (Lillard, 2005). For this alone, I think we can reasonably say that she provided enabling conditions that set the stage for happiness. Certainly, Montessori teachers and parents will attest to the fact that they have often seen their students and children happy as a direct result of the school's teaching methods. Still, detractors might argue that one can find happy children in virtually every school. Ultimately, the question of Montessori's happiness legacy is an empirical issue, subject to scientific testing. There is, in fact, an entire book on the psychological science undergirding Montessori's methods (Lillard, 2005). It is an excellent guide to the motivation, cognition and developmental research literature relevant to Montessori's teaching methods. Lamentably, there is no mention of joy, satisfaction or happiness in the index. The studies presented within the book use typical measures of academic performance such as reading ability and this overview covers little about the children's actual experience of their learning. One notable exception to this is a study by Rathunde and Csikszentmihalyi (2005), the latter being the 'positive psychologist' best known for his pioneering work on 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), the state colloquially known as 'being in the zone.' In the 2005 study the researchers found that Montessori students' reports of their day-to-day experience were significantly more positive than ratings offered by students in traditional educational settings. Although this is a single study and cannot, therefore, be generalized to all Montessori students throughout the world, it is a first step; indeed it is a suggestive piece of tangible evidence that Montessori was not just concerned with reading and arithmetic, but also with processes and happiness. Ultimately, personal fulfillment will be the charge of each student as he or she leaves the halls of Montessori school and heads out into the world. Their job will likely be—at the very least—a little bit easier owing to the fact that Montessori removed obstacles to both wellbeing and learning and also created structures that support growth, mastery, independence and other psychological needs that are strongly associated with happiness.

It is important, at this point, to bring up a criticism not only of the Montessori approach but of the idea of educating for happiness in general. While the notion of wellbeing-producing

institutions fits well with the modern positivity movement, there are those who rightly suggest caution in this regard (e.g. Ehrenreich, 2009). It is wise to reflect on the fundamental purpose of education. Historically, philosophers have understood education to be, in part, about influencing character, virtue and morality (e.g. Aristotle, 4th Century BCE/1987); and many are inclined to agree with the idea that the state has both opportunity and obligation to intervene in public moral discourse (e.g. Smith, 1776/1987). There are those who disagree, however, on the basis that government intrusion into mental states is overstepping authoritative bounds and could be a form of violence against individual liberty. Critic Kathryn Ecclestone (2004), for example, argues that the heavy emphasis on self-esteem as a desirable goal of education is more aligned with therapeutic modalities than educational policy. Similarly, Ecclestone and Field (2003) make the case that emphasizing social capital variables as foci of educational policy contains potential drawbacks; among these is the possibility that normative social policy could undermine the performance of, or punish, non-conformists. Certainly, this point would be interesting to consider in the context of the Montessori classroom: how are non-conformists dealt with? What happens to those children who do not exhibit the capacity for 'work' or who would prefer not to choose for themselves? Unfortunately, no research on this topic exists (to the best of my knowledge). This absence highlights the fact that the research literature on Montessori schools is small, which is surprising given the fact that there are more than 7,000 Montessori schools.

3. The life that led to the legacy

The theme of 'challenge' that 4-year-old Ella described was a concept familiar to the founder of the Montessori schools. Maria Montessori was born in Italy in 1870, the same year that country was first officially united in modern times. From the perspective of a biographer, her childhood was largely unremarkable. Perhaps the most interesting and ironic footnote from her formative years is that, when considering a future profession, Montessori indicated an interest in becoming "anything but a teacher" (Kramer, 1976/1988: 23). Her experiences in school were discouraging, to say the least. She was actively dissuaded from cultivating her natural gifts for mathematics and, defying her parents, entered first a boy's technical school and later medical school. There were no female doctors in Italy at the time and her conspicuous appearance in the hallways and lecture theaters of the medical school was discomfiting to many. She was often ostracized by her all-male peers, many of whom would jeer at her in the concourses as she passed by. Montessori was also not allowed to dissect bodies with her classmates as it was deemed unseemly by contemporary standards for a woman to do so in the presence of men. Although the years of her higher education were undoubtedly socially difficult for Montessori, her efforts paid off and she eventually became the first female medical doctor in Italy (Standing, 1957/1998).

After completing her medical training Montessori assumed the position of assistant director of the psychiatric clinic attached to the University of Rome. It was in this capacity that she had her first opportunities to visit with and observe institutionalized children. As you might imagine, the psychiatric care in the facilities at the turn of the century were not up to modern standards. Ever prescient, Montessori was quick to notice that the conditions in which the children were housed—the lack of toys, objects or other forms of stimulation—were substandard to the degree that she believed it would interfere with any potential cognitive development. She quickly became an advocate for better education for these institutionalized children, arguing—in a speech on 'moral education' delivered in 1899 (Standing, 1957/1998)—that they should be entitled to 'normal' instruction. In this way and from this time Montessori

gravitated from being a practicing physician and lecturer to becoming an education reformer. Her leaning toward social reform was consistent with the times: at the turn of the twentieth century Italy was in the midst of social and economic crisis following a widespread crop failure, repressive government policies and heated public discourse over the contentious political issue of colonization in Africa (Kramer, 1976/1988). Then-Prime Minister Giolitti came to power in 1906 promising sweeping reforms for the poor, and these paved the way for Montessori's ideas on education to become reality.

It is interesting that Montessori had strong opinions on how to improve education but no actual school in which to implement them. It was this lack of formal institutional affiliation that eventually led her to a slum school in Rome—the now famous *Casa dei Bambini* (Children's House)—where she found a testing ground for her theories and where she refined her methods. Because *Casa dei Bambini* was a slum school catering to Rome's disenfranchised children, Montessori had an opportunity to implement teaching reform with a disadvantaged population that, in essence, made her educational methods a form of social activism (Kramer, 1976/1988). The school also gave Montessori a laboratory for observing the natural behaviors of 'normal' children and experimenting with methods for engaging them in the learning process. The success of her school was evident early on and her model was quickly expanded to other schools, and Montessori continued to craft her program and implement it in schools throughout the world until her death in 1952.

Montessori's legacy is much larger than the humble origins of her first school though. Currently, there are about 7,000 Montessori schools around the world and innumerable independent Montessori-inspired institutions. These schools ensure that Montessori's mission to cultivate self-motivated, socially aware and responsible citizens is both widespread and enduring. Her name and methods also influence books, conferences, and teacher training institutions. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize on three separate occasions, but it was never awarded to her. Although she is principally known as an educator, Montessori was, at heart, a social reformer and activist and often addressed spiritual, feminist and other socially active groups. In fact, she thought of herself as a "Social Crusader" (Montessori, 2008; p. 57).

Perhaps her greatest achievement, and the primary reason I nominate her as one of history's great felicitators, is the effect she has had on the world through her students, numbering in the hundreds of thousands at least. Montessori wanted to teach children more than facts; she wanted to encourage good character. Although the law of averages tells us that we can find famous alumni in any school system, I would be remiss if I did not point out a few notable Montessori graduates: Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos was educated at Montessori, as were Anne Frank, Julia Child, and Nobel laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez. It could be that these people would have grown up to be famous whatever their educational background, of course, but it is more amusing to think that the Montessori system had something to do with the rise of its graduate Sean 'Puff Daddy' Combs. Montessori (2009) believed that children had a psychological hunger for exploring and learning about the world, and only by satisfying this need from within could good character be developed. She was passionate about helping each individual child to live a life that was engaged, meaningful and enjoyable. These are, by their very nature, vital components of happiness.

3.1 Time out: A peek into a Montessori classroom

If you were to enter a Montessori classroom, especially an early childhood education classroom, you might notice several differences between it and the typical public school classroom. For instance, if you saw the early childhood education classroom at the Montessori

School of Ladera Ranch, California, you might notice the animals. Maria Montessori believed that animals were helpful to teach children responsibility and connection. The early childhood education room at Ladera Ranch boasts a rabbit, a leopard gecko, two beta fish, hermit crabs, a tiger salamander and a turtle named 'Sophie', as well as outdoor feeders for hummingbirds and finches. You might also notice that all of the fixtures in the room are small, built at the children's eye level…a nod to the legitimacy and importance of being young. You would also likely notice the many materials stacked and shelved against the walls. These materials, sometimes called 'manipulatives' are, in some ways, the core elements of the Montessori approach to learning. They include, among other things, alphabet blocks for reading, beads for counting and sorting, a pig—that's right, a pig—for washing. Washing a toy pig is seen as an element of life skills training as it points student attention to hygiene and caretaking. When I interviewed teacher Indi Avila she told me that these manipulatives were the most surprising aspect of Montessori:

> I attended Montessori from the age of four to when I was six and the materials in my classroom now are the same as those from when I was a kid! I can remember doing the same things my students are, like pouring rice from jar to jar. (Personal communication)

These tactile materials hearken back to the time of Maria Montessori herself and her observations that institutionalized children hungered for stimulating materials. Maria Montessori wrote about a time when she found such a child playing with food crumbs, just to have something to play with at all. Back at Ladera Ranch, teacher Karen Skirvin also emphasized that the materials are chosen with care to teach the children how to interact with the world and to cultivate an appreciation for beauty. She told me that her two- and three-year-old students do not drink from plastic cups but, rather, from glass and ceramic containers. When I asked what would happen in the all-too-likely event that such a vessel were dropped she smiled and said, "Then the children would learn about what happens to glass when it hits the floor."

The Montessori school day begins outdoors on the playground, as students are dropped off. The teachers are aware that this period—often thought of as the minutes before school begins—is actually a time of interaction and learning. From the playground the students file into the classroom where they have, at least in the case of the younger children, 'circle time'. Circle time is a transition period of sorts, to help the kids shift from physical play mode to indoor mode. The children acknowledge one another, greet their instructors, say good morning to the class pets and then move into 'work'. It is here that the children have the opportunity to express personal preferences and follow their own whims and intuition. Rather than following a structured, teacher-centered curriculum, the Montessori students are allowed to gravitate toward whichever projects they happen to fancy on a particular day. This ensures the students are self-motivated in their learning. When I expressed concern that a student could, potentially, choose to engage in counting and sorting activities day after day while ignoring reading readiness activities, teacher Indi Avila reassured me: "That is what the teachers are for—to gently guide the children." This is also when Indi pointed out something I, or any casual visitor, might not notice. All the materials are arranged in order of difficulty and complexity from left to right and top to bottom on the shelves, thus preparing the unwitting children for the structure of reading when they arrive to that stage of education.

4. Freedom: The heart of Montessori education

Maria Montessori came to believe that people—everyone, and especially children—have an innate desire to learn. In part, this conclusion was the result of her observation of institutionalized youth, who hungered for stimulation and, later, from her observations of children in her own schools. Montessori thought of curiosity as a human birthright that people employ on a daily basis to motivate action and engage with the world. To this end, she advocated a system of learning that was 'student focused,' with children's interest pouring forth from within, rather than the traditional passive learning methods in which children are expected to sit, listen and be good receptors of content. This is aligned with research findings that suggest that extrinsic reinforcement undermines enjoyment, especially in the case where tasks would have been inherently interesting without reinforcement (Lepper, Greene & Nisbett, 1973). Montessori's approach to learning was built on a foundation of personal choice. According to Edwards (2006), Montessori:

> [S]trongly believed that all young children naturally prefer to learn in an organized but supportive environment that permits a high degree of choice, control, and self-direction, and where children are not distracted by extrinsic rewards and punishments that distort their preferences (for instance, by grades, stars, awards, demerits, honor rolls, smiley faces, and the like) (p. 184).

Just as adults are free to gravitate toward skiing or gambling or woodworking as suits their fancy, Montessori believed that children should have some say in what type of educational activities they spend time on.

Although Montessori did not have the sophisticated science of modern times at her disposal, it turns out that a huge range of recent research supports her instincts about children. In fact, if Montessori schools can be thought of as small-scale societies, then it would be interesting to know to what extent freedom is associated with happiness at the societal level. Fortunately, there are data on exactly this topic. In a study of factors predicting the wellbeing of nations, for example, researchers found that social equality, human rights and individualism were significant predictors of wellbeing (Diener, Diener & Diener, 1995). Even when controlling for other factors, such as income, individualism reliably predicted societal happiness. Diener, Diener and Diener (1995) also evaluated the outcomes associated with democracy (and increasing democratization of a country), and found a strong relationship between democracy and happiness. However, the authors of this work also point out that democracy is neither necessary nor sufficient for societal-level happiness. In a more direct assessment of economic, political and personal freedom, Veenhoven (2000) found that greater freedoms were significantly related to higher levels of happiness across societies. In a study using data from the Gallup World Poll, a survey that assessed the happiness of more than 140,000 respondents in 125 countries, Helliwell and his colleagues (2010) found that 'freedom to choose' was a significant predictor of happiness. These studies all point to the same conclusion: societies higher in democratic rights and personal freedoms appear to be happier places. Certainly, we must ask about the direction of the causal arrow; it could be, for example, that happier people are more likely to create societies which offer more freedoms. In addition, the question of freedoms must be disentangled from the wealth of nations. It could be, for instance, that democratic nations happen to have economic systems that produce more wealth, and therefore the happiness of the citizenry might better be accounted for by public infrastructure and other material concerns rather than individual freedoms. Fortunately, we can employ statistical controls to parse out the relative effects of income. Although studies that adopt this tack differ

slightly from one another, the consensus view is that—at the societal level— freedoms matter to happiness more than do the contributions of national wealth (Helliwell *et al.*, 2010; Veenhoven, 2005). In the end, groups—whether they are nation-states or Montessori classrooms—seem to produce happier members when they are structured around individual freedom and choice.

Not only have researchers discovered in large-scale surveys that freedom is associated with happiness but it is also related to happiness at the individual level. Research on choice behaviors, such as how people decide to spend their money, suggests that some choices pay higher 'happiness dividends' than others. Van Boven (2005), for example, found that people who spend money on *experiential* rather than *material* purchases tend to be happier. Similarly, Aknin and colleagues (2010) found that people who spend money on others are happier than those who spent a comparable amount on themselves. This finding has been replicated in societies across the world (Aknin *et al.*, submitted). This body of research suggests that people are free to spend on the goods and services that are most attractive to them personally (a form of economic freedom) but that, where personal happiness is concerned, some choices will be better than others. Interestingly, it may be that we are biologically predetermined both to help others and to adapt to new circumstances. If this is the case then expenditures on others and on experiences (to which we are less able to adapt than we are to expenditures on material items)—those purchases that are the most emotionally rewarding—are actually in line with our basic phenotypic motives. The message is that we may be free to make any choices we want, but we will be rewarded—both emotionally and socially—for only some of them.

Another line of research connecting freedom to choose and the happiness of individuals is that which examines personal control. Thompson (2002) argued that humans are unique in the extent to which they can manipulate their environment and judge the degree to which they have the means to do so. This is certainly a sentiment with which Maria Montessori would have agreed—she believed that manipulating the environment was a primary adult longing (Montessori, 1966). Thompson suggests that a sense of control may activate problem solving behaviors and increase perseverance. Grob (2000) has found that people who believe they have more control of their environment are, in fact, happier. There is also a substantial research literature on the relation between income and subjective wellbeing suggesting that there is a modest positive correlation between the two, perhaps explained—in part—by the suggestion that more affluent individuals have a greater ability to fund the pursuit of personal goals (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). Although there are many studies that hint at the possibility that having personal control and free choice are important to individual and group happiness, these do not really tell us—psychologically—why freedom and control might be associated with happiness. For that, we have to dig a little deeper.

5. The psychology of autonomy

The strong links between freedom, personal control and happiness suggest that people generally fare well when they are autonomous. Cultural critics, on the other hand, remind us that—at best—we are interdependent creatures living in family groups and complex societies. The emphasis on the importance of social connectedness and cooperation extends especially to the classroom environment (Aronson, 1978). We are, after all, primates and have a natural tendency to cluster together in groups and rely on one another to get by. We live in an age where, worldwide, urban dwellers outnumber people living in rural locations. In fact, instances of reclusive people living in the geographic hinterlands are relatively rare. It appears, if anything, that folks like to work, live and play together. Which begs the question: what are the differential contributions of autonomy and relatedness to happiness? Which aspect of the

Montessori school curriculum is the magic potion that leads to so much wellbeing? Is it that Montessori schools are viewed as a community, and tend to promote the strong bonding of children and teachers? Or is it that there is an emphasis on individual mastery? Or, perhaps, is there some optimal balance between the two?

Self-determination theory, advanced by Deci and Ryan (2000), contains the idea that there are three distinct and fundamental human needs. By needs I—and presumably Deci and Ryan—mean motives that drive just about everyone because they are so fundamental to our functioning, and so enjoyable when they are met. These three needs include autonomy, relatedness, and mastery. According to self-determination theorists people will be happy to the extent that they are gaining new skills, have the opportunity to express their unique selves, and have a chance to connect with others. Indeed, research supports this conclusion. Students in law school, for example, are happier and perform better when they are given more autonomy and steered away from a competitive attitude that might interfere with their ability to connect with their peers (Sheldon & Krieger, 2007). Other studies have shown that having friends is a reliable predictor of happiness (Diener & Seligman, 2002). This type of wellbeing research that focuses on psychological drive states rather than emotional pleasantry is often termed 'eudaimonic', from Aristotle's discussion of Eudaimonia—a state of wellbeing in which a person has achieved their highest potential (Aristotle 4th Century BCE/1987).

Another eudaimonic course of research on 'psychological wellbeing' dovetails nicely with studies on self-determination theory. Ryff and Singer (1998) proposed that there are six fundamental human needs, and that progress toward and the fulfillment of these needs will equate with wellbeing. The needs associated with psychological wellbeing are self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. These contain some overlap with those offered by self-determination theorists but include others, such as self-acceptance, as well. Like self-determination theory studies, studies on the fulfillment of needs associated with psychological wellbeing are generally associated with greater levels of happiness.

Where Maria Montessori and her methods are concerned, there is reason to believe that each of these needs is actively cultivated in the children who attend her schools. It may be that the unique techniques employed at Montessori schools are well-suited to promoting a sense of self-acceptance in children, or connectedness, or mastery.

6. The limits of freedom

The empirical evidence for the benefits of personal choice and freedom-related variables on wellbeing and healthy functioning are clear. They are, however, not the whole picture. There are several instances in which greater choice does not necessarily translate to higher wellbeing. All such instances are—to a greater or lesser degree—anchored in culture. In the first instance, an emphasis on extreme individualism can result in an expectation that people should have nearly unlimited choice. Western markets, especially those in the United States, follow this assumption. Schwartz (1994; 2000) argues that there can be a 'tyranny in freedom' such that too much choice can undermine enjoyment. A classic real-world example of this is being stuck in traffic: if there is only a single lane of traffic you are mildly irritated by the lack of progress. If there are two or three lanes of traffic, however, you are more likely to be really angry—perhaps even at yourself—for choosing the 'wrong lane'. Thus, choice can be helpful, but when something goes wrong there is a natural tendency to blame one's self. Another cultural instance of the downsides of choice is that of collectivist cultures, where the individual is encouraged to subjugate their personal desires if those desires are perceived to come into conflict with the

overall welfare of their in-group (Triandis, 1998). A final aspect of culture relates to basic cultural worldviews about the extent to which one has control over one's fate. Westerners tend to have a 'disjoint agency' view in which they have agency and therefore tend to take credit for successes and blame themselves for failures (Markus, Uchida, Omoregie, Townsend, & Kitayama, 2006). Thus, there appears to be an optimal level of perceived personal control and freedom of choice, especially where happiness is concerned. Research is needed to examine the extent to which classroom choice is important both to learning and to enjoyment.

7. Montessori today

Maria Montessori died May 6, 1952 at the age of 81. Her legacy lives on in the thousands of Montessori and Montessori-inspired schools that exist on all six inhabited continents. Her name is a household word, and her life's mission offers the scenery for many interesting historical footnotes. Jean Piaget, for instance, conducted his famous observations of children in Montessori schools. Alexander Graham Bell helped to establish the first Montessori school in the United States. Montessori's influence is so great, in part, because of the inherent effectiveness and popular appeal of her views on educating children. Although her methods have been applied primarily to the education of younger children it is possible that her experiential approach and her emphasis on student choice are appropriate in higher education as well (Biswas-Diener & Patterson, in press). But more than that, Montessori was a pioneer who faced challenges and charted new intellectual territory. Although her scientific methods are antiquated by today's standards, her far-sightedness is unquestionable. Ultimately, Montessori provides a personal example of happiness: fostering relationships by realizing one's responsibility to others; enjoying mastery by working within areas of strength; and having the courage to live a life that is independent enough to provide opportunities to live one's values and progress toward personally relevant goals. She wasn't exactly a bullfighter, but her life was just as powerful and dynamic.

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ARTICLE

Peace, war, and happiness:
Bruder Klaus as wellbeing facilitator

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Abstract: Little is known in the scholarly literature about the effect of war and peace on happiness; but they have a large number of direct and indirect effects on happiness, difficult or impossible to capture due mainly to issues of causality and attribution. The paper concentrates on three fundamental claims regarding the effect of war and peace on happiness: 'War brings happiness'; 'People adjust to wars'; and 'The happiness of the dead is irrelevant'. An attempt is made to discuss different solutions to deal with these claims but it is made clear that each one has grave disadvantages. Bruder Klaus, whose full name was Niklaus von Flüeh, is the patron saint of Switzerland. This paper describes Bruder Klaus as a creator of peace and, based on the claims mentioned above, as a felicitator or wellbeing facilitator.

Keywords: peace, war, happiness, wellbeing, well-being, Civil War, terrorism, Bruder Klaus

1. Introduction

Bruder Klaus, whose full name was Niklaus von Flüe, is the patron saint of Switzerland. He was born in 1417 into a well-to-do peasant family in Flüeli, canton Obwalden, which is in the center of Switzerland. He excelled as an officer in the Zurich war (1440-44) and was a much esteemed councilor and judge in his commune. In 1467 he changed his life dramatically. With the approval of his wife, he left his family, which included several grown-up sons, and decided to live as a hermit and to lead a spiritual life.

While he is also known as a mystic who received profound visions (highly valued by Carl Gustav Jung) this paper focuses on Bruder Klaus as a *creator of peace, thus acting as a facilitator to bring happiness to people.*

During Klaus' time what later became the Swiss federation was still only a loose confederation of four rural and four city cantons. In 1481 a disagreement broke out among them at the Tagsatzung (General Assembly) at Stans on the question whether or not to admit two new cantons into the confederation. The conflict ran so deep that the outbreak of war became imminent. The delegates of each of the cantons could reach consensus on only one procedural issue, namely to ask the hallowed hermit Bruder Klaus for advice. The emissary came back with two pieces of advice: „Machet den zun nit zu wit" (do not extend your boundaries too far) and „Mischt Euch nicht in fremde Händel" (do not interfere in the affairs of other communities). Above all Bruder Klaus urged the delegates: "Keep peace!" He was well aware that cooperation leads to superior outcomes compared to aggressive and conflicting behavior. To the surprise of all observers, the delegates accepted the advice of the holy man and found a solution within two hours.

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This event has had a lasting effect on Swiss people. While the country unfortunately was not able to evade all conflicts and was engaged in several wars, the basic message was not lost. Over time not interfering in the affairs of other nations became a guiding rule in Swiss politics. The principle of neutrality helped to save the country from getting involved in World Wars I and II, and laid the foundation for the humanitarian efforts of the country. It made it possible for the Red Cross to emerge. The guiding principle for the efforts of the Swiss government and its diplomats still is to provide facilities, or 'good services', to achieve peace, and to guarantee peace treaties.

Many observers suggest that the stable and deep-seated democracy known in Switzerland, as well as economic prosperity and peaceful social conditions, are the major reasons why in surveys the Swiss are regularly among the top nations with respect to average happiness.

The purpose of this paper is not to provide a historical account of the manifold achievements of Bruder Klaus. Rather, he is looked at as an example of a facilitator of happiness through creating peace. The paper discusses evidence of what is known about the effect of war on happiness. The broader aspect of his teaching, that cooperation is better than conflict and leads to a happier population, is not further pursued here because it would lead too far. The author is, however, well aware that it is of great importance[1].

The focus of the paper lies on the question of how much, if at all, *peace raises the wellbeing of the population*[2]. Many readers will be surprised that such a question is raised at all: is it not a matter of course that war leads to terrible human suffering and unhappiness, and that only peace allows people to achieve happiness? I started this research exactly on this premise. I was absolutely convinced that peace brings happiness, and that therefore it is a primordial goal of politics to avoid war and to achieve peace. After writing this paper I am still convinced that this is true, but I had to realize that it is not as obvious as it at first seemed to me. Things look somewhat different when one goes beyond the first (wishful) impression.

I do not want to dwell on the well-known Phoenix effect (see Organski and Kugler 1980, Koubi 2005), which suggests that a population's size and economic pace often tend to recover relatively quickly after a war, West Germany and Japan being cases in point. I wish to concentrate on the effects on happiness produced *during* a war, compared to periods of peace.

This paper reflects my effort to understand what is *not* obvious, namely that *to some extent*, and *in some regard*, war may produce happiness. I make a special effort to collect the relevant empirical evidence.

Section I reviews what is known in happiness research on the effects of war on happiness. Section II deals with the surprising claim that 'War brings happiness' by adding meaning to life, energizing the population and creating solidarity. Also, there is the phenomenon of 'combat flow' raising the happiness of the soldiers involved. Section III grapples with the observation that people tend to adapt to circumstances, in particular to war events: Over time they get used to death and destruction, and weigh them less heavily than in times of peace. Section IV considers how persons killed in war should be treated with respect to a happiness analysis. Should they be left out of account (because they are no longer among the living) or

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[1] These considerations address issues such as the role of procedural utility (see Frey, Benz and Stutzer 2004, Frey 2008, chapter 10) and of trust (see Helliwell 2010, Helliwell and Wang 2011) for individual wellbeing.

[2] Wellbeing can either be affective (a short run experience) or cognitive (a longer run evaluation of one's life, called life satisfaction). Following current practice in scientific research, I use the term happiness, or interchangeably wellbeing, for both, and differentiate the two only when it is of importance.

should their unrealized expected happiness in the future be calculated? The closing section endeavors to reach conclusions. They are by necessity quite tentative and personal.

2. Existing research on war and happiness

The effect of war on happiness is a most relevant topic. According to credible estimates, not less than 191 million persons lost their lives due to war during the twentieth century (Iqbal 2006: 631). In addition, many millions were wounded and became disabled, suffering through the entire remainder of their lives. In addition, war destroys infrastructure as well as cultural heritage (such as a large part of ancient German cities during World War II). Even smaller wars have significant consequences. Collier (1999: 181, see also Collier and Hoeffler 2003, Murdoch and Sandler 2002) estimates that during civil wars per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) falls at an annual rate of 2.2% relative to a country without civil war because production directly falls and capital stock is gradually reduced. As many civil wars drag out over a considerable number of years, the decline in average income is substantial. Koubi (2005: 69), looking at a large cross-section of countries over the period 1960-89 (which does not include a major global war), finds that the average growth in GDP in countries that fought a war was slower than in those that did not, and that this effect is larger for civil than for interstate wars.

To my great surprise I could find only very few studies studying the effect of war on *happiness*[3]. In view of the great consequences of war on the population, economy and society at large this is most surprising. In comparison, there are now hundreds of studies analyzing the effects of income on happiness, generally coming to the conclusion that it is rather small, if it exists at all (see the surveys by Clark, Frijters and Shields 2008, Dolan, Peasgood and White 2008, Frey and Stutzer 2002a, 2002b, Frey 2008, Helliwell and Barrington-Leigh 2010). There may be several reasons why happiness researchers are reluctant to deal with the effect of war on happiness:

1) There is a data problem. Normally, in times of war no surveys are undertaken capturing how happy or satisfied civilians and soldiers are with their lives;

2) It is unclear whether people remember war episodes correctly. The difference between experienced and remembered utility (see Kahneman, Wakker and Sarin 1997) is crucial in this context;

3) The issue is extremely complicated. There are many different types of war, ranging from more or less dormant civil wars to all out national wars. There are also many different and indirect consequences. For example, in wars, democratic rights are curtailed and authoritarian decisions take over. Undermining democracy is known to reduce happiness (Frey and Stutzer 2000, Inglehart and Klingemann 2000, Graham and Sukhtankar 2004, Dorn et al 2005). During interstate and intrastate conflicts the health achievements of states decrease[4], lowering the wellbeing of the population (Iqbal 2006). Moreover, the question of how to deal with the forgone happiness of persons dying in war is difficult to deal with;

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[3] In contrast, the reverse causation, i.e. whether happier persons are more inclined to endorse peace, has been empirically analyzed. The important study by Diener and Tov (2007) finds that individual wellbeing is related to several peace attitudes, among them greater confidence in parliament and civil services, stronger endorsement of democracy, and less intolerance of immigrants and members of different racial and ethnic groups. These attitudes support a peaceful society that is open and free to all people. Subjective wellbeing is therefore considered "a crucial element in sustaining peace over time" (p. 438).

[4] Remember the influenza which broke out during WWI, killing more people than were killed in combat; and other epidemics or famines, or the effect of lack of clean water, or poor sanitation etc. prevalent during wars.

4) The causalities going from war to happiness, and from happiness to war, are difficult to separate and to empirically measure.

I could find three areas in which serious empirical studies have been undertaken in order to capture the effect of war on happiness.

1) *Civil Wars:* Violent conflict has the tangible effects mentioned above and, in addition, intangible effects in terms of psychic costs such as pain, suffering, fear, and agony, as well as empathy with relatives, friends and other persons mourning the victims. In a study comprising 44 countries around the year 2000, and using average happiness by country from representative surveys, Welsch (2008: 336) finds that the current number of conflicts significantly reduces the wellbeing of the population. He calculates that, on average, the compensating variation for one fatality is about 108,000 US dollars. This means that income must increase by 108,000 dollars to leave happiness constant when one additional person dies. The direct effects in terms of suffering, fear and agony are larger than the indirect effects due to the smaller income brought about by the premature death.

2) *Terrorism:* Terrorism is a special type of war in which, normally, the civil population is targeted and the goal is to create havoc and produce fear (see e.g. Frey 2004, Sandler and Enders 2004). Estimating standard happiness functions for two countries affected by terrorism, Frey, Luechinger and Stutzer (2007) show for France and Northern Ireland that more intensive terrorist activity in terms of the number of attacks and of victims significantly reduces the life satisfaction of the population. For Northern Ireland, the wellbeing cost from one additional terror victim amounts to about 0.6 per cent of income. This figure is similar to the one calculated by Welsch (2008: 335) for Israel, Burundi and Liberia.

3) *Particular events and countries:* The exposure of concentration camp inmates leads to intense distress due to the terrible experience but is sometimes alloyed with positive experience a former inmate may have later in life. In a careful study, Shmotkin and Lomranz (1998: 152-3) find that "… the survivors (are) deficient in satisfaction and joy… (but there is) also a dynamic response to challenge and change… leading to a life story that bears a message of comfort besides agony".

Another study (Landau, Beit-Hallahmi and Levy 1998) looks at life satisfaction in Israel in the period 1967 to 1979, during which time there were several wars, including the War of Attrition with Egypt, the October 1973 War, and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. There were also many other war-like events, including terrorist attacks. As a result, "…wars, as well as attacks on civilians, significantly increase the levels of anxiety and fear in the population" (p. 330). Overall, the study concludes that national stress negatively affects happiness (pp. 348-350) but notes that this finding cannot necessarily be generalized for other countries and periods.

While these research results are revealing, they are incomplete: we have little systematic and empirically compelling evidence on how war affects happiness. The next three sections focus on three claims that play a crucial role for analyzing the relationship between war, peace and happiness.

3. Claim: 'War brings happiness'

At first sight, this claim seems to be outrageous. However, observers (e.g. Hedges 2002) have noted that some people who experience war find it energizing and even addictive. This may help to explain why many wars drag on and are still supported by the population though

defeat is almost certain[5]. In order to be able to survive in wars, solidarity, trust and friendship play a large role. Such feelings tend to raise wellbeing (for the case of trust see Helliwell 2007, Layard 2005).

War also raises (affective) happiness in a more direct way, by the production of what has been termed 'combat flow'. "Such absorption is often reported in combat situations in which it contributes both to the well-being and to the efficiency of soldiers" (Harari 2008: 253). For the Vietnam War "addiction to the experience of combat flow"(p. 255) has been documented, but there is also evidence going back to Homeric Greece and medieval Europe. Noted authors such as Tolstoy in *War and Peace* (1865-68) for the Napoleonic period and Jünger in his book *In Stahlgewittern* (1920) for World War I extensively report instances of combat flow.

How should we deal with these forms of happiness in war? One solution could be to dismiss such feelings as inappropriate for moral reasons and to disregard them completely. Such a solution is in line with what many classical Greek philosophers thought. Epicurus is an example: "Though pleasure was a good in Epicures' view, it was always subordinate to the greater goal of achieving peace (ataraxia), a self-sufficient state free of anxiety and unease" (McMahon 2006: 209-10). Similar ideas can be attributed to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle with their notion of 'eudaimonia'. To totally neglect these forms of happiness experienced in war is, however, a drastic solution not taking into account well-documented feelings of happiness because they are illegitimate.

Harari (2008: 257) proposes to differentiate between sensual pleasures such as combat flow from the summum bonum of real wellbeing. Subjective feelings are not always a good indicator of what can be taken to be 'true' happiness. Moreover, waging war can certainly not be justified by an army of happy soldiers high on combat flow. Obviously, the wellbeing of the relatively small number of happy soldiers must be compared to the unhappiness of the large number of negatively affected civilians and unhappy soldiers.

4. Claim: 'People adjust to wars'

One of the major results of empirical happiness research is that people adjust to some extent to good and bad experiences (e.g. Frey and Stutzer 2002a, 2002b, Frey 2008). There is a tendency to return to a 'set point' of happiness determined by genetic factors. It must, however, be taken into account that the speed and extent of adjustment varies between areas and persons. For example, men do not adjust to being unemployed while women do (e.g. extensively Clark, Georgellis and Sanfey 2001). The question is whether people really adjust to war experiences. The finding that the change in the number of victims, rather than their absolute number, reduces wellbeing in civil wars suggests that there is some, but no complete, adaptation to the conditions of conflict (Welsch 2008: 334). But there does not seem to be any evidence for other forms of war. It is likely that people get used to some extent to the horrors of war. When one experiences that many persons die, then the fact that one's son, husband, father or other relative has died may be more bearable because the people affected are aware that they are no exception, and that other persons have had to come to terms with similar grief. On the other hand, one can well argue that experiencing the death of many others has a cumulative negative effect on one's own happiness. The question therefore remains open.

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[5] It must be emphasized that the military and political leadership are often responsible for extending the duration of wars. A striking example is World War II where Hitler and the Nazi establishment prolonged the war by many months though defeat was clear and predicted by some generals such as Rommel as well as the rebels of 20 July 1944.

How should we deal with this kind of reduction of unhappiness? Should we take war to be less brutal and devastating because people partly adjust to its horrors? This is a quite general question relating to all kinds of adjustments. Frederick and Loewenstein (1999: 320) conclude after an extensive and careful study of adaptation:

> Would (people) stop wearing seatbelts with the assurance that they would get used to being paralyzed? Would they exploit an embezzlement opportunity knowing that prison wouldn't be all that bad in the long run? We suspect not.[6]

However, the fact is that adaptation to such events is never complete – as even the founders of set-point theory have now agreed (see e.g. Diener *et al.*, 2009, 103-8). In the case of war, it seems to me that few people would wish to accept going to war because they know that they will get used to the immense sufferings. However, to ignore the process of adaptation is no convincing solution either, because ignoring it conflicts with empirical observations.

5. Claim: 'The happiness of the dead is irrelevant'

How should we treat those persons who die in war and therefore are no longer a living part of society? This is a philosophical issue I cannot judge. Three solutions come to mind:

The first is to disregard the wellbeing of the dead. This is done if the happiness of people is measured by representative surveys, i.e. the most frequently used approach (see e.g. the World Values Survey or the Gallup World Survey of Happiness). Disregarding the dead would not matter if the dead had the same average happiness level as the rest of the population. But this is exactly what is unknown; the dead may well be persons with a particularly high or low happiness potential in the future.

Two aspects seem to me to be relevant. Why should we disregard the happiness of those who died but count the wellbeing of those wounded, some of whom are closer to death than to life? Moreover, during wars many babies will not be born who, under peaceful conditions, would have come to life. If we regard the wellbeing of the dead we should (probably) also consider the happiness not gained by the unborn babies. To calculate the expected future happiness of unborn babies is difficult. One might take the average happiness of the respective generation of persons living (though this evidence will be available only in the future) and attribute it to the unborn babies. For example, if mostly highly pessimistic persons chose not to have babies during a war, those respective babies must be expected to be less happy during their lifetime because pessimism is a characteristic depressing happiness. As a result, the lifetime happiness of the unborn babies is overestimated. It follows that not to have these babies born raises the *average* happiness of the population, and to that extent war is less horrific.

The second solution is to just assume that the happiness of the dead is zero. This is, of course, a strong assumption but probably is considered reasonable by many people. When the wellbeing of a country is measured by taking the average self-reported subjective happiness score multiplied by average length of life (see e.g. Veenhoven 1999) this is indeed assumed.

The third solution would be to calculate the happiness the dead would have experienced if they were still alive. The respective techniques may be derived from econometric micro-studies. One would first have to empirically estimate the future happiness based on the characteristics of a person such as his or her age, socio-economic background, education, health, expected length of life, etc. In a second step one would have to associate these characteristics to the persons who died in war. This is obviously a difficult procedure and may result in major mistakes. In particular, if the dead, say young soldiers killed on the battlefield,

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[6] See also Fleurbaey 2009: 1060-61

have characteristics not captured by the happiness function estimated, the estimates may be seriously biased. For example, the soldiers killed might have been more than averagely optimistic and idealistic. As these characteristics are positively related to happiness, a standard empirical approach would systematically underestimate the calculated future happiness of the soldiers killed. War then appears to be less damaging to happiness than it is in reality but only under the maintained, and probably false, assumption that soldiers are on average more optimistic and idealistic.

These considerations reveal that to calculate the presumed happiness of the dead and unborn babies is most questionable. Moreover, it makes happiness considerations even more speculative than they presently are.

Considering the grief, suffering and mourning of spouses, parents, children, other relatives and friends of the people who died can capture only one part of the unhappiness created by war. It must be emphasized that this does not account for the loss of happiness of the dead persons themselves. It may well be imagined that grief about a departed is immense to other persons, but that the person himself or herself wanted to die because he or she did not expect any happiness in the future.

Empirical estimates led to the conclusion that "The largest emotional losses are from the death of a spouse; the second-worst in severity are the losses from the death of a child; the third-worst is the death of a parent" (Oswald and Powdthavee 2008: 1). Based on an 'economistic' approach of valuing psychic effects, the loss of happiness by other persons has been found to be very large indeed: "… the hedonic compensation annual amount *in the first year* for the death of a child might be of the order of £100,000/$200,000" (Oswald and Powdthavee 2008: 19). And the grief continues for many years. The authors find that people do adapt to the loss of a loved one. The question is again whether such adjustment is quicker during wars in which many other people die.

6. Conclusions

This paper leaves a great number of questions open. As mentioned at the beginning, I focus on the question of how much, if at all, peace raises the happiness of the population. Broader and certainly also important aspects, such as that cooperation is better than conflict and therefore leads to a happier population, are not further pursued here for reasons of space.

War and peace have a large number of direct and indirect effects on happiness, difficult or impossible to capture. I am well aware that I have discussed only a limited part of them. In addition there are many problems due to issues of causality and attribution, making it very difficult to reach any empirical insights into the effects of war on happiness.

The paper concentrates on three fundamental claims regarding the effect of war and peace on happiness. These claims are: 'War brings happiness'; 'People adjust to wars'; and 'The happiness of the dead is irrelevant'. These claims are critically discussed and it is argued that they are open to doubt, but that there are some aspects of war contributing to people's happiness. An attempt is made to discuss different solutions to deal with these claims but it was made clear that each one has grave disadvantages.

I am surprised how little is known in the scholarly literature about the effect of war and peace on happiness – at least compared to the great advances made over the last few years with respect to the determinants of happiness under 'normal' conditions. While the results of this paper are extremely tentative, one goal of the paper has been reached if it draws attention to a missing and most important aspect of happiness research.

Taken overall, and taking account of all the uncertainties mentioned, I conclude that Bruder Klaus was right in advising politicians and citizens not to extend the boundaries too far, not to interfere in the affairs of other countries, and most importantly, to keep peace. In these fundamental respects, this person living in the Alps as a hermit in the fifteenth century was truly wise. After considering what I have read and thought about while preparing this paper my *personal* conviction is unshaken: war is horrific, and all effort should be made to prevent it – and this not only for moral reasons but also to raise the happiness of mankind.

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Central Park:
Nature, context, and human wellbeing

Daniel M. Haybron

Abstract: This paper considers evidence that social and physical contexts, particularly natural environments, are surprisingly important for human wellbeing. In particular, the pursuit of happiness seems to be less a matter of individual choice than is commonly supposed. These ideas are explored through an examination of New York's Central Park.

Keywords: philosophy, wellbeing, well-being, happiness, biophilia, nature, context

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It is a scientific fact that the occasional contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character… is favorable to the health and vigor of men.
<div align="right">– Central Park architect Frederick Law Olmsted[1]</div>

I've tried to transport this sort of joie de vivre when returning to New York, and upon my arrival at J.F.K. I realize, it's not just about me: I am only the shrimp in the gumbo. I need my bell peppers, celery, file, sausage, my neighbors, my mama, my French quarter denizens. I need other people for this magic.
<div align="right">– Margeaux B.[2]</div>

1. Introduction

In happiness, as in so many other things, location is key. Or so I will suggest. In what follows I want to consider the importance of context for the successful pursuit of happiness, and more broadly wellbeing. I will say something of social context, which has gotten the most attention in this regard. But mostly I want to focus on the less-noted significance of *physical* context, specifically the benefits of proximity to the natural world. These appear to be considerable, and add to the case for thinking about the pursuit of happiness less individualistically, and more as a matter of context, than has been our habit. Central Park will serve as the chief vehicle for these reflections.

This paper is small, and my target large. I make no pretense of establishing these claims conclusively—or even, really, establishing them at all. My aim in what follows is, more modestly, to bring together several provocative lines of evidence and sketch the broad

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[1] Olmsted 1993, p. 17, cited in Hartig, Berg *et al.* 2010.
[2] "They Know What It Means," *The New York Times*, June 12, 2009.

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perspective on human wellbeing they apparently point to. It will be enough if the sketch is sufficiently plausible to merit further investigation. The reader will notice that I make more use of anecdote than is typical for an academic journal, partly because this issue is aimed to reach a broader audience. But anecdotes can have substantive value, calling the reader's attention to important points that otherwise might get overlooked, or bringing unanticipated possibilities to the fore. That seems to me the case here, where the empirical challenges to quantifying the benefits of nature are, to put it mildly, steep. Yes, the anecdotes can be unrepresentative, and the teller less than truthful. If the anecdote is honest, and enough readers find it illuminating, then it has earned its keep.

2. The park

If you have ever visited New York City, or moved there from elsewhere, perhaps you recall that feeling when you first set foot on its busy, boiling streets: an electric sense of possibility, energizing you and putting an extra bounce in your step. That's how it was for me, anyway, and still is. I have visited many cities, and none of them has quite that effect. New Orleans likewise has a profound impact on the psyche, but it inserts not so much a bounce as a lazy swing in your gait. It matters where you are, for where you are shapes not just what you do but how you feel and think; indeed it molds your very personality. I'm a different person in New York and New Orleans.

New York in particular has a very odd feature: right there, smack in the middle of some of the most valuable real estate on the planet, they put a park. An enormous park. A park that, among other things, makes it very difficult to get from one part of town to another. (Come to think of it, you could probably fit a couple more subway lines there.) If you consider for a moment what New York conventionally stands for, this is a pretty strange thing to do. In the middle of the most industrious city of the most industrious nation of the most industrious age in the history of the planet, they set aside a huge chunk of land for a bunch of trees and grass. It doesn't make a lot of money, nor does it help many people to realize their ambitions, all of which is to say it doesn't make a lot of sense in New York terms. What's it doing there?

Consider: we could level Central Park, pave it, and carpet it with skyscrapers, effectively trading Green Manhattan for Gray Manhattan. And we could fill that annoying gap between the subway lines. This would bring in loads of cash, create countless jobs, and house legions of people at more affordable rates. I trust that most readers would find such a proposal repellent. But why should there be anything wrong with it?

An obvious thought here is that Green is, to some degree, better for us than Gray: our lives would be impoverished by eliminating most vestiges of the natural world from them. But a deeper point, which I will also suggest, is that good places to live are not simply venues for us to seek out whatever we happen to want; they shape what we want, feel and do, nudging us in countless ways toward sensible ways of living, and away from senseless ways of living. And they give us things that we need, even when we don't entirely recognize the need. Central Park illustrates the limits of individual decision in the pursuit of happiness. And yet we find it at the epicenter of the most individualistic age in human history.

3. The benefits of contact with nature

> The enjoyment of scenery employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it;
> tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it; and thus, through the influence of the mind

over the body gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system.

—Frederick Law Olmsted[3]

3.1 The biophilia hypothesis

At least one investigation suggests that Central Park is a superb place to work (*n* = 1). The study: one summer I procured a small apartment just a block from the 72nd St. entrance to Central Park. I, being a philosophy graduate student, could spend many hours doing my work in the park, most often under a tree in Strawberry Fields. This tree, significantly, grew just a brief stroll from any number of cafes, restaurants, drinking holes, and—my favorite—a storefront advertising soft-serve ice cream containing something like 12 calories. (Probably a fraud, but my kind of fraud.) Offices don't get much better than that.

I trust no one would be surprised that I should choose to do my reading in the park and not, say, my apartment living room. There are good reasons for this. A large body of evidence indicates that human beings tend to respond positively to natural environments: roughly speaking, contact with nature is good for us. Indeed, according to the 'biophilia' hypothesis first advanced by biologist E.O. Wilson, the love of nature is *innate*, a product of our evolutionary heritage. Interestingly, some of the evidence originally cited in favor of this theory concerns human landscape preferences, namely that people seem generally to prefer environments resembling the African savanna in which much of our evolutionary history transpired: a good view of wide grassy expanses punctuated by trees and perhaps some water. Central Park, perhaps not coincidentally, resembles an idealized savanna habitat.[4]

Now before laying out further evidence for biophilia, I should immediately head off a nest of worries that such claims tend to provoke. The term 'biophilia' may be less than ideal: it strictly concerns an attraction to *living* things, though much of the appeal of nature relates to nonliving things (the sea, the sky, stars, mountains, streams…).[5] It can also seem romantic, obscuring the ways in which nature frightens (biophobia) and disgusts us. But it is no part of biophilia theory that people are primed to love *everything* in nature: what you most love can also be the source of your greatest pains. Strictly speaking, it is not nature per se that benefits us, but certain aspects of the natural world. The evolutionary claim associated with biophilia generates further controversies that needn't detain us here: what matters for practical purposes is that people benefit from contact with nature.[6] The evolutionary story is relevant only insofar as it lends this idea some plausibility. Note that the idea that biophilia is innate is sometimes taken by critics to imply a kind of biological determinism. It does not: Wilson himself refers to it as a kind of "biased" or "prepared" learning, whereby humans are biased to acquire an affinity for nature. Whether any given individual actually does so, and what precise shape it takes, may depend on the person's environment.[7] (That said, it is a good question whether anyone, ever, has exhibited a preference for environments thoroughly stripped of all signs of nature: no greenery, no animals, no sun, no stars, no sky, no fresh breeze…).

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[3] Olmsted 1993.

[4] Wilson 1984. This feature of Central Park is explicitly noted by Ulrich 1995, which also includes a good overview of biophilia theory in relation to viewing natural landscapes.

[5] It is somewhat misleading, then, to speak of natural environments as "green," as I often do here. "Green spaces," in the relevant sense, need not be green. My personal favorites tend rather to be wet.

[6] Strictly speaking, certain kinds of contact with nature. Sharks, tornados, etc. excepted.

[7] Wilson 1984, pp. 106-9. See also Ulrich 1995, pp. 75-77 for a useful discussion of "prepared learning".

Some readers will wonder what 'nature' means anyway. Is the human realm supernatural? If beaver dams count as part of nature, then why don't human constructions? The notion of nature at work here is indeed vague, and should be regarded as a crude placeholder for some more precisely articulated notion to be revealed through further research. We clearly respond differently to what are intuitively natural versus human environments: there is some distinction to be made here. Perhaps, in the end, we can produce the psychological benefits of nature via carefully crafted artificial environments, so that it is not 'nature' per se that we respond to, but a certain range of perceptual cues. This seems to me unlikely, however.[8]

3.2 The evidence: a sampler

So what is the evidence that contact with nature benefits us? The literature here is surprisingly large, so I will only gesture at some of the more representative studies; this is not meant to be a comprehensive literature review. To simplify, I will focus on psychological benefits such as increased happiness or otherwise improved psychological functioning, setting aside other ways in which nature experiences can benefit us: for instance, offering deeply *meaningful* forms of engagement with matters of independent worth,[9] the added *perspective* it can bring toward human life, the cultivation of *virtues* like modesty, humility or wonder, or the *aesthetic* goods of contemplating beauty.[10] I will not commit to any particular conception of happiness here, but use the term broadly to refer to matters of subjective wellbeing, particularly emotional wellbeing.[11]

Much of the literature directly addressing questions of benefit concerns the impact of nature exposures on health. While not directly relevant to questions of happiness, the observed health benefits are plausibly mediated by, or at least associated with, greater emotional wellbeing (stress reduction, etc.). Perhaps the best-known study of this sort, published in *Science* in 1984, found that gallbladder surgery patients randomly assigned to rooms with a window view of a natural setting (i.e., some trees) had significantly shorter hospital stays (7.96 versus 8.7 days post-op), fewer negative comments about their condition recorded by nurses, fewer minor complications, and had a lower need for painkillers than patients whose windows faced a brown brick wall.[12] Similarly, a study of Michigan prisoners randomly assigned to cells

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[8] There is reason to doubt that recognizably artificial environments can reproduce the full benefits of nature exposure (see, e.g., Kahn, Severson *et al.* 2009, Kjellgren and Buhrkall 2010; thanks to an anonymous referee for these references). But it may be that lively urban environments like Manhattan are gratifying precisely because they share certain perceptual features with natural environments. If nothing else, they are much more stimulating and visually interesting than simplified, predictable suburban communities.

[9] This seems to me a very important benefit of nature, one that cannot easily, if at all, be reproduced by artificial means. A helpful illustration of the way this might be valuable is Darwall's "Aristotelian thesis," in which a central part of the good life involves appreciative engagement with matters of independent value (Darwall 2002).

[10] I also set aside an interesting body of research on the benefits of "connectedness with nature" or "nature-relatedness" (e.g., Mayer and Frantz 2004, Nisbet, Zelenski *et al.* 2010). This literature mainly assesses the wellbeing impacts of people's *attitudes* to, and general sense of connection with, the environment. But the benefits of, say, valuing nature are quite distinct from the benefits of *experiencing* nature. You might feel a kinship with nature, or value its preservation, without actually having much experience of it (cynics might quip that the latter actually promotes the former). Similarly, the finding that *valuing* material success may reduce happiness has little or no bearing on whether material success *itself* reduces happiness (Kasser 2002).

[11] I defend an emotional state theory of happiness in Haybron 2005 and Haybron 2008.

[12] Ulrich 1984. Some of the studies I discuss, including this one, could fairly be criticized on one or another count. This study, e.g., only had 46 patients. But most of the effects discussed here have been confirmed by multiple studies, so not much hangs on any particular study. For a good but slightly dated review of research on the health and psychological benefits of nature exposure, see Frumkin 2001. An excellent popular discussion of this literature appears in Louv 2008.

facing either the prison courtyard or rolling farmland found a 24% higher rate of sick calls among those whose cells faced inward, toward the prison yard.[13]

Other studies directly assess anxiety and stress responses, as well as behavioral impacts of nature. Dental patients, for instance, reported less anxiety and had lower blood pressure when a mural of a nature scene was hung in the waiting room than on days when it was removed.[14] Immersive nature experiences have been found to increase participants' valuing of 'intrinsic' versus 'extrinsic' aspirations—meaning, roughly, that people seem to become less materialistic and more caring and concerned with inherently rewarding activities when engaged with the natural world.[15]

Cognitive functioning also appears to improve through nature experiences. Performance on tasks like proofreading seems to improve from viewing nature scenes, as does attention, alertness, and focus.[16] Similarly, children with attention deficit disorder (ADD) focus better, and otherwise show diminished symptoms, following nature-related activities such as camping.[17]

Camping and other immersive activities seem, unsurprisingly, to do more good than does merely having a view of a natural setting. 'Horticultural therapy', for instance—gardening—appears to be useful in helping various populations, including prisoners and psychiatric and cardiac patients.[18] (One observer reports that gardening in a prison has a "strangely soothing effect" on the prisoners, making "pacifists of potential battlers."[19]) Similarly, wilderness experiences have been used to treat a variety of problems, medical and otherwise. Inner-city children, for instance, reported greater wellbeing and self-esteem after attending a rural camp.[20] Healthy adults who took part in 2 to 4 week wilderness experience programs reported "an increased sense of aliveness, well-being, and energy."[21] In fact a heightened sense of vitality, energy, or 'feeling alive' appears to be quite common among those who engage with nature, as well as improved recovery from fatigue.[22]

Note that even a weeks-long wilderness program is unlikely to reproduce the psychic impact of living close to the land full-time, as humans did for most of their history. Truly to become fully engaged with a natural environment arguably takes months or years. Even those well-acquainted with the local landscape and wildlife may take weeks to fully adjust after being away for very long. Reproducing that experience in a representative sample of the population would not be a trivial task. I will present further evidence of the benefits of nature below, in Section 4.6.

4. The architecture of happiness[23]

Suppose nature does make us happier. What follows? The obvious take-home is that we, as individuals, should bear that fact in mind when deciding what to do. We could consider

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[13] Moore 1981.

[14] Heerwagen 1990.

[15] Weinstein, Przybylski *et al.* 2009.

[16] Hartig, Mang *et al.* 1991, Cimprich and Ronis 2003, Berman, Jonides *et al.* 2008, Kaplan and Berman 2010.

[17] Faber Taylor, Kuo *et al.* 2001, Kuo and Faber Taylor 2004, Faber Taylor and Kuo 2009.

[18] For references, see Frumkin 2001.

[19] Neese 1959, cited in Frumkin 2001, p. 236.

[20] Readdick and Schaller 2005.

[21] Greenway 1995, cited in Frumkin and Louv 2009, p. 3. See also Ryan, Weinstein *et al.* 2010.

[22] Ryan, Weinstein *et al.* 2010

[23] With a tip of the hat to De Botton 2008, though I use 'architecture' more broadly, to refer to the social and physical structure of our environment.

spending more time in parks and other green spaces, or even moving someplace where we'll find more contact with the natural world.

I want to suggest something a bit more radical than that: Not that we should go back to living in the trees. Rather, I suggest that the overwhelming focus in our culture on what *individuals* can do to make themselves happier is a mistake. There are several reasons for this.

4.1 The collective pursuit of happiness

For starters, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that individuals can't make parks, though this rather unremarkable fact gets remarkably little attention in the literature on happiness. Parks are a paradigm case of public goods, along with clean air, national defense, and many other good things that typically require collective action to secure. Some of these things are very important to happiness. Relationships, and social capital more generally, are widely thought to be the *most* important source of happiness, but there is only so much one person can to do secure them.[24] It takes a village, as they say, to make a village. You can go sit on your porch, but it won't do you much good if no one stops to chat. If your friends are too busy to play, or you're just tired of making calls to track one down, you get to stay home and watch TV. Some things, perhaps most things worth having, people need to work out together. Central Park was one of them: had forward-thinking citizens and planners not made a point of setting aside a huge swath of real estate for a public green space—in the process limiting individuals' freedom to use that land as they saw fit—there would be no park in which to seek one's happiness. And it would be a lot harder for many people to follow the advice to give themselves a bit of nature.

So while I have emphasized the importance of place for happiness in this paper, places like Central Park need people to make them happen, and even good-old-fashioned nature often requires human effort to preserve. The happiness generated by Central Park is a product not simply of geography but of human choice, notably the inspired choices of landscape architects Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux, not to mention the many people whose efforts have sustained the park over the years. Happiness is indeed being pursued here, but the endeavor is not so much about 'me' as we tend to suppose, and more about 'we,' and 'thou.' To a considerable degree, we pursue happiness together, and for each other.[25]

4.2 Underconsuming nature

Context matters for another reason: people don't always choose well. How wisely we choose may depend substantially on whether we live in the right sort of environment. There is good reason to think people systematically underconsume nature, for example: we avail ourselves of it too little given the magnitude of its benefits to us. The biophilia literature suggests one reason for this: we benefit more from exposure to the natural environment than we realize. Everyone knows that it's pleasant, but few realize just how extensive its psychic impact is, much of it potent but subtle and easily overlooked. And even when we know it will be good for us, we often forgo opportunities to partake. During my summer living by Central Park, I spent far too little time there, inexplicably choosing more often than not to work in my dark little walk-down instead of Strawberry Field. I suppose the few minutes' walk was just too much aggravation; easier just to remain on the couch. There is no question the days would have been more pleasant, and myself happier, had I taken every opportunity to work in the park. And yet I did not.

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[24] See Helliwell and Putnam 2004, Helliwell, Barrington-Leigh *et al.* 2010.

[25] See also Thin forthcoming–2012.

There is a new development in one of the outer suburbs of St. Louis. In fact, there are *many* new developments in the outer suburbs and flood plains of St. Louis. Should you venture out to one of them, you will know you've arrived when you find (a) a proliferation of streets named for trees, and (b) few if any actual trees. You see, most housing built in the United States in the last couple of decades sits on land largely bereft of arboreal matter. A smattering of runty little shrubs, perhaps, but, for the most part, curiously uncontaminated by trees. I suppose it saves developers a little money, not having to work around trees, but really I don't know why this is: for whatever reason, builders seem to mow down every tree in sight before laying down a new homestead. Evidently wise to the strangeness of this arrangement, they frequently compensate by putting trees in the street names. 'Pine Crest': no pines, you can be sure (and probably a gully). 'Oak Lane': nary an acorn in sight.

Down one of these treeless-streets-named-for-trees, at some remove from any other sign of civilization—or nature—you will find a barren cul-de-sac circled by some very large, very nice houses. Not entirely barren, actually: one of those homes boasts, in its back yard, three very tall, perfectly formed coconut trees. In St. Louis? Turns out they're made of metal. These are not inexpensive homes, mind you, and they are chock full of widescreen plasma TVs. The owners have plenty of money. Yet smart people with lots of options regularly choose, quite freely, to buy them, treeless yards and all. If people were willing to spend even a small sum for trees— say, the cost of another plasma TV—then builders would, I suspect, refrain from chopping them all down. But apparently homebuyers don't figure trees into the equation.

Just a matter of taste? Not likely. People who already have trees on their property typically quite like them, and will spend considerable sums to keep them healthy. A good shade tree over your deck is worth at least a plasma TV. And those streets have woodsy names for a reason. In all likelihood, it just doesn't occur to most homebuyers that trees make a house more desirable. It took many years before even I, who gets paid to notice such things, realized that my vague sense of disgust at new housing developments owed mainly to the lack of trees, and that good trees add a lot to a home. The failure to figure trees into the home-buying equation is quite understandable, but a mistake nonetheless.[26] Not wise to what they might be missing, homebuyers don't look for it. And so they settle down to consume their plasma entertainments in the cavernous abodes of Tin Palms.

4.3 Why needs can outstrip motivation

I've been suggesting that people might systematically fail to choose what's good for them—in particular, that people might fail to choose nature in proportion to its benefits. You might think this implausible: if human beings really benefit so much from contact with nature, wouldn't we have desires to match? And if we're going to trade in evolutionary arguments, here's one: if we evolved an affinity for nature, wouldn't that include commensurate *motivation* to seek out nature? In general, you might think, it isn't adaptive for human wellbeing to depend on things that we don't really want. If we didn't want to eat, we'd do very badly indeed.

Call this idea the *needs-motives congruency thesis* (NMCT): people's motives will tend to reflect what's good for them, or at least what they need.[27] Even if people don't actually *need* contact with nature—which I doubt—one might expect NMCT to apply to an allegedly innate tendency like biophilia. In fact it need not, and there's no reason to think NMCT holds as a

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[26] I am not suggesting that any particular home purchase is a mistake. The mistake is when people give too little weight to the value that trees add to a home when making the decision. But giving trees due weight is, of course, consistent with buying a treeless home.

[27] I previously discussed this issue in Haybron 2008.

general principle. The reason is simple: there's no selection pressure to desire some benefit if there's nothing the organism can do to make its possession more likely. Early humans who strongly craved connection with the natural world would likely have fared no better than those who did not, for the simple reason that there was nowhere else to go. Similarly, there's good reason to think human immune systems need copious exposure, from an early age, to germs; the exposure helps train them up, and those lacking it are more vulnerable to allergies, asthma, and other diseases.[28] Humans need dirt, basically, but don't particularly desire it. Why? Our ancestors, presumably, had plenty enough of it; they were filthy. Your choices were Pigpen, and Pigpen. By contrast, those among them who craved fats and sweets *were* clearly better off: such things were scarce but lavish sources of energy, and the more you could get, the better. So we crave fats and sweets. And that's probably why I ended up making more trips to that ice cream shop than to Central Park, even though I am, and was, pretty sure the latter would have done me a lot more good.

4.4 Context shapes us

> No one who has closely observed the conduct of the people who visit the Park, can doubt that it exercises a distinctly harmonizing and refining influence upon the most unfortunate and most lawless classes of the city—an influence favorable to courtesy, self-control, and temperance.
>
> —Frederick Law Olmsted[29]

> Every human being responds to a connection with nature… People of all kinds love something beautiful and will talk to each other when they see it. They change the way they behave. It changes the way they feel about themselves and each other.
>
> —Lynden Miller[30]

Context matters for a third reason: it shapes our mental lives, and with them our behavior. To a surprising extent, the choices you make depend on the environment in which you make them. Not simply because you include information about the context in your deliberations, though. It's also because the context helps make the deliberator.

Olmsted and Miller observe this about Central Park, and doubtless many readers have noticed this too. New Yorkers take on a different demeanor in the park: quicker to laugh, easier to smile, more open, friendly, and loose. They slow down, soften. They even listen. (Something I wish they would do in expensive concert halls.) Watch or listen to Paul Simon's *Concert in the Park,* or the Simon and Garfunkel version, and you sense New Yorkers at their best. No doubt someone in the crowd got testy, but it's not easy to picture. You get the sense of a hundred thousand souls *connecting* with each other, and it is not just the music: the setting is key. A Times Square performance would not have been the same. This is one of the great compensations of an afternoon in the park: you don't just get a rewarding taste of nature; you, yourself, undergo a transformation of consciousness and personality. You soften, and open up both to the natural surrounds and to the now less-strange strangers around you. It is easier to

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[28] This is the "hygiene hypothesis." For a review, see Sheikh and Strachan 2004.
[29] Olmsted and Sutton 1997, p. 96.
[30] "Garden designer Lynden Miller says a healthy city needs beautiful parks," by Sarah Goodyear, *Grist,* November 12, 2010.

connect, or at least feel a connection, with fellow New Yorkers in the park, and as a result you get a welcome respite from the relative loneliness and alienation that often attends city life.

We have always known that human beings are sensitive to their environment. But recent work in psychology suggests that we are far more sensitive than most people realize. The traditional story of human nature in the modern West—call it *individualism*—paints us as rational, autonomous, agents who properly direct our lives through conscious decision. And thus do we respond to our surrounds: we observe what goes on around us and take that information into account. But the conscious, reasoning self calls the shots. At least ideally, individuals are strongly self-determining.

Not all cultures have seen us this way, however, and growing numbers of researchers are beginning to doubt this picture too. Let's call the contrasting view of human agency and wellbeing *contextualism*.[31] Roughly speaking, contextualists maintain that people's lives tend to go best when they are, to a significant extent, shaped by their social and environmental context. In short, people live better given some mix of constraints and assists. Individualists, by contrast, think human lives go best when individuals, as much as possible, determine the shape of their lives. Individualism and contextualism are typically motivated by very different views of human psychological functioning. In particular, individualists normally see autonomous, conscious decision-making as the healthy norm for human action. Whereas contextualists tend to regard much of what we do as quite fittingly shaped by our circumstances, in ways that often bypass conscious choice. For the contextualist, then, the good life will depend substantially on living in the right sort of environment—one that conduces to good choices and otherwise nourishes us. Individualists take the good life to be fundamentally an individual matter, dependent on whether people choose wisely, and perhaps also on whether people have the options to live as they wish. Environments are important, of course—it is better to live in Italy than North Korea—but only because a poor environment can get in the way of the individual's living as she freely chooses.

To an individualist, then, Central Park is a good thing because it gives people something they want. In economists' terms, it is a commodity that individuals can choose, or not, to consume. And when in the park, what people do will depend on their preferences, their deliberations, their personalities.

I am suggesting that individualism—the usual way of looking at things—badly understates the impact of our environment on our psyches. A place like Central Park, for instance, doesn't just satisfy our preferences; it shapes them. It is not simply a venue for making choices; it influences the choice-making process itself, substantially below the radar of consciousness. And it is good, in part, because it makes us better choosers. Indeed, it has a multitude of salutary effects on our functioning more broadly, making us more perceptive, sensitive, and so forth. As well, it benefits us independently of our choices: it makes us happier, even if we don't realize that it does. It gives us something we may not know is good for us. At least, many contexts are like this; while the evidence on Central Park itself is largely anecdotal, the power of situations to influence our functioning in these ways is well-established. It would be surprising, and certainly contrary to my own experience, if Central Park lacked this power.

4.5 The evidence for contextualism

These are, clearly, large issues. Here I can only hope to gesture very broadly at the research favoring contextualism. There are roughly two bodies of literature here, the most important of

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[31] For further discussion of the individualism/contextualism distinction, see Haybron 2008.

which is *situationist* research in social psychology.[32] You may already know something of this literature if, say, you've heard of the infamous Milgram obedience experiments, where ordinary citizens were easily gotten to shock innocent test-takers, as far as they could tell, to death. (The shocks, and their effects, were fake.) In this case, a bad situation caused people to violate their most cherished values for trivial reasons. A similar study put college students in a simulated prison, whereupon they promptly adopted the manner of beasts—so rapidly and disturbingly that the experiment had to be terminated early. (The atrocities at Abu Ghraib were entirely predictable to anyone having a passing acquaintance with this research.) Other studies have found that whether people help someone in need is strongly influenced by such weighty matters as: whether they found a dime in a pay phone; whether other people are in the vicinity; whether they just unscrambled words related to helpfulness; whether a lawnmower was running nearby; and so on.[33] Merely exposed to *words* related to the elderly, people's memory gets worse and they walk more slowly. Disturbingly, subliminal exposure to pictures of African-American men causes white people to get angrier when their computer subsequently crashes.[34] Whether people save for retirement often depends on what the default option was on their employment paperwork: if they have to check a box to save, they won't; but if they don't, they will.[35] And recent work on social networks suggests that many behaviors and feelings ripple through the population like viruses: if you become obese, get divorced, or grow happier, chances are significantly greater that your friends will, too—and *their* friends, and so on.[36]

The litany of results goes on, but the idea should be plain enough: human beings are extraordinarily sensitive to their environment, so that even tiny situational cues can have large effects on what they do and how they feel. And if even trivial manipulations can strongly impact our behavior, one can imagine the influence that the myriad facets of our physical and social environments have on us. The juiciest studies concern *bad* influences, so many people wrongly take the moral to be that situations are threats to good choice: we must learn to resist them. But situations can *help* just as easily as they hurt. Good situations inspire firefighters and soldiers to feats of heroism; entire villages to risk their lives to help the innocent, as happened in France when Le Chambon rescued thousands of Jewish refugees from the Holocaust; and ordinary folks to save more, eat better, exercise more, and lead happier lives. Central Park is a good situation.

The other line of research helps explain why situations are so important.[37] Specifically, the mistakes noted earlier: a vast body of work shows that human beings are systematically prone to make poor choices in many situations. Let's call these tendencies 'biases,' though I'm not sure all of them can strictly be considered biases (as when our memories are just lousy, but in no particular direction). We put too much weight on losses versus gains; we irrationally favor the status quo; we ignore base rates when estimating probabilities; we are overconfident and

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[32] Actually, there are three, the third being research on automaticity or "dual process" psychology, which indicates that we have less control over our behavior than we tend to think (Haybron 2008). But this work is mainly relevant insofar as it relates to situationism and mistakes, and for brevity and simplicity I omit it here.

[33] For reviews of the situationist literature discussed to this point, see Doris 2002 and Ross and Nisbett 1991. While situationism is often associated with a controversial skepticism about personality or character traits, my arguments here do not require that strong view, and are compatible with a robust role for personality variables.

[34] For reviews of these and other automaticity findings, see Doris 2009, Bargh and Chartrand 1999, and Hassin, Uleman *et al.* 2005.

[35] Thaler and Sunstein 2008.

[36] Fowler and Christakis 2008. Christakis and Fowler 2007, McDermott, Christakis *et al.* 2009, Christakis, Fowler *et al.* 2009.

[37] The automaticity literature is also crucial here.

overly optimistic about our futures, and generally think too highly of ourselves; we overestimate the impact of many events on our happiness; our choices irrationally favor 'hard' or quantifiable values over intangibles, even when we consider the 'soft' values more important; we discount our own futures at an insanely steep rate; again, the list could go on for some time.[38]

I don't suppose anyone needs convincing of this in the wake of our recent financial mass suicide attempt, but people make *lots* of mistakes. We make lots of choices that, by our own lights, are lousy. These mistakes have consequences: think divorce rates, poorly chosen careers, foreclosures, bankruptcies, overeating, under-exercising, meagre savings, credit card debt, underinsurance, and countless hours in front of the television (I have met very few people who actually *want* to be couch potatoes; they just, as it were, fall into it). Some of this is just bad luck, but a lot of it is error—predictable error. Many economists have been skeptical about such worries, arguing that people are still mostly rational and prudent. Well, yes, that has to be true: imagine what would happen if we were complete buffoons, paying more for the rotten apple than the fresh one, searching for the most expensive gas station we can find, and buying all our clothes the wrong size. We'd starve. But the whole point of Greek tragedy is precisely how few mistakes it takes to ruin your life. Just one will do. The perfectly rational *Homo economicus* could well be a close approximation to a stupendously imprudent creature.

One reason situations are important, then, is that they can either ameliorate, or exacerbate, our tendencies to make mistakes. (As in the default option bias noted above.) This point, mostly lost on contemporary Western culture, has been obvious to almost every society in human history, where considerable effort has gone into developing social institutions that foster good behavior, and discourage bad. Sometimes this works through coercion or rational persuasion, but more often it takes the form of myriad 'nudges' that simply make certain choices, and certain ways of living, come naturally to people. Think French vs. American eating habits: the French eat fattier foods yet are thinner and live longer. To live in France is to be embedded in an encompassing food culture where eating well is easy, indeed a tremendous source of pleasure. To live in the United States, where the culture follows the tenets of laissez-faire individualism, is to be embedded in an anything-goes food culture where staying healthy requires a constant battle between willpower and appetite. Instructively, willpower regularly loses: one third of America's youth may well become, not just overweight, but *diabetic*.[39] (Where I live, doctors sometimes refer to obesity as 'Missouri medium'.)

Taken together, the research on situationism and biases seems to me highly damaging for individualistic views of human agency and wellbeing. Individualists, including many economists, will argue that these effects are mere 'anomalies' afflicting a species for whom conscious, rational deliberation, and a strong form of self-determination, are the healthy norms. They could be right. But I would suggest that a broad shift in our picture of human nature is under way: situation-sensitivity and biases aren't regrettable limitations or anomalies, and they aren't 'bugs.' They are core features of human psychology, and central aspects of healthy human functioning.[40] Situation-sensitivity does give us Milgram, yes, but it also gives us Le Chambon. Indeed it may be what makes human society possible: for a social species, you want individuals to be highly sensitive to context, rapidly and automatically adjusting themselves in response to the myriad social cues that surround them. You want people to fit in and get along,

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[38] Accessible reviews of this literature appear in Gilbert 2006, Thaler and Sunstein 2008, Ubel 2009, Trout 2009 and Schwartz 2004. A more academic, but fairly comprehensive, review appears in Haybron 2008.

[39] Boyle, Thompson *et al.* 2010.

[40] See Haybron 2008, chapters. 11-12.

and a race of individuals who do so only when they calculate that it serves their purposes is not likely to do a very good job of it.

And for a hunter species whose survival originally depended on adeptly navigating the natural world, conscious deliberation would likely be a very crude, clumsy tool for many purposes. You want individuals who automatically attune themselves to their environment, responding to the blizzard of information with sensitivity, discernment, and speed. Considering how different the demands of this environment are from those of social life, it would make good sense for the transition between the social and natural worlds to automatically trigger a cascade of psychological changes. Here is Michael Pollan's description of his first attempt at hunting:

> Nothing in my experience has prepared me for the quality of this attention. I notice how the day's first breezes comb the needles in the pines, producing a sotto voce whistle and an undulation in the pattern of light and shadow tattooing the tree trunks and the ground. I notice the specific density of the air. But this is not a passive or aesthetic attention; it is a hungry attention, reaching out into its surroundings like fingers, or nerves. My eyes venture deep into thickets my body could never penetrate, picking their way among the tangled branches, sliding over rocks and around stumps to bring back the slenderest hint of movement. In the places too deeply shadowed to admit my eyes, my ears roam at will, returning with the report of a branch cracking at the bottom of a ravine, or the snuffling of a…wait: what was that? Just a bird. Everything is amplified. Even my skin is alert, so that when the shadow launched by the sudden ascent of a turkey vulture passes overhead I swear I can feel the temperature momentarily fall. I am the alert man.[41]

Pollan later notes that "it was as if I'd dialled up the gain on all my senses," a sharp contrast he likened to "putting on glasses with a strong new prescription for the first time."[42] His hunting mentor confirms that this observation about "hunter's eye" was quite typical. He continues, "so much sensory information was coming into my head that it seemed to push out the normal buzz of consciousness. The state felt very much like meditation."[43]

Such is the power of context. While toting a .30-06 through Central Park is probably not a good idea, it is not implausible that any time spent in natural environments would trigger wide-ranging psychological changes. The contextualist moral to all this is that, in thinking about human wellbeing, we need to move beyond the typical focus on what individuals can do to make themselves happier. We need to attend closely to the social and environmental context in which people spend their lives, and how that influences their psychologies and behavior. We need to take seriously the architecture of happiness.

4.6 Greening the architecture of happiness

What does Central Park tell us about the architecture of happiness? At least, that accessible green spaces are a good thing, not just for the nature experiences they offer but for the social leavening they provide. The question arises, however, whether mere parks are enough: the psychic impact of time in the park appears to last for some time after you leave; and it would not be surprising if that benefit proved to be somewhat contagious, passing even to those who

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[41] Pollan 2007, pp. 334-5.
[42] Pollan 2007, p. 341.
[43] Pollan 2007, p. 341.

never went. But parks rarely occupy a very sizeable fraction of people's time, and our minimal exposure to parks can only do so much to make us happier.[44] The question, then, is whether social planning can do more to 'spread the wealth' of contact with nature: can we design green urban environments that offer more continual exposure to nature, even if only in small doses? Can the natural world be part of the fabric of our everyday lives, including the majority of our workdays? Obviously we can't all live in the wilderness. But perhaps smaller steps can be made that would do us all good, spreading a little bit of Central Park throughout our daily environs, and thus, we can hope, promoting happiness and social connection.[45] New buildings might incorporate substantial greenery, for instance. And housing construction might transition from low-density treeless suburbs, which isolate residents both from nature and each other, to higher-density communities with abundant shared green space—friendlier to wildlife, healthy child play, and connecting with our neighbors.[46] Someday, today's synthetic gray office cubicles may be regarded with puzzlement and disgust, the relics of a benighted era.

There is some fairly direct evidence that such measures would yield tangible benefits.[47] A simple expedient like introducing plants to the office, for instance, may reduce blood pressure while increasing efficiency and perceived attentiveness among workers.[48] We already noted, similarly, the effects of a window view on hospital patients and prison inmates. On a larger scale, two large epidemiological studies in the Netherlands found proximity to green space to be a significant predictor of health, even controlling for obvious factors like age and socioeconomic status.[49] Other studies have found that stress declines among residents the closer they live to green spaces, again controlling for obvious factors.[50] The effects are strongest for people who spend the most time near their residences, like the elderly, housewives, and poorer residents. As well, they seem to be substantially due to psychological benefits from nature exposure, rather than just mediated by physical exercise. Interestingly, frequency of use of green spaces does not fully account for the impact. Perhaps people benefit just from seeing or even knowing about them, or maybe they gain indirectly, through their neighbors.

Let me cite just one more study, or rather series of studies, concerning the Robert Taylor Homes, a low-income housing project in Chicago.[51] Here, twenty-eight buildings arrayed over three miles housed thousands of residents randomly assigned to apartments. Some of them

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[44] New Yorkers are not known for their sunny dispositions, Central Park notwithstanding (e.g., Oswald and Wu 2010).

[45] There is in fact a minor industry of architecture and urban planning devoted to just such questions. See, e.g., Kellert 2005, Kellert, Heerwagen *et al.* 2008.

[46] No doubt one reason for the popularity of sprawling suburbs is the relatively plentiful greenery, so the problem is less acute there than in cities. Yet neatly manicured lawns, particularly those without decent trees, may be so transparently artificial that they fail to yield many of the benefits of less tightly managed spaces. (It would be interesting to see a study of wellbeing among suburbanites whose yards are barely distinguishable from astroturf versus those with much "wilder" properties.) As well, private yards don't bring people together in natural environs the way parks do.

[47] For reviews, see Matsuoka and Sullivan 2011 and Sullivan and Chang in press.

[48] Lohr, Pearson-Mims *et al.* 1996. There is some question, however, about how robust these effects are; see Bringslimark, Hartig *et al.* 2009.

[49] De Vries, Verheij *et al.* 2003, Maas, Verheij *et al.* 2006, Maas, Verheij *et al.* 2009.

[50] Grahn and Stigsdotter 2003, Nielsen and Hansen 2007.

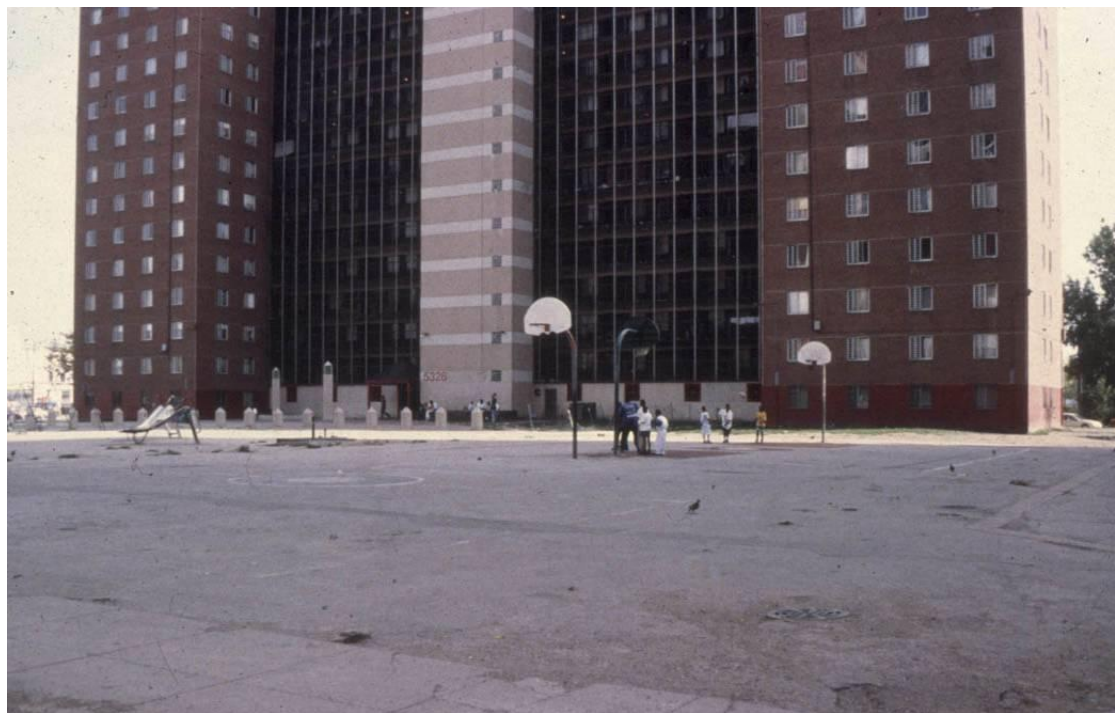[51] See Kuo 2001, Faber Taylor, Kuo and Sullivan 2002, Kuo and Sullivan 2001a, Kuo and Sullivan 2001b. For an accessible discussion, see Frumkin and Louv 2007.

faced trees, grass, and other vegetation, like that pictured here:[52]

© William Sullivan

Other apartments faced, well, something like this charming vista:

© William Sullivan

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[52] Photographs by William Sullivan; used with kind permission.

In essence, we have a big experiment in Green versus Gray Manhattan, except that the differences are smaller: nobody enjoyed a Central Park in the vicinity, while everyone had access to some greenery. What did they find? 'Green' apartment dwellers were significantly more likely to know their neighbors, socialize or even know people within their building, acknowledge or help each other, and significantly less likely to engage in a wide range of aggressive behaviors against their partners. For instance, nearly half of the 'Grays' employed "severe violence" against their partners within the past year, while only (!) thirty-one percent of Greens did.[53] As well, Greens procrastinated less, saw their problems as less severe, had better coping skills and self-discipline, and—obviously—had better relationships and committed fewer crimes. These are not effete nature-lovers, note, but hard people leading hard lives. It would not be surprising if most of them had no idea the greenery made any difference to their wellbeing—a nice frill, perhaps, but nothing important. And it would be very surprising if many of the residents fully recognized how much they could benefit from even the barest whiff of nature. In fact, only seven percent of participants mentioned anything remotely related to vegetation when asked what they looked for in a place to live, and only one participant said that a 'natural setting' was important. Like the citizens of Tin Palms, they probably underestimate the value of contact with the natural world.[54] Look at that second picture. Kind of makes you want to hit someone, doesn't it? In an interview, investigator Frances Kuo reported, "Without vegetation, people are very different beings."[55]

I suspect many people would agree that nature is good for us, but regard it as merely a question of optimizing: if not a luxury, then pretty far down the list of social desirables. I would conjecture that it is more a matter of maintaining our sanity.[56]

5. Conclusion

While the immediate lesson of Central Park is that people could benefit from greater connection with nature, there is a broader moral to the story: the pursuit of happiness is not simply an individual affair. This is not to deny the power of individual prudence: we can exert tremendous control over our own happiness, perhaps the best example of this being Buddhist training.[57] But even Buddhist practice arguably embodies contextualist insights: beginning meditators are advised to practice in formal group settings—at least partly, it seems, because such settings make it easier to take up the discipline; it takes less willpower. Moreover, Buddhist monasteries tend not to be located in dark, filthy basements, though the real estate might be cheaper. Settings and rituals create a suggestive context that conduces to the right mindset. Progress is made, not simply through individual agency, but through agency as shaped by context.

Consider the likelihood of Americans taking up meditation en masse. Even if every citizen were given a manual, and liked what they saw, the odds seem to me vanishingly small that more than a small proportion would, in the short run, commit to the practice. If widespread

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[53] Kuo and Sullivan 2001a, p. 556. The sample size was 145. "Severe violence" meant at least one of: kicked, bit, or hit with a fist; hit or tried to hit with something; beat up the other one; threatened with a knife or gun; used a knife or gun.

[54] True, they are poor: their responses are eminently understandable. But the results suggest they may, for all that, undervalue nature.

[55] In a documentary film, *The Forest Where We Live,* by Louisiana Public Broadcasting. Cited in Tina Prow, "The Power of Trees," *The Illinois Steward*, 7:4, Winter 1999.

[56] For a further example of how these are not merely the concerns of rich Westerners, consider the Brazilian city of Curitiba, which is well-known for making green space and environmental concerns a top priority.

[57] Ricard 2006.

meditation is to become a reality, it will need to become part of the culture, including institutions that create a setting in which meditating seems natural, and not unusual or weird. This could happen from the bottom-up, as forward-thinking individuals influence acquaintances to take up meditation and the practice spreads like a virus. Or it could happen from the top-down, for instance if the military were to incorporate meditation into training, sending many thousands of respected, mainstream meditators back into the culture.[58] Even for Buddhists, the pursuit of happiness is not typically something we undertake alone.

I will close by returning to the most obvious contextualist good: sociality. Human beings are *intensely* social animals. Some commentators, Aristotle included, have even likened us to bees and herd animals. Be that as it may, researchers generally agree that human relationships, both personal and communal, are the most important source of happiness. Social isolation is immensely destructive, as the fate of prisoners in solitary confinement—many of them go crazy—makes plain.[59] 'All you need is love,' though exaggerated, is close enough to the truth that it is trite even to mention it.

Let me venture a somewhat radical suggestion: short of securing vital physical needs like survival and freedom from severe pain, no gains in other goods could compensate for large decreases in our connections with other people. A society that creates mass social isolation in exchange for other goods that aren't vital needs is almost certainly making a grave mistake, and the happiness of its residents will be greatly compromised. Some contemporary societies, arguably, are doing just this. The basic worry is familiar enough, so I will offer just one data point: a large-scale epidemiological study in the United States finds that the average American can claim just *two* confidants—relatives or friends with whom they can discuss important matters. And a quarter of Americans have *none*.[60] These figures reflect a significant decline in social connection compared to results from twenty years prior. If you ran those numbers by the inhabitants of most societies through human history, I imagine a lot of jaws would drop. I submit that no quantity of plasma TVs, SUVs, iPods, luxury cruises, or inflatable shoes could make this a reasonable, or even sane, development. Surely this isn't the necessary price of antibiotics and a steady supply of food. If those numbers are correct, then we are very likely talking about a profoundly sick society.[61]

This is not a problem individuals can solve on their own, and giving people still more choices is not going to make it go away. Indeed, part of the problem may be that we have so many options, many of which don't require other people. Perhaps the problem is insoluble, one of the unavoidable discontents of civilization. But I don't think so: even today, in some corners of the modern world, there remain places where friendship and neighborly affection are abundant, where evenings are passed in the company of friends and not a glowing screen, where music is something people make together and don't merely consume through headphones, and where being 'grounded' might constitute a meaningful punishment for a

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[58] My Buddhist friends might well shudder at such an idea, which probably isn't particularly faithful to Buddhism. But it could well do a lot of good, reducing both atrocities and psychological trauma among soldiers. In any event, meditative practice need not be embedded in Buddhist doctrine.

[59] Smith 2006. See also Cacioppo, Hawkley *et al.* 2003, Cacioppo and Hawkley 2009, Miller 2011.

[60] McPherson, Lovin-Smith *et al.* 2006.

[61] It may be objected that most people are in fact happy, so there can't be much of a problem here. I've argued at length elsewhere that people are probably a good deal less happy than much of the research seems to suggest (Haybron 2007, 2008). It is possible that a majority of people are happy, but we aren't currently in a position to say. Suffice it to say that rates of happiness are almost certainly lower than is often claimed, and rates of psychological distress are in some cases rather alarming. In any event, everyone agrees that the vast majority of people are less happy than they could be, and most researchers think it would be desirable for people to be happier.

child. They have TVs and all the rest, but they don't let the stuff get between the people. These places exist, not because they are pockets of specially wise individuals, but because the local landscape and culture make them possible. Front porches and walkable neighborhoods help,[62] as do trees and common green spaces. So do unspoken customs of time allocation: a simple expectation that you'll hang out when the day's work is done, or when a neighbor stops to say hello. More familiar markers of culture also play a role: a shared pool of songs everyone can sing, or norms against dining alone.

If you happen to live in such a place, and are blessed as well with green surrounds, you'll likely be a lot happier than if you reside in an anonymous, gray cityscape whose residents beat a daily retreat to their well-appointed isolation chambers. But you probably won't be able to claim credit for it.

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[62] Rogers, Halstead *et al.* 2010.

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Institutions as enablers of wellbeing: The Singapore Prison case study

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Abstract: Wellbeing research has long found a correlation between the subjective wellbeing of individuals and the quality of their private and public institutions. But which way do the causal arrows point, and what can be done to improve institutions? Only real-life experiments can answer these two questions convincingly.

Prisons are frequently considered schools for criminals rather than creators of wellbeing. Thus they provide a tough test for institutional changes intended to improve wellbeing. Since 1998 the Singapore Prison Service has converted its prisons into schools for life, thereby improving the lives of inmates, prison staff and the community at large. In so doing, the Prison Service exemplified five key lessons from subjective wellbeing research: the importance of social context, benevolence, trust, building positive outcomes, and top-to-bottom engagement in a shared purpose. By any measure, the results have been impressive, ranging from a one-third drop in recidivism to improved staff morale and better social connections between prisons and the rest of society.

Keywords: prisons, subjective wellbeing, subjective well-being, social capital, institutional reforms, quality of life, recidivism, community engagement, quality of government, felicitators

1. Introduction

Those who take subjective wellbeing seriously usually start asking, at some point, what can be done by individuals, families, neighbourhoods, organisations and nations to make lives better for themselves and others. This discussion usually centres at the level of the individual – what can individuals do, and how should they act, to produce better lives? The self-help literature tends to focus even more narrowly on what individuals can do to increase their own happiness. But the papers in this symposium instead describe felicitators – those whose ideas and actions increase the happiness of others. My own research has emphasized the social context of wellbeing, so I wished from the outset to find examples that demonstrate in real life some ways in which the social context can be altered to increase happiness. This paper illustrates how private and public institutions can change their structures or operations in ways that improve the social contexts in which people meet, move, work, play and live.

This paper illustrates five fundamental but often ignored results from wellbeing research, each of which refers to some aspect of the social context of wellbeing:

1) Process matters. How something is done matters even more to wellbeing than does what is actually done.

2) Benevolence is its own reward, but working together to do good things for others is a super-charged form of benevolence.

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3) People routinely under-estimate the extent to which others can be trusted, leading to declines in social engagement and weakening of social norms.

4) Individuals and institutions could improve wellbeing by building positive outcomes rather than merely repairing damage and avoiding risks.

5) Shared engagement trumps top-down.

There are many inspiring examples of building or reforming institutions to create better lives. For example, Greg Mortenson's celebrated efforts[1] to turn stones into schools (Mortenson 2009) illustrated the importance of bottom-up efforts, and the necessity and value of building trust one cup of tea at a time (Mortenson and Relin 2006). Especially in its emphasis on the time and listening it takes to build trust, and on the power of trust-driven local efforts to succeed in making fundamental changes, the story is inspirational and cautionary. BRAC[2] , a Bangladesh-based development agency, has shown how to raise material and subjective wellbeing together through mutual and effective engagement for a good purpose.

The Singapore Prison Service (SPS) reforms (Leong 2010) provide perhaps the most useful example, since they are not so widely known as the other examples. Facing all of the problems faced by prison systems throughout the world, Singapore's prison authorities took an amazingly broad approach focussed quite explicitly on the wellbeing of prisoners, staff, and community. They emphasized the building of connections and trust so as to combine prisoners, staff and the public in collaborative commitments to improve the lives of all. In the words of a case study presented to an intergovernmental meeting on new approaches to governance (Leong 2010, 11), "The case illustrates a government agency stepping beyond its traditional role of a guardian to that of a facilitator and enabler of change, first by clarifying the shared vision and purpose, and then creating channels, empowering and equipping its staff, other members of society, and even its beneficiaries to contribute". How different this is from the common view of prisons as social cesspits functioning primarily to punish criminals by incarceration while more often functioning as crime schools.

Reformed prisons that successfully exemplify key results from wellbeing research deserve to be described as Felicitators. If it is possible to show how the least tractable parts of public administration can be turned around dramatically, then the general case follows directly. If prison reforms can be shown to achieve not just conventionally measured success ratios but also to improve the lives of all whose interests usually clash in the management of criminal justice, then anything should be possible. Hence this paper spotlights the reforms of the Singapore Prison Service, making reference to other examples to help make the case that the Singapore successes can indeed be achieved in other institutions in other countries.

The paper proceeds by first describing five threads of wellbeing research that have special relevance to the paper. There follows a description of the main features of the Singapore reforms, showing how the reforms illustrate the main lines of wellbeing research to be outlined. There is also a short section surveying the limited amount of previous research linking

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[1] http://www.ikat.org/ The Central Asia Institute is the NGO established to provide an administrative framework for what was in the first instance 'One man's mission to promote peace one school at a time' – from the cover of *Three Cups of Tea* (Mortenson and Relin 2006). What is most striking about the book is the nature of the lessons learned, and later applied, by Greg Mortenson, a grateful mountain climber who had promised to return to help the villagers of Korphe.

[2] http://www.brac.net/ BRAC, formerly the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, has for almost four decades developed and applied a range of strategies to engage and enable the Bangladeshi poor and illiterate. It now operates in many countries.

subjective wellbeing research to the criminal justice system. The conclusion will attempt to assess the extent to which the Singapore experience offers ready lessons for others to follow.

2. Five strands of wellbeing research

When unravelling the social context of wellbeing, there are many ways of proceeding. This section lists a sample of relevant results under five different headings. Even together, these five points do not capture all the ways in which the social context matters for wellbeing. They were chosen instead with the aim of showing which elements of the social context were addressed by the reforms. The subsequent description of the reforms then shows how these principles were put into actions.

2.1 Process matters

Institutions often, and increasingly, focus on the attainment of specific outcomes, and are judged on what services they provide for those they serve. By contrast, research in subjective wellbeing suggests that much more depends on improving the social context than on the delivery of specific services. The best illustration of this, and one that dovetails nicely with the Singapore Prison reforms, is provided by the elder-care experiments of Knight, Haslam and Haslam (2010). When residents of an elder-care facility were being moved to a new building, the control group (the residents of the previously happier floor in the old facility) were given the best of professional designs for their new shared spaces, while the experimental group were invited to get together to make their own design decisions.[3] By both their own assessments and those of the staff, the members of the experimental group were significantly more satisfied with their lives, were healthier, and more socially engaged after the move to the social spaces that they had designed together. These improvements were large and statistically significant, compared either to their own previous lives or the lives of the control group[4]. The experimental group also used and enjoyed their new collaboratively designed shared spaces more than the control group used their professionally designed shared areas.

This experiment did not come out of the blue; rather, it was a full-scale example of an accumulating set of results showing that shared autonomy matters in elder-care facilities (e.g. Kasser and Ryan 1999), and that maintaining social ties and identities helps individuals and groups to adapt successfully to change (e.g. Haslam *et al.* 2005, 2008). But what is striking is that two groups, both receiving the same high level of empathetic care, should have such different wellbeing outcomes by means of a small, but nonetheless important, change in the way in which the care was delivered. No extra resources were required, just the forethought to recognize that the process can matter even more than the service itself[5].

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[3] "In addition to the provision of standard care, residents in the experimental (empowered) condition were…given the opportunity to make decisions about how to decorate their home's shared social spaces (i.e. the dining room, lounge and corridors). This involved selecting pictures and plants from a range of options. For this purpose, the residents took part in two formal meetings with the care-home managers, representatives of an interior landscaping company, and the researchers. Following these meetings, the residents were asked to make group decisions about the decor of the communal spaces in the new care home. At this point, the residents arranged their own formal and informal meetings to decide on the best designs. There was no interference in this process from the managers, care staff or researchers in relation to either aesthetic choices or spatial arrangement." (Knight *et al.* 2010, 1399).

[4] For example, the average reported life satisfaction of the experimental group rose from 4.6 before the move to 6.2 after the move. Before the move they were significantly less satisfied with their lives than were the control group, while after the move they were significantly more satisfied than the control group (Knight *et al.* 2010, 1404).

[5] See also Frey, Benz and Stutzer (2004).

2.2 Benevolence matters, and even more when it is shared

A number of studies have shown that people are happier when they do things for others, to an extent even greater than they predict. For example, Dunn, Aknin and Norton (2008) found that experimental subjects assigned to spend money on others experienced greater happiness than did those assigned to spend the same money on themselves. Subsequent research in a cross-cultural setting has confirmed with both survey and experimental evidence that this subjective wellbeing (SWB) payoff to benevolence is found everywhere, and thus has claims to be a psychological universal (Aknin *et al.* 2010). Meier and Stutzer (2008) find that the SWB rewards of volunteering are pervasive, but are even greater for those with less materialistic motivations.

Other studies have shown that time spent with others is generally associated with higher subjective wellbeing. For example, Helliwell and Putnam (2004) show that frequent interactions with friends and neighbours are tightly associated with higher subjective wellbeing. At a more basic experimental level, synchronized physical actions done (on a rowing machine) with others are more productive of endorphins that promote feelings of wellbeing and protect against pain than are precisely the same activities done on one's own (Cohen *et al.* 2010).

The subjective wellbeing benefits of social engagement are by now well-documented. What is less well known is how much of the gains flow to those who are the givers. Schwartz and Sendor (1999) found that when peer-support relations were established between pairs of multiple sclerosis patients, there were SWB gains for the recipients of this peer support. Only later did researchers consider whether there may have been gains also for the providers of the counselling. The gains to the providers turned out to be several times larger, and more sustained, than for those who were given support. This leads us to suspect that the benefits of the Singapore reforms, which are based on peer counselling among prisoners, may have produced the largest benefits among those providing the support.

2.3 Trust matters to subjective wellbeing, and trustworthiness tends to be under-estimated

Initial results linking trust and subjective wellbeing (e.g. Helliwell 2003) made use of the widely available yes-or-no responses to a standard social trust question: 'In general, most people can be trusted, or, alternatively, you cannot be too careful when dealing with people'. Across countries, answers to this question were correlated with differences in happiness, life satisfaction, traffic fatalities, suicide, and the frequency of return of experimentally dropped wallets, among other things (Helliwell and Wang 2011). Subsequent surveys have probed many different modes of trust: for example, of management, neighbours, co-workers and police; and found strong independent effects from each (Helliwell and Putnam 2004, Helliwell and Barrington-Leigh 2010, 2011). If there is a first among these equals, it is perhaps trust in management. For example, working where trust in management is just 1 point higher on a 10 point scale has the same impact on life satisfaction as an income one-third higher (Helliwell and Huang 2010).

A related finding is that where it is possible to distinguish perceptions of how much one should trust from the reality, it is perceptions rather than reality that determine subjective wellbeing. To give one example, it is possible to obtain comparable survey measures across countries of the past and expected future frequency of burglaries and attempted burglaries. In all countries, people think that the chances of being burgled in the next year are far higher than the average incidence of the previous year. Since this degree of over-estimation differs among countries, it is possible to see whether international differences in life satisfaction are related to either or both of the actual and expected likelihoods of burglary. The results show that it is only the expected future incidence of burglaries that is correlated with international differences in

subjective wellbeing. Thus the systematic over-prediction of the risks of future burglaries is likely to be responsible for life satisfaction being unnecessarily low. People like to live in a world where other people can be trusted, but they frequently believe that people are less trustworthy than they actually are.

One more example may help to make this point. Several major surveys have asked respondents to report on a four-point scale how likely it would be for their lost wallets (assumed to contain $200) to be returned if they were found, firstly, by a police officer; secondly, by a neighbour; and thirdly, by a stranger. In the Canadian sample the expected likelihood of wallets being returned by police officers was even higher than for neighbours; in some countries this ranking was reversed. In all countries, the expected likelihood of wallet return was judged lowest for wallets presumed to be found by strangers. By good fortune, a newspaper in Toronto decided to repeat the wallet experiment (originally done in a number of countries by the Reader's Digest) by dropping 20 wallets in metropolitan Toronto. In all cases the wallets were found (or not) by strangers, since the presumed owner was fictitious. Since there was already a large amount of survey evidence about the presumed likelihood of a wallet being returned if found by a stranger in Toronto, it was possible to compare the actual frequency of wallet return with what people living in the same city expected. The good news is that the actual frequency of wallet return was very high, about 80%. The bad news is that it was expected to be less than 25%. Despite the relatively small number of wallets dropped, the difference between the actual and expected wallet returns was so great that there is no chance that the two distributions are the same (Helliwell and Wang 2011).

It is well-established that trust and social connections are linked in both directions: where there is a climate of trust, people are more willing to reach out and make connections with others (Putnam 2000). In the reverse direction, people are more likely to trust those with whom they have regular social interactions. Hence the unjustified presence of mistrust hurts wellbeing in two ways. It lowers willingness to engage with others, and such engagements are themselves productive of wellbeing. And the lower trust perceptions also lead directly to lower levels of subjective wellbeing.

2.4 Existence of positives trumps absence of negatives in determining wellbeing.

It is a feature of the social sciences and related professions to wait until things go wrong and then try to make repairs. Think of medicine and the criminal law, or psychology. Positive psychology was started by those who saw something wrong with this approach. An electronic review of psychological abstracts since 1887 found that references to negative emotions outnumbered mention of positive emotions by 14 to 1, even greater than the 7 to 1 ratio by which treatment outscored prevention (Myers 2000, 56). Since that time, psychologists have been comparing the effects of positive and negative emotions more systematically, and found the positives to be more important. For example, experiments have shown a systematic positive dose/response relation between a subject's initial positive affect and the extent to which he or she was able to ward off an experimentally administered cold virus, or to have milder symptoms if infected. Having negative affect did make colds more likely, but the effect was smaller than for the absence of positive emotions, and not significant (Cohen and Pressman 2006). In a different vein, the use of positive expressions in written work has been shown to be a strong predictor of future longevity in groups as different as a long-studied order of nuns (Danner, Snowdon and Friesen 2001) and a selection of eminent psychologists (Pressman and Cohen 2007).

The common policy concentration on the repair of negative outcomes (the medical model), the punishment of those held responsible for bad outcomes (the criminal justice model), and the creation of laws and regulations designed to avoid bad outcomes (e.g. closing public spaces to reduce the chances of lawsuits) can at best restore the system to stasis by repairing damage and reducing the risk of future crimes and injuries.

But at what cost? The very laws and regulations that are intended to deal with actual and potential crime and disease usually have the effect of raising the perceived threats of bad events, reducing trust, and eliminating places and spaces available for people to mingle and meet, to engage in helping each other, and in other ways to build better lives.

2.5 Shared engagement trumps top-down

Only after this paper was substantially complete did I realise the extent to which the success of the Singapore Prison Service reforms rested on a seldom-studied bedrock of subjective wellbeing. It is broadly known that wellbeing in any organisation depends on shared values, shared identities, and a sense of engagement in a common purpose. It is less often noticed that it will all go better if everyone is having fun. Even less is said about the extent to which it is much easier to establish these critical elements of success if the whole process is driven as much or more from the bottom than the top, even if it needs to be empowered from the top. When reading about the Singapore Prison case, consider if it would have been possible at all if the enabling vision, and all of its innovative elements, had not flowed from horizontal collaboration among all parties. Success also required that senior management was willing to accept the risks of a process of change that was facilitated, rather than directed, from the top.

3. The Singapore Prison Service reforms

In 1998, the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) was facing pressures common to such systems around the world, particularly overcrowded prisons and shortages of staff due to difficulties in recruitment and retention. Although rehabilitation was always a goal, it was handled piecemeal by specialists. Such efforts were limited to work, education and religious counselling, and were not systematically monitored for effectiveness. The roles of prison officers remained mainly custodial.

New leadership came in 1998, and research was directed to assessing what sorts of promising reforms were taking place in other countries. In 1999, more than 800 staff members from all ranks of the prison system were brought together, in a series of retreats, dialogues and forums, to develop a shared vision for the prison system. What became clear during the course of a year of continuing discussions was that "most Prison Officers wanted to do more to help inmates under their charge become contributing members of society" (Leong 2010, 2). That in turn gave rise to a new shared vision that gave shape and direction to many of the strategies to follow. The vision clearly went beyond safety and security and into the rehabilitation and reintegration of the prisoners into society:

> We aspire to be captains in the lives of offenders committed to our custody. We
> will be instrumental in steering them towards being responsible citizens, with
> the help of their families and the community. We will thus build a secure and
> exemplary prison system. (Leong 2010, 2)

One of the first substantive reforms was the design and introduction of a Housing Unit Management System to engage inmates and officers together to work toward the common goal of rehabilitation. Management recognized that this abrupt challenge to the traditional 'lock and

bolt' mindset might pose problems for prison officers being asked to combine the roles of disciplinarian and rehabilitation officer. To ease this adaptation, and to learn more about how the two roles could best be made to co-exist, there was a year-long pilot project to test the new system within units that volunteered to do so. This combination of sequential evolution and bottom-up engagement was as central to the SPS reforms as it has been shown to be for wellbeing more generally.

Next, new rehabilitation programs were established to involve inmates more directly in prison operations, including peer support. This helped the workload of prison officers, improved inmate-staff relationships, increased mutual trust, and became a central part of the rehabilitation process. There were also a number of procedural reforms, including more use of home detentions, tele-visits and virtual court sessions for remand inmates. These reforms conserved resources, rewarded the higher levels of mutual trust, and gave prison staff "the confidence to explore new solutions beyond the prison walls" (Leong 2010, 4).

The most innovative parts of the SPS reforms involved 'breaking down' the prison walls, and attempting to unlock the 'second prison' when ex-prisoners return to a society not ready to accept them. The SPS leaders and staff realized, as the reforms evolved, that integrated in-care and co-ordinated after-care were not separate stages, and that reintegration had to begin on the first day of the first incarceration. For this to happen, links between the SPS and the community needed to change in fundamental ways. The SPS opened the doors of its prisons to the public, gave press tours and emphasized the success stories of reformed ex-prisoners. Media coverage and SPS ads began to change public attitudes towards prisons, and towards prison work, leading to increased recruiting success for both employees and volunteers. Co-ordinated after-care networks were established, and brought into play by case workers for individual inmates as their sentences were ending.

The major reintegration branding instrument has been the Yellow Ribbon Project (YRP), introduced in 2004 as a framework for many activities designed to build and demonstrate the community's willingness to accept and enable successful new lives for ex-inmates. The range and content of these activities are impressive. There are annual song-writing contests for inmates, ex-offenders and after-care agencies, with inmates and headline artists from Singapore and abroad performing together in concerts to raise money for the Yellow Ribbon Fund. There are now regular runs that pass through prison grounds (the runners in the first such event included the Deputy Prime Minister). The Singapore Lions Club approached the YRP in 2009 to co-host a lunch for the elderly, with the meal cooked by inmates and served by ex-offenders. In that same year, inmates volunteered to fill the fun packs for the National Day Parade, and an ex-offender, a prison officer, and a social services officer took part in an Ironman race to raise S\$10,000 for the YRP. Since 2005, YRP conferences have brought together ex-offenders and groups involved with rehabilitation and reintegration to share experiences and build collective wisdom with an eye to further improvements.

The outcomes of the SPS reforms have been impressive on all fronts. The two-year recidivism rate, a classic measure of the overall success of a prison system, dropped from 44% for the pre-reform cohort released in 1998 to an all-time low of 23.7% for the cohort released in 2004. It has risen gradually since then, to 27.3% for the 2008 release cohort (Ng 2009, 20, updated). On the staff side, the SPS was voted one of the ten best employers in Singapore in 2007, and prison officer satisfaction with management grew steadily from 70% in 2001 to 84% in 2005 (Singapore Prison System 2006, Figure 7.3.4). Respect among prison inmates for prison officers rose from 58% in 2002 to 92% in 2006 (Singapore Prison System 2006, Figure 7.1.1). In the community, a 2007 survey found that 94% knew about the Yellow Ribbon Project, and 70%

were willing to accept ex-offenders as friends or colleagues. In addition, the number of community volunteers, including a growing representation of ex-inmates, continues to grow (Singapore Prison System 2006, Figure 7.2.3.)

Since the SPS reforms were designed to solve perceived problems, rather than to facilitate subsequent research, they have not given rise to pre- and post- statistics sufficient to assess the overall success of the reforms, or to distribute the credit among the interlocking parts of the reform package. Horizontally-managed reforms that happen simultaneously and incrementally on many fronts have been shown to deliver higher subjective wellbeing in experimental contexts. But they are especially hard to monitor when they are taking place within a real prison system. However, the results quoted above, taken together, make a convincing case for the initial and continuing success of the SPS reforms.

Each of the main elements of the reforms illustrated one or more of the research strands listed; and all parties are thus far very satisfied with what has been accomplished. Singapore still has relatively high incarceration rates. Singapore's 2007 incarceration rates, at 250 per 100,000, were four times those of Japan, twice those of Canada and Australia, but still only one-third those of the United States (Ng 2009, 18). In international terms, the system appears very efficient in terms of its low recidivism rates, absence of prison violence and continued maintenance of very low costs (Singapore Prison System 2006, Figure 7.2.1).

4. Prisons and wellbeing

There have been studies that have used experimental prison environments to study social psychology, and other studies have tried to apply subjective wellbeing research results to aspects of the criminal justice system. In the former instance, the best-known example is the Stanford prison experiment (Haney, Banks and Zimbardo 1973), in which students were recruited into roles of prison guards and prisoners. Those assigned to be guards subsequently fell into authoritarian attitudes, while the prisoners ultimately ceased resisting the guards' brutality and were even prepared to victimize other prisoners. The brutality of the guards and the suffering of the prisoners were so great that the experiment was terminated less than half-way through its intended two-week duration.

The more recent BBC prison experiments (Reicher and Haslam 2006[6]) took a rather different tack, emphasizing the importance of the social structure within and between the groups of prisoners and guards, studying tyranny and resistance in tandem. In the Stanford experiments, tyranny trumped resistance, and the prisoners suffered. In the BBC prison study, the prisoners worked together in resistance, and the guards became a fragmented and ineffective force. In both cases, one group had a collective oppositional identity that it used to oppress the other. This conforms, in both cases, to the general model of a prison as a conflictual society, with guards and prisoners in opposition.

The magic of the Singapore Prison reforms was to break down that historic model of oppositional identities. The agents of reform sought and found a broad set of objectives that could be shared by prisoners and officers, and enabled shared identities as builders of better lives for all parties. There are earlier hints of these possibilities in the BBC prison study, where at two different stages, both at the beginning and the end, the guards and the prisoners made common cause, at first establishing a communal form, and at the end, in a less promising way, in accepting a harsher form of collective. Earlier Australian experiments (Lovibond, Mithiran and Adams 1979) provided a more direct blueprint for the possibilities achieved by the

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[6] See also the website for the BBC prison study: http://www.bbcprisonstudy.org/bbc-prison-study.php?p=19.

Singapore Prison reforms. These experiments showed that regimes involving greater mutual engagement and individuality for prisoners and officers led to significantly better results for both prisoners and officers. The Singapore Prison reforms go much further than such lab experiments, not only by being undertaken within prison realities but also extending the participation beyond the prison walls and into the community at large.

Previous applications of subjective wellbeing research to criminal justice topics have included proposing the use of estimated trade-offs from wellbeing equations to obtain better matching between the seriousness of an offense and the severity of the punishment (Bagaric and McConvill 2005). Bronsteen et al (2008) argue instead that evidence of adaptation creates an obstacle for all utilitarian approaches to the choice of appropriate punishments. Neither study is in the spirit of the SPS reforms, which are intended to avoid recidivism not by raising the perceived penalties but by improving the possibilities for prisoners to build preferable non-criminal lives. One SPS report includes a picture of a prison's tower and surrounding barbed wire with the caption "Most of our guests who checked out have no desire to return" (SPS 2006, 32).

The Singapore Prison Service reforms embodied all five lessons from the wellbeing research described earlier. First, the SPS leadership recognized immediately the importance of process. This involved spending time to develop a shared vision, and experimenting with different ways of implementing the vision. Second, the value of benevolence was demonstrated by the resonance and popularity of the many activities that unite inmates, ex-offenders, prison staff and the community in efforts designed to help others. Third, the need for and value of trust were central to the design of sequential reforms based on collaborative design and shared consultations. Fourth, the importance of having fun, and not just avoiding harm, is evidenced by many of the YRP activities, ranging from song-writing and runs to hosting meals for the elderly. Finally, the value of bottom-up initiative and engagement is apparent at each stage of the reforms, from a 'we-centred' leadership to a framework that encourages new initiatives and shares their lessons.

The Singapore Prison Service reforms did not draw directly from research on subjective wellbeing, but they certainly provide fine examples of how institutions in general, and prisons in particular, can be changed to make lives better for inmates, ex-offenders, families, staff and the community at large.

5. Conclusion

The most appropriate summary of the key lessons from the Singapore Prison Service reforms is drawn from their own report (Leong 2010, 11):

> The case illustrates … the possibilities that open up when a government agency begins not only to frame desired outcomes at the societal level, but also to help other members of the society to do likewise, leveraging its unique position and expertise to harness the collective efforts of society towards a common purpose. Finally, the case illustrates the impact that could result when a government agency beyond acting alone starts involving other stakeholders and members of society; tapping on their aspirations to co-create the change agenda, collective wisdom and strengths to design interventions and implement them, so that the sum of the whole is more than its parts.
>
> As SPS work attracted new believers, first internally and then externally, more resources were made available to deepen their mission. Positive results in turn attracted more believers and resources – a reinforcing loop. Quality of

relationships both within the organisation and with external partners enabled collective thinking, improved planning and actions, which led to higher quality outcomes that in turn grew relationships and deepened trust-improving outcomes – another reinforcing loop. 'Think big, start small' was where it seemed to have begun – a shared desire to improve the lives of those whom they served. The circle of influence started from individuals, organization cascading to the rest of community.

Each element of this description rings true when seen through the lens of wellbeing research. Every aspect seems ripe for application and emulation by others. The Singapore Prison Service reforms are an inspiring example of how institutions can be changed to improve wellbeing.

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Moses, happy man?

Darrin M. McMahon

Abstract: This article exams the Biblical figure Moses in the light of both ancient and modern understandings of happiness, asking whether Moses himself was happy, and what that might mean, and whether he may be considered an example of a "felicitator," one who works successfully for the happiness of others.

Keywords: religion, Jewish happiness, blessedness, felicitator

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, Moses may seem an odd choice to serve as a model purveyor of human happiness. True, he is said to have accomplished a series of no mean feats—leading an entire people out of bondage to the brink of the Promised Land, communicating directly with God, and receiving God's law, which has provided untold millions with the resources to live lives of sanctity and peace. He even parted the Red Sea! That said, some will question whether he ever lived. And even those who cede his existence may be excused if they come away from a cursory reading of the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Jewish Bible/Christian Old Testament and our principal source of information about the man— with a less than cheery view of his life and times. After all, Moses served as the perpetrator and agent of terrible violence and destruction, divinely conferred on the enemies of Israel and those unfortunate enough to have crossed Yahweh's path. An orphan, whose parents were forced to abandon him as an infant, Moses was relatively fortunate in adoption, allowed to run the halls of Pharaoh. And yet one need not be a psychologist to wonder just how well things turned out. For clearly Moses was a man of hot temper, prone to rash outbursts and acts of violence. He committed murder as a young adult, provoked by the sight of injustice (Exodus 2:12), later smashing up tablets and giving himself over to acts of rage and destruction when his "anger burned hot" (Exodus 32:19), incensed, as he very often was, by the failings of others.[1] Awkward in social situations, "slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exodus 4:10), Moses seems to have possessed very little of those qualities of extroversion and volubility that psychologists today tend to associate with positive emotion. When examined as a whole, his life would seem rather bleak—tragic even—filled with privation, annoyance, and ultimate failure, a life spent wandering in a wilderness, bearing the constant complaints and ingratitude of those around him. If his great life's goal was to set foot in the Promised Land, and deliver his people to freedom, then his life must be deemed a failure. "You shall not enter there," the Lord tells Moses (Deuteronomy, 1:37), judging that he, with his brother Aaron, had broken faith "by failing to maintain my holiness among the Israelites" (Deuteronomy 32: 51). And though it is the case that God permits him a glance across the River Jordan, revealing that Moses' people will enter the land of milk and honey in his place, he cannot take much solace in the thought.

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[1] All Biblical references are drawn from the New Revised Standard Version.

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For Moses is also told that his descendants will prove unworthy of their deliverance, and shall fall quickly again into bondage and despair. As God reveals:

> Soon you will lie down with your ancestors: Then this people will begin to prostitute themselves to the foreign gods in their midst, the gods of the land into which they are going; they will forsake me; breaking my covenant that I have made with them. My anger will be kindled against them in that day. I will forsake them and hide my face from them; they will become easy prey, and many terrible troubles will come upon them. (Deuteronomy 31:16)

A life of struggle and sacrifice has apparently ended in vain. Surely, to call Moses 'happy' is a stretch. Wouldn't it be truer, modern readers may well wonder, to say that Moses made himself miserable, and many others besides?

They would hardly be the first to entertain the thought. From at least the time of the European Enlightenment, many have said as much, and more, concurring with Voltaire, who was content to write off the entire story of Moses as so much fanaticism and superstition. "It is very pardonable," he observes in his article "Moses" in the *Philosophical Dictionary*, "to see in such a history the barbarous stupidity of the first ages of a savage people…."[2] Not only were many of Voltaire's contemporaries skeptical of the veracity of the Biblical account, but the more radical among them were inclined to associate religion itself with a good deal of gratuitous suffering and unhappiness. A century and a half later an admirer of Voltaire, Sigmund Freud, essentially agreed, suggesting in his final work that not only was the Biblical account of Moses' life a pious fiction, but that Moses was in fact not a Jew.[3] An Egyptian nobleman (and in Freud's opinion an enlightened one at that), Moses was murdered by his Israelite followers, who later felt deep regret at their primal act of aggression. The upshot was that Moses had bequeathed to the Jewish people an indelible sense of guilt for which they continued to seek atonement, and forever in vain. In Freud's opinion—not unlike that of the Radical Enlightenment and very much like that of today's so-called 'New Atheists' (whose arguments have been around for several hundred years)—religious belief was not just false, it made us miserable as well.

To be sure, many have disagreed with this assessment over the centuries, not least practising Jews, Christians, and Muslims, all of whom venerate Moses to this day as a paragon and prophet. From relatively early on in the Jewish tradition, moreover, there was an attempt to present Moses not simply as a prophet of the Jews—a man specially chosen to lead the tribes of Israel to deliverance—but an ideal human being of universal stature. The philosopher Philo of Alexandria, for example, writing in Greek to a cultivated Hellenistic audience in the early first century, drew on the Midrash as well as classical learning to present Moses as "the greatest and most perfect man that ever lived."[4] Similarly, the historian Josephus, Philo's rough contemporary, took pains to represent Moses as an archetypal man, who embodied the cardinal classical virtues of courage, wisdom, temperance, and justice, and who combined in his person the attributes of Pericles, Aeneas, the stoic sage, and Plato's philosopher king. It may be questioned how many pagans accepted this portrait in the late Antique world, and yet Christians for their part enthusiastically embraced the image of Moses as a universal man.

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[2] Voltaire, "Moses," (*Philosophical Dictionary)* in *The Works of Voltaire. A Contemporary Version*. A Critique and Biography by John Morley, notes by Tobias Smollett, trans. William F. Fleming, 21 vols. (New York: E.R. DuMont, 1901), 6:41.

[3] Sigmund Freud, *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion* (1939).

[4] Cited in Louis H. Feldman, *Philo's Portrayal of Moses in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 3.

Indeed, in a sort of Judeo-Christian version of Classical parallel lives, they embraced Moses as the predecessor and prefiguration of Jesus (Joshua) himself. Had not Moses declared in Deuteronomy 18.15 that "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people," and that "you shall heed such a prophet"? Reading scripture in reverse, Christians hailed Jesus as that very same man. In doing so, they anointed Moses as the 'first savior' whose work was to be completed by the 'new Moses,' the Messiah Christ. Muslims, for their part, would later draw attention to this same passage in Deuteronomy to bolster their claim, asserted frequently in the Qur'an, that Moses was a "messenger of Allah," and one of the greatest men who had ever lived. With the exception of Mohamed, who in the Islamic understanding is the chosen one who completes Allah's work, Moses is mentioned in the Qur'an more than any other prophet. With reason is he revered as a human being "specially chosen" (Qur'an 19: 51–53). For the followers of all three of these traditions, then—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—there can be no doubt that Moses was a man apart, a paragon of human excellence and immense moral stature.

But can we conclude from this that Moses was deemed 'happy' in the eyes of his beholders? Do believers, in other words, consider Moses a happy man? And what might that conviction say to those who refuse to look at him solely through the lens of faith? Is there any basis for considering Moses 'happy' from the standpoint of contemporary science? And finally how might we judge whether he was in truth a 'felicitator' enabling others to live happier lives?

The answers to all these questions depend, in large part, on what we mean by the term, and here it might be useful to insist on how widely the meaning of the word has varied through the ages.[5] It is certainly true, as the psychologist Paul Ekman has famously shown, that all peoples in all places smile to signify joy and delight, just as they share other universal expressions to indicate fear, disgust, anger, surprise, and sadness.[6] But it hardly follows that all cultures and peoples think of happiness in the same way. On the contrary, both across space and across time, men and women have come to very different conclusions about what constitutes happiness and who might be deemed to lead a happy life.

The word that classical Hebrew employed to signify the state of happiness is *Asher* (אֶשֶׁר), and though it is always perilous to venture etymologies of such ancient terms, lexicographers point to a connection with the root *'sr*, meaning "to go," "to go straight," or "to advance."[7] That would explain why variants of the term are used synonymously with the noun "step," as in Psalm 17:5, where we read that "My *steps* have held fast to your path; my feet have not slipped," so rendering the Hebrew beatitude found at the beginning of Psalm 119 of particular interest. "Happy (*asher*) are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the way of the Lord." In this case the first step to happiness was the step itself, a connection that would certainly have

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[5]For an insightful rumination on precisely this question in the context of the Torah and ancient Greek philosophy, see Nathan MacDonald, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? Is There Happiness in the Torah?," in Brent A. Strawn, ed., *The Bible and the Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). I am grateful to Professor MacDonald for kindly sharing this article with me prior to its publication, and also for generously reading, with the eyes of a professional Old Testament scholar, a draft of the present piece, written by an (interested) amateur.

[6] For a concise, early statement of the position he has developed throughout his long and distinguished career, see Paul Ekman, "Universal Facial Expressions of Emotion," *California Health Research Digest* 8, no. 4 (Autumn, 1970), 151–58.

[7] The account here draws on the discussion in my *Happiness: A History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006), 77–81. For ancient Jewish understandings of happiness more generally, see the rich account provided in Hava Tirosh-Samuelson's *Happiness in Premodern Judaism: Virtue, Knowledge, and Well-Being* (Cincinatti: Hebrew Union College Press, 2003), as well as Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1991).

resonated with Moses' followers, who were engaged, after all, in marching from the misery of bondage to the milk and honey of freedom. By putting one foot in front of the other, they undoubtedly hoped, they would make their way to happiness on the horizon, the Promised Land of milk and honey, a place of peace and rest and abundance, a land of fertile soil.

Happiness, in this connection, was an earthy affair. It was in other respects as well. For *asher* is not only derived from the root *'sr*, it is the name of one of Israel's twelve tribes. The brother of Gad and the second son of Zilpah, Leah's maid, who was made pregnant by Jacob when his wife was past child-bearing years, Asher earned his name from Leah's exclamation upon his birth. "'Happy am I! For the women will call me happy,' so she named him Asher" (Genesis 30.12–13). Here happiness is associated, as it is in so many ancient cultures, with good fortune, fecundity, and bounty, a connection that is echoed by Moses himself when he blesses Asher in Deuteronomy 33.24: "And of Asher he said: Most blessed of sons be Asher; may he be the favorite of his brother, and may he dip his foot on oil." Oil, here, the oil of olives, crushed by foot like grapes, was a symbol of prosperity, and so Moses wishes Asher's tribe, Israel's largest, continued fertility and abundance. His blessing, in this respect, partakes of a more comprehensive vision of what earthly happiness might entail. It is, to repeat, an earthy vision, one entirely appropriate to a people close to the land—shepherds and farmers—whose lives and fortunes are precarious. To those threatened continually by war, famine, dearth, and disease, there could be nothing more pleasing than a vision of safety and bounty, teaming families, and ripe old age. We get a similar glimpse of Asher's blessing, and the blessing of what it meant to be *asher* in Psalm 128:

> Happy is everyone who fears the Lord,
>> who walks in his ways.
> You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;
>> you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.
>
> Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
>> within your house;
> your children will be like olive shoots
>> around your table
> Thus shall the man be blessed
>> who fears the Lord.
>
> The Lord bless you from Zion.
>> May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
>> all the days of your life.
> May you see your children's children.
>> Peace be upon Israel!

But all of this, it should be stressed—the fruits of one's labor, peace of mind and person, longevity and health, fecundity of table and bed—is made contingent on keeping God's laws and God's favor, walking (stepping) in his ways. The happiness of Asher may be *earthy*, but it is also spiritual, predicated on divine blessing. It is revealing in this connection that Moses, when blessing Asher in the line from Deuteronomy cited above, employs the term *Baruch* (בָּרוּךְ) to describe him as "most blessed."[8] The word, a term of praise when applied to God, indicates,

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[8] On the word '*Baruch*,' see Christopher W. Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK "To Bless" in the Old Testament* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1983).

like *asher*, a state of happiness when applied to human beings, though with a stronger spiritual connotation. And while any Jew, like any reader of the Hebrew Bible, need only consider the fate of Job (to say nothing of Jewish history) to know that keeping God's laws is no guarantee of prosperity and good fortune, it is an indispensable precondition nonetheless, one that comes with an implicit promise, which carries with it hope, the hope that the blessing of happiness will be conferred on those who merit God's favor. By walking in God's way, one sets a course for the Promised Land: The road to happiness is paved by God's commands.

Moses, then, opened up an avenue to the good life, one that stressed happiness as a process and pattern of living, an activity and movement, in which the journey itself was as important as the arrival. God's law, in short, as revealed by Moses, was a regime for human flourishing.[9] Seen from the outside, to be sure, and in the light of the twenty-first century, certain stipulations may seem peculiar, if not downright odd, as they did already to various early Christians and Pagans like Origen and Celsus, or to even more perplexed critical enquirers at the time of the European Enlightenment, who balked, after two centuries of religiously inspired bloodshed, at the injunction, say, that "You shall not permit a female sorcerer to live" (Exodus 22:18). Similarly, we may be inclined to ask now why "No one whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off [should] be admitted to the assembly of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 23.1). And what harm can it do, we might legitimately wonder, to "wear clothes made of wool and linen woven together" (Deuteronomy 22.11)? Biblical scholars and anthropologists possess answers to such questions, though in the end the particulars of the law are for rabbis and priests to interpret, and for the faithful to live as they best see fit. And yet all but the most uncharitable observer should be able to acknowledge that to focus exclusively on provisions of this kind is to blind oneself to much that is not only deeply familiar in the Pentateuch—the Mosaic law, after all, beginning with the Decalogue, is part and parcel of the Western ethical and legal tradition—but also, from the perspective of happiness, much of what has been confirmed by centuries of reflection and, more recently, by mountains of research. To those who have taken the trouble to familiarize themselves with the literature on the modern science of happiness, for example, a good deal of what Moses has to say will come across as strikingly astute, a fine illustration of what the psychologist Jonathan Haidt has described as "modern truth in ancient wisdom."[10]

Take, for example, the issue of gratitude. Contemporary psychologists and philosophers of emotion stress that, although the relationship between gratitude and happiness is undoubtedly complicated, there are nevertheless numerous ways in which gratitude "enhances or protects happiness and well-being" when consciously cultivated as a virtue.[11] To feel and express gratitude is to call to mind the good others have done us, which is almost always a spur to positive emotion. Similarly, to forgive is to free ourselves from thoughts and resentments that may cause us pain, urging us to let go of the harm others have done us. The Hebrew Bible is nothing if not a primer in the expression of gratitude and forgiveness. Regarding the latter, it is Moses who urges the Lord to forgive his people when they forge an idol in the image of a Golden Calf, and it is Moses who continually implores, as he does right before the forging of

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[9] On this point, see Tirosh-Samuelson, *Happiness in Premodern Judaism*, 316 ff, as well as Norma Roth, "Attaining Happiness (Eudaimonia) in Medieval Jewish Philosophy," *Centerpoint* 4 (1981), 21–32 and Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, "The Concept of '*Eudaimonia*' in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy" in his *Studia Semitica*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 2:127–44.

[10] Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Basic Books, 2006). Though Haidt only discusses Moses and Judaism in passing, he would, I think, accept the comparison.

[11] See, for example, Robert C. Roberts, "Gratitude: A Conceptual Analysis," in Robert A. Emmons and Michael E. McCullough, eds., *The Psychology of Gratitude* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 77.

the covenant, that "Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin" (Exodus 34.9). Moses himself repeatedly forgives the people he leads, who are forever prone to wander, err, and disappoint. In so far as his own conduct can be taken as a model for others, he instructs by example, just as he inculcates the virtue of gratitude. The central sacrificial rite spelled out to Moses in Deuteronomy 26, for instance, whereby those "who have come in to the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance," shall deliver the "first fruits" of the fields in calling to mind his mercy, benevolence and kindness in delivering them from Egypt is, in effect, a call to the performance of ritual gratitude, a reminder to celebrate one's blessing and rejoice. The so-called "thank-offering" or "fellowship offering" detailed in Leviticus 7:11–13 serves a similar function, instructing individuals how to offer a personal "expression of thankfulness" to God for his beneficence. And finally, the Passover Seder, celebrated to this day as a feast of joyful remembrance and thanksgiving, bids all those gathered at table to recall with gratitude the narrative so vividly recounted in the Pentateuch—God's liberating power in Egypt, and his guidance, then as now, to Jerusalem.

It bears emphasis that Moses' promptings to gratitude and forgiveness are ultimately intended, like the deliverance from Egypt itself, as collective endeavors. We ought, of course, to be grateful and to forgive as individuals in our personal relationship to God, but in the final analysis it is in the context of community that such injunctions make sense. We could say the same about Moses' teaching as a whole, and about the understanding of happiness that emerges from them, for the law and the exodus and arrival in the Promised Land are projects of an entire people. The happiness of each is contingent in part on the happiness of all, and so to keep God's laws, to walk in his way, to know prosperity, peace, fecundity, bounty and familial love is to do so in a resolutely social environment. No man is an island, and there are no islands in the desert.

That insight is one that modern researchers on happiness would wholeheartedly confirm, attesting, as they frequently do, to the fundamentally social nature of happiness, which is sustained by rich networks of friendship and mutual support. Moses is the leader of a people and it is to a people that he reveals God's law, leading them collectively on the road to Jerusalem. The vision of hope that he provides is one of collective deliverance, and, in the end, that is probably Moses' greatest bequest, providing not just the hope of happiness, but the happiness of hope. For it is that very narrative—that human beings, acting in concert, can take steps together toward their own transformation, sustaining themselves in the process by a vision of the happiness on the horizon—that has moved so many millions over the centuries.[12] It is a powerful narrative, the movement from bondage to freedom, and a powerful vision, the milk and honey of the Promised Land, all the more inspiring in that it bids us to action and engagement. The Exodus narrative may be a chronicle of God's intervention in history, but it is also an account of human agency, of human beings taking action and making progress in the pursuit of their own destination and deliverance. It is, in this respect, not just an inspiring tale, but an empowering one, suggesting that human beings can do something about their own happiness. We can take *steps* towards our destination and deliverance. And though the road may be difficult, full of challenges and setbacks, there is hope on the horizon.

Lest that sound like a mere rhetorical flourish, consider how many millions of men and women, Jew and gentile alike, have been moved by that vision, and are still moved to this day. Hope, modern researchers affirm, is a source of resilience, optimism, and happiness itself. It has

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[12] See Michael Walzer's classic *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

put energy into countless steps.[13] The example of Moses and the narrative of the movement from bondage to slavery gave conviction to radicals who fought against absolute monarchs in seventeenth-century England, and who defied King George in eighteenth-century America. Thus the Reverend Thomas Coleman, preaching before Parliament on August 30, 1643, likened his countrymen's struggle against King Charles, typically, to the ancient Israelites' "long pursuit of happinesse."[14] And in the New World at the time of the American Revolution, the example of Moses was so prevalent (and comparisons to King George III as pharaoh so common) that when the Continental Congress asked a committee to design a seal for the newly proclaimed United States immediately following the Declaration of Independence, two of its members, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, proposed an image of the Biblical leader leading the Israelites to freedom.[15] More recently, the exodus narrative helped the followers of Martin Luther King to brave water cannons and snarling dogs in their own march to the Promised Land. Jerusalem may lie, both temporally and spatially, on the horizon: We will arrive there 'next year.' But the journey itself is better for the thought of the arrival.

Was Moses, then, a happy man? In our contemporary language—with its connotation of smiling faces and ready good cheer—almost certainly not. But in the terms of his own time the description is more likely. Notwithstanding his many privations and discomforts, Moses married, had two sons (even if we hear almost nothing about them), and lived to the ripe old age of 120 (Deuteronomy 34:7). His life, to be sure, was never one of pastoral peace and bounty, and was often plagued by anger and dissatisfaction. But what rendered Moses both *asher* and *baruch* in the eyes of his contemporaries was not domestic comfort and the fruits of the earth, but rather his uniquely privileged relationship to God. He was a man "whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deuteronomy 34:12), singularly blessed by him. And though that special relationship presented, like life itself, severe challenges and setbacks, it enabled Moses to set a great many human beings in motion.

And that, from the perspective of the papers collected in this volume, is ultimately Moses' greatest achievement, what renders him worthy of the label we are using here. Moses was a *felicitator* not insofar as he himself was (or was not) a model of a happy man. Nor is he one who may be said to have brought smiles regularly to the faces of others. Rather, like all great leaders whose anger burns hot at the sight of injustice, he struggled continually to free others from the constraints that bound them. In so doing, he bequeathed a gift that in the end may be even greater than happiness—the freedom to strive for it ourselves, and the prospect that it lies within our power to attain this coveted end.

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[13] There is, now, an extensive literature on the relationship between happiness, hope, and optimism. An essential starting place is Martin Seligman's seminal *Learned Optimism* (New York: Knopf, 1991).

[14] Thomas Coleman, *The Christian's Course and Complaint, Both in the Pursuit of Happinesse Desired, and for Advantages Slipped in that Pursuit: A Sermon Preached to the Honorable House of Commons on the Monthly Fast day, August 30, 1643* (London: I.L., 1643), 8.

[15] Although the proposed seal was not adopted in the end, the invocation of the Exodus narrative in Revolutionary America was extensive, with George Washington frequently cast as "the American Moses." See Todd Gitlin and Liel Leibovitz, *The Chosen Peoples: America, Israel, and the Ordeals of Divine Election* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), esp. 66–7.

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The Dalai Lama: Happiness from within

Matthieu Ricard

Abstract: The Dalai Lama often speaks of a 'Buddhist science,' a science of mind and, for the last thirty years, he has engaged in numerous dialogues and collaborations with scientists within the Mind and Life Institute. How can this 'science of mind' contribute to our understanding of happiness? What does the Dalai Lama mean by this simple and straightforward statement "the main goal of life is happiness?" In this essay, I discuss what enduring happiness means according to the Buddhist perspective and the ways in which the Dalai Lama embodies this enduring happiness. I will approach happiness as a way of being, not a gift that good fortune bestows upon us and a reversal of fortune takes back, but a skill that can be cultivated. In order to become happy, we have to learn how to change our selves.

Keywords: wellbeing, well-being, happiness, Buddhism, Dalai Lama

1. Introduction

During the last thirty years I have been fortunate to spend extended periods of time in the presence of the Dalai Lama and I have gained great insights by witnessing his attitude in the face of very challenging circumstances. Most of the time the Dalai Lama is ebullient with joy and kindness, but I have also seen him deeply saddened. Yet he also says that deep within he retains his inner peace, no matter what the outer circumstances might be.

In 2008, a few months before the Beijing Olympic Games, thousands of Tibetans demonstrated throughout Tibet as an impassioned plea to the world. They were expressing their frustration and resentment at fifty years of harsh oppression under the Chinese totalitarian regime. The government's reaction was brutal. Hundreds of unarmed Tibetans were killed, thousands imprisoned and tortured. The Dalai Lama expressed his deep sorrow and confided how powerless he felt to alleviate the suffering of his people. "Yet," he added, "I can always relate to a sense of equanimity and inner peace."

The Dalai Lama is certainly not indifferent to the pleas of others. I heard him once confiding: "For the last thirty years, every day during my early morning meditation tears come to my eyes when I consider the innumerable sufferings of sentient beings." Is sadness compatible with happiness? Some contemporary research shows that people sometimes report being sad and happy at the same time (Larsen *et al.*, 2001), but this research refers to the juxtaposition of different feelings. In the case of the Dalai Lama, it seems that emotional sadness coincides with happiness as an enduring way of being. Whether sadness is compatible with happiness thus all depends on what we mean by 'happiness'.

To understand what we mean by 'happiness,' we need to explore the Buddhist understanding of *sukha*, a Sanskrit term that can be defined as:

> [A] state of flourishing that arises from mental balance and insight into the nature of reality. Rather than a fleeting emotion or mood aroused by sensory

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and conceptual stimuli, *sukha* is an enduring trait that arises from a state of mental balance. It entails a conceptually unstructured and unfiltered awareness of the true nature of reality. (Ekman, Davidson, Ricard and Wallace, 2005, p. 60)

One may thus understand that sadness in the face of a tragedy, such as an injustice or a massacre, is by no means incompatible with *sukha*, since it remains compatible with compassion, with a sense of direction and meaning in life, with inner strength and deep confidence in our resolve to bring about a better world. Even in sadness we can continue to pursue a meaningful and constructive life. So the Dalai Lama does feel sadness, but not despair, which is to lose all hope, meaning, and inner freedom.

Similarly, the Buddhist concept of *duhkha*, often translated as 'suffering,' is not simply an unpleasant feeling. Rather, it refers to a basic vulnerability to suffering and pain due to the misapprehension of the nature of reality and to the influence of afflictive mental states such as hatred, craving, pride, and envy.

The Dalai Lama often speaks of a 'Buddhist science,' a science of mind and, for the last thirty years, he has engaged in numerous dialogues and collaborations with scientists within the Mind and Life Institute. How can this 'science of mind' contribute to our understanding of happiness? What does the Dalai Lama mean by this simple and straightforward statement "the main goal of life is happiness?"

In this essay, I will attempt to consider what enduring happiness means according to the Buddhist perspective. I will approach happiness as a way of being, not a gift that good fortune bestows upon us and a reversal of fortune takes back, but a skill that can be cultivated. In order to become happy, we have to learn how to change our selves.

2. Outer and inner conditions for happiness

We all strive, consciously or unconsciously, competently or clumsily, to be happier and to suffer less. Instinctively most people put all their hopes and fear in the outer world. But our control of this outer world is limited, temporary, and often illusory. In addition to that, the universe is not a mail order catalogue for all our desires.

No one would deny that it is eminently desirable to live long and in good health, to be free in a country at peace where justice is respected, to love and to be loved, to have access to education and information, to enjoy adequate means of subsistence, to be able to travel the world, to contribute as much as possible to the wellbeing of others, and to protect the environment. Sociological studies of entire populations clearly show that human beings enjoy their lives more in such conditions.

But in pinning all our hopes on the external world, we can only end up being disappointed. The reason is that it is our mind that experiences the world from morning till evening. Our mind can be our best friend or our worst enemy. We all know that we can feel miserable in a little paradise and, conversely, retain our 'joie de vivre' in the face of adverse, undesirable circumstances. As the Buddhist thinker Alan Wallace wrote:

> If you bank on achieving genuine happiness and fulfillment by finding the perfect mate, getting a great car, having a big house, the best insurance, a fine reputation, the top job — if these are your focus, wish also for good luck in life's lottery. ([sic.] 2003, p. 20)

It is thus very naïve to imagine that external conditions alone can ensure happiness. That is the surest way to a rude awakening. As the Dalai Lama once said when visiting a city in Portugal where a lot of building activities were taking place: "If a man who has just moved into a luxury

apartment on the hundredth floor of a brand new building is deeply unhappy, the only thing he'll look for is a window to jump out of."

We willingly spend fifteen years in school, then go on to professional training for a few more; we work out at the gym to stay healthy; we spend a great deal of time enhancing our comfort, our wealth and our social status. We put a great deal into all this, and yet we do so little to improve the inner condition that determines the very quality of our lives.

As the Tibetan teacher Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche writes in *The Joy of Living*:

> Unfortunately, one of the main obstacles we face when we try to examine the mind is a deep-seated and often unconscious conviction that 'we're born the way we are and nothing we can do can change that.' (2007, p. 32)

According to Buddhism, the state we generally consider to be 'normal' is just a starting point, and not the goal that we ought to be setting for ourselves. Our life is worth much more than that! It is possible, little by little, to arrive at the 'optimal' way of being.

What strange hesitancy, fear, or apathy stops us from looking within ourselves, from trying to grasp the true essence of joy and sadness, desire and hatred? Fear of the unknown prevails, and the courage to explore that inner world fails at the frontier of our minds. I once met a Californian teenager who told me: "I don't want to look inside myself. I'm afraid of what I'd find there." I mentioned this to the Dalai Lama, who exclaimed: "But that is the most interesting thing to do! There is so much happening within the mind, much more than in any movie." He was echoing Marcus Aurelius' sentiment that we should 'Look within where we find the fountain of all good' (Marc-Aurèle, 1953).

And yet, looking within is something that we must learn how to do. Why should we be able to delve inside ourselves without the slightest effort? Simply because we want to? Such an assumption makes about as much sense as hoping to be able to play a Mozart concerto simply by tapping on the piano keys from time to time. We are all a mixture of light and shadow, strengths and weaknesses.

But this state of affairs is neither optimal nor inevitable. Each of us has the potential to become free from mental states that cause suffering for ourselves and others, to find inner peace and to contribute to the wellbeing of others. But just wishing for this is not enough. We need to train our minds (Ricard, 2006; 2010). Happiness is a skill that requires effort and time.

As influential as external conditions may be, suffering, like wellbeing, is essentially a state of mind. It is the mind that translates good and bad circumstances into happiness or misery. The search for happiness is not about looking at life through rose-colored glasses or blinding oneself to the pain and imperfections of the world. It is the purging of mental toxins, such as hatred and compulsive desire and, above all, of ignorance, that poison the mind.

If happiness is a state that depends on inner conditions, one must recognize those conditions with awareness and then bring them together. It is important to emphasize that the cultivation of inner conditions for happiness does not mean wallowing in egocentric introspection and failing to be concerned with others. It is not a 'selfish' process, as its aim is to diminish self-centeredness and cultivate altruism. A key component of 'finding inner happiness' is to cultivate benevolence, altruistic love, and compassion. These qualities are cultivated within, but expressed towards others. In essence, according to Buddhism, seeking happiness for oneself alone is doomed to failure, since self-centeredness is a major source of our discontent.

3. Extrinsic and intrinsic values

According to the Buddhist, by pinning all our hopes and fears on the external world, we can only end up being disappointed. For instance, in hoping that money will make us happier, we work to acquire it; once we have it, we become obsessed with making it grow and we suffer when we lose it. A friend from Hong Kong once told me that he'd promised himself that he'd save a million dollars, then quit work and enjoy life, and thereby become happy. Ten years later he had not one million but three million dollars. What about happiness? His answer was brief: "I wasted ten years of my life."

Wealth, pleasures, rank, and power are all sought for the sake of happiness. But as we strive, we forget the goal and spend our time pursuing the means for their own sake. In so doing, we miss the point and remain deeply unsatisfied. This substitution of means for ends is one of the main traps lying across the pursuit of a meaningful life. As the economist Richard Layard puts it:

> Some people say you should not think about your own happiness, because you can only be happy as a by-product of something else. That is a dismal philosophy, a formula for keeping oneself occupied at all costs. (2005, p. 235)

According to Tim Kasser (2008), cross-cultural studies have clearly demonstrated that, in accordance with Buddhist views, the pursuit of extrinsic, materialistic values is detrimental to wellbeing. Kasser defines 'consumerism' as a mindset that makes one believe that a happy, meaningful, and successful life occurs when a person is wealthy and owns many possessions that convey a high social status (Kasser & Kanner, 2004). Multiple studies of a variety of types of people in a variety of settings have shown that to the extent people take on consumerist beliefs, the more they report high levels of personal suffering (Kasser, 2002), of depression and anxiety, as well as physical discomfort (headaches, stomachaches, and backaches). They also report stronger, more frequent experiences of unpleasant emotions such as anger, frustration, sadness, anxiety, and worry. Materialistic values are also associated with using more drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, and other mind-altering substances.

Other studies have demonstrated that materialistic aims typically stand in opposition to the kinds of values that promote good interpersonal relationships (Grouzet *et al.*, 2005; Schwartz, 1992). They tend to oppose values such as being 'helpful' and 'loyal,' obtaining 'true friendship' and 'mature love,' and having close, committed relationships. They also oppose aims such as working for 'social justice' and 'equality,' and trying to make the world a better place.

A strong focus on money and possessions also seems to increase the likelihood of 'objectifying' other people (Kasser, Vansteenkiste, & Deckop, 2006) and treating them as instruments to be manipulated in the pursuit of one's self-centered goals. Materialistic individuals also report engaging in fewer pro-social and more anti-social activities, including questionable ethical behaviors in business settings. Thus, the beliefs of consumerism seem to work against healthy, compassionate human interactions.

The cross-cultural research of Schwartz (1992) reveals that to the extent people value aims such as wealth and status, they tend to care less about values such as 'protecting the environment,' 'attaining unity with nature,' and having 'a world of beauty.'

Conversely, abundant research shows that intrinsic goals are positively associated with personal, social, and ecological wellbeing (Kasser, 2006). People oriented towards intrinsic values are more empathic, more cooperative, and more likely to engage in the kinds of pro-social, generous behaviors that promote good will and the wellbeing of others.

In short, according to R. H. Tawney:

> The psychological evidence suggests that the social system of consumerism is one that does indeed encourage the egotism, greed, and quarrelsomeness that contribute to personal suffering, lower compassion, and greater damage to other living things. Buddhism, in contrast, is a proven means of discouraging such qualities and helping people fix their minds on much higher ends, ends that will benefit their own well-being, the well-being of other people, and the well-being of other species of living things. ([1920/2004], p. 180 cited in Kasser's unpublished [2008])

The Dalai Lama continually encourages the enhancement of intrinsic values, which are those that can contribute something to the world. These include kindness, inner contentment, self-discipline, tolerance, non-violence towards human beings, animals and the environment, and a sense of global responsibility.

4. Pleasure and happiness

It is very common to confuse pleasure with happiness. Buddhism argues that there is no direct relationship between pleasure and happiness. The fleeting experience of pleasure is mostly dependent upon outer circumstances, on a specific location or moment in time. It is unstable by nature and the sensation it evokes soon becomes neutral or even unpleasant. It leads to 'hedonic adaptation' and when repeated it may grow insipid or even lead to disgust; savoring a delicious meal is a source of genuine pleasure, but we are indifferent to it once we've had our fill and would even sicken of it if we were to continue eating.

Pleasure is almost always linked to an activity and naturally leads to lassitude by dint of being repeated. Listening to beautiful music requires a focus of attention that, minimal as it is, cannot be maintained indefinitely. After a while, fatigue kicks in and the music loses its charm. If we were forced to listen to it for days on end, it would become unbearable.

Furthermore, pleasure is an individual experience, most often centered on the self, which is why it can easily descend into selfishness and sometimes conflict with the wellbeing of others. Pleasure can be joined to cruelty, violence, pride, greed and other mental states that are incompatible with true happiness. Therefore, it stands to reason that if we identify happiness with pleasure, we would never be able to achieve enduring happiness.

Instead of being, like pleasure, vulnerable to outer circumstances, genuine happiness gives us the resources to deal with the inevitable ups and downs of life. It does not mutate into its opposite, but endures and grows as we keep on experiencing it. It imparts a sense of fulfilment that, in time, becomes second nature.

This distinction does not mean that we should not seek out pleasurable sensations. There is no reason to deprive ourselves of the enjoyment of a magnificent landscape, of swimming in the sea, or of the scent of a rose, as long as such sensations do not lead to craving. Although intrinsically different from happiness, pleasure is not its enemy. Whether pleasure poses any threat to happiness depends on how it is experienced. If pleasure is tainted with grasping, gives rise to avidity and dependence, and impedes inner freedom, it has become an obstacle to happiness. On the other hand, if it is experienced in the present moment, in a state of inner peace and freedom, pleasure adorns happiness without overshadowing it.

As observed by Tsong-kha-pa:

> [C]linging to such stimuli as the actual source of one's happiness can easily give rise to at least intermittent, if not chronic, anxiety as one faces the possibility,

> likelihood, or certainty that stimuli will not last. ([sic.] 2000, pp. 281–284, c.f.
> Wallace and Shapiro 2006, pp. 691-692)

The collaborative research between neuroscientists and Buddhist contemplatives seems to support this distinction between pleasure and happiness. The mental states that long-term meditators generate are related to emotional balance and positive affects (involving, for instance, the left prefrontal cortex), rather than with sensations and pleasure (involving the reward areas of the brain).

The distinction between pleasure and happiness is found throughout Buddhist literature and is not foreign to western psychology. According to Ryan and Deci (2001), hedonic happiness occurs when we are primarily seeking pleasant feelings and avoiding unpleasant ones, while eudaimonic happiness is conceptualized more in terms of optimal functioning. Ryff (1995, p. 100) describes eudaimonia "as the striving for perfection that represents the realization of one's true potential." A recent study (Steger, Kashdan, and Oishi, 2008) shows that the wellbeing resulting from hedonic behaviors is unstable. This notion is also traceable to Aristotle's ethics.

In essence, for the Dalai Lama, happiness does not consist of an uninterrupted succession of pleasurable experiences. Rather, it is an optimal way of being, an exceptionally healthy state of mind that underlies and suffuses all emotional states, that embraces all the joys and sorrows that come our way. It is also a state of wisdom purged of mental poisons and of insight free from blindness to the true nature of reality. *Sukha* includes a combination of various fundamental human qualities, such as altruistic love, compassion, inner peace, inner strength, and inner freedom.

5. Altruism and happiness

A series of studies conducted on hundreds of students found an undeniable correlation between altruism and happiness, determining that those who believe themselves to be happiest are also the most altruistic (Myers, 2000). Research done by Seligman (2002) indicates that the joy of undertaking an act of disinterested kindness provides profound satisfaction. Some students were given a certain sum of money and asked to go out and have fun for a few days, while others were told to use this money to help people in need (elderly, sick patients, etc.) All were asked to write a report for the next class. The study has shown that the satisfactions triggered by a pleasant activity, such as going out with friends, seeing a movie, or enjoying a banana split, were largely eclipsed by those derived from performing an act of kindness. When the act was spontaneous and drew on humane qualities, the entire day was improved; the subjects noticed that they were better listeners that day, more friendly, and more appreciated by others. "The exercise of kindness is a gratification, in contrast to a pleasure," Seligman (2002, p. 9) concludes.

According to Buddhism, there is a direct relationship between having a good heart and happiness. Joy and satisfaction are closely tied to love and affection. As for misery, it goes hand in hand with selfishness and hostility.

Compassion is also deeply related with wisdom. Altruistic love and compassion are attuned to reality insofar as they recognize and appreciate the interdependent nature of all beings. This naturally brings more empathic concern for others (Batson, 2011) through the recognition that we are all the same in wanting to avoid suffering. Being attuned to reality, altruistic love and compassion are 'functional'. Someone who sees phenomena as interdependent cultivates compassion, and who then acts accordingly, will feel a sense of

harmony. This is a win-win situation. On the contrary, an exceedingly self-centered person views the world as consisting of intrinsically separate entities: 'me,' 'others,' 'the rest of the world.' Such a person attempts to build his individual happiness within the bubble of self-centeredness. This is essentially dysfunctional because the world is not made of separate entities. Such a worldview leads to a lose-lose situation where the person is miserable and makes others miserable.

The research in neuroscience also indicates that loving-kindness and compassion are among the most positive of all positive emotions or mental states.

The collaborative research involving neuroscientists and Buddhist contemplatives began in earnest fifteen years ago. Following an initial exploratory phase, about twenty experienced meditators were tested: monks and laypeople, men and women, easterners and westerners. All of them had devoted between ten thousand and fifty thousand hours to meditation—to developing compassion, altruism, mindfulness and awareness. These studies led to the publication of several articles in prestigious scientific journals, establishing the credibility of research on meditation and on achieving emotional balance, an area that had not been taken seriously until then. In the words of Richard Davidson: "It demonstrates that the brain is capable of being trained and physically modified in ways few people can imagine" (Kaufman, 2005)[1].

Experienced meditators have the ability to generate mental states that are precise, focused, powerful and lasting. In particular, experiments have shown that the region of the brain associated with emotions such as compassion, for example, showed considerably higher activity in those with long-term meditative experience. These discoveries show that basic human qualities that contribute to wellbeing can be deliberately cultivated through mental training.

During meditation on compassion (Lutz, Greischar, Rawlings, Ricard and Davidson, 2004), most experienced meditators showed a dramatic increase in the high-frequency brain activity called gamma waves in areas of the brain related with positive emotions and with empathy. Other studies (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek and Finkel, 2008) have also shown that 'loving-kindness meditation' significantly increases positive emotions and decreases psychological distress.

Twenty years ago it was almost universally accepted by neuroscientists that the brain contained all its neurons at birth, and that their number did not change with experience. We now know that new neurons are produced up until the moment of death, and we speak of 'neuroplasticity', a term which takes into account the fact that the brain changes continuously in relation to our experience. For example, a particular training, such as learning a musical instrument or a sport, can bring about a profound change. Mindfulness, altruism, and other basic human qualities that contribute to happiness can be cultivated in the same way, and we can acquire the 'knowhow' to enable us to do this.

In Buddhism, 'to meditate' means 'to get used to' or 'to cultivate'. Meditation consists of getting used to a new way of being, of perceiving the world and mastering our thoughts. Meditation is a matter not of theory but of practice, just as it does not satisfy our hunger to read a restaurant menu if we are not going to eat something from it. It is essential to maintain the continuity of meditation day after day, because in this way our practice gradually gains

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[1] Richard Davidson's words here are reported by M. Kaufman, in his (2005) interview of Davidson for the Washington Post.

substance and stability. Cultivating loving-kindness and compassion is, according to Buddhism, essential to happiness (Ricard, 2010).

The Dalai Lama often speaks of two kinds of compassion. The first is a 'biological' compassion that we feel towards those who are close to us, to our children, relatives, and close friends. This compassion is naturally present in most people, but is limited and biased. The second one is an 'extended' compassion for all sentient beings—friends, strangers, or difficult people—that is unbiased and unlimited, but needs to be cultivated, emotionally and cognitively.

The Dalai Lama also stresses the fact that compassion is a source of courage in the face of suffering. When we experience in a self-centered way, either our own suffering or others' sufferings, the greater those sufferings are, the more discouraged we will become. Conversely, if we are deeply concerned with others' wellbeing and not overly focused upon ourselves, our own sufferings will seem flimsy; and the more we are exposed to others' sufferings, the more our compassionate courage to do whatever it takes to dispel these sufferings will grow.

6. Dealing with emotions

According to the Dalai Lama, one important aspect of the 'Buddhist science' of happiness is to develop methods for dealing skilfully with emotions, reinforcing constructive ones and counteracting afflictive ones. Buddhism considers that if an emotion strengthens our inner peace and seeks the good of others, it is positive, or constructive; if it shatters our serenity, deeply disturbs our mind and is intended to harm others, it is negative, or afflictive. That is what differentiates, for instance, 'holy anger'—indignation before injustice—from rage born of the desire to hurt someone. The former has freed people from slavery and domination; it seeks to end injustice or to make someone aware of the error of his ways. The second generates nothing but sorrow. Likewise, the thirsts of obsessive desire and greed that latch onto the objects of their attachment are other examples of afflictive emotions.

Conversely, altruistic love directed towards the wellbeing of others, compassion focused on their suffering in thought and deed, are considered to be examples of nourishing emotions that help to generate happiness.

6.1 Negative emotions

The Tibetan word *nyön-mong* (*klesha* in Sanskrit) refers to a state of mental disturbance, torment and confusion that 'afflicts us from within.' Hatred, jealousy or obsession make us deeply uncomfortable. Moreover, the actions and words they inspire are usually intended to hurt others. Conversely, thoughts of kindness, affection and tolerance give us joy and courage, open our minds and free us inside. They also spur us on to benevolence and empathy.

In addition, the disturbing emotions tend to distort our perception of reality and to prevent us from seeing it as it really is. Craving idealizes its object, hatred demonizes it. These emotions make us believe that beauty or ugliness is inherent in people and in things, even though it is the mind that decides if they are 'attractive' or 'repulsive.' This misapprehension opens a gap between the way things appear and they way they are, clouds the judgment and makes us think and act as if these qualities were not largely based on how we see them.

6.2 Positive emotions

On the other hand, 'positive' emotions and mental factors strengthen the clarity of our thinking and the accuracy of our reasoning, since they are based on a more accurate appreciation of reality. Selfless love reflects some understanding of the intimate interdependence of beings, of

our happiness and that of others, a notion that is attuned to reality, while selfishness opens an ever-wider abyss between us and other people.

Buddhism's sole objective in treating the emotions is to free us from the fundamental causes of suffering. It starts with the principle that certain mental events are afflictive regardless of the intensity or context of their formation (Ekman *et al.*, 2005). That is particularly true for the three mental processes considered to be basic mental 'poisons:' desire (in the sense of hunger or tormenting greed), hatred (the wish for someone to be harmed), and delusion (which distorts our perception of reality.) Buddhism usually includes pride and envy as well; together, these are the five major poisons associated with some sixty negative mental states. The texts also refer to '84,000 negative emotions.' These are not all specified in detail, but the symbolic figure gives a sense of the complexity of the human mind and helps us to understand that our methods of transforming the mind must be adapted to the enormous variety of mental dispositions. That is why Buddhism speaks of the '84,000 doors' that lead to inner transformation.

7. Ignorance: Clinging to the notion of self undermines happiness

Ignorance, in the Buddhist lexicon, is an inability to recognize the true nature of things and the law of cause and effect that governs happiness and suffering. Among all the ignorant ways we go about building happiness, one of the most sterile is egocentrism. According to Buddhism, we can never be truly happy if we dissociate ourselves from the happiness of others. Echoing Romain Rolland (1952); life soon becomes goalless when selfish happiness is life's only goal.

Among the many aspects of mental delusion and ignorance, the most radically disruptive is the grasping onto the concept of a personal identity: the individual self. Buddhism distinguishes between an innate, instinctive 'I'—when we think, for instance, 'I'm awake' or 'I'm cold'—the notion of the 'person', which refers to the dynamic flow of our personal history, and a conceptual 'self' shaped by the force of habit. We attribute various qualities to it and posit it as the core of our being, autonomous and enduring. A similar distinction between the 'I', the 'person' and the 'self', has been presented by psychologist David Galin (2003).

As to the 'self', we imagine it as an invisible and permanent thing that characterizes us from birth to death. The self is not merely the sum of 'my' limbs, 'my' organs, 'my' skin, 'my' name, 'my' consciousness, but their exclusive owner.

At every moment between birth and death, the body undergoes ceaseless transformations and the mind becomes the theatre of countless emotional and conceptual experiences. And yet we assign qualities of permanence, uniqueness, and autonomy to the self. Furthermore, as we begin to feel that this self is highly vulnerable and must be protected and satisfied, aversion and attraction come into play—aversion for anything that threatens the self, attraction to all that pleases it, comforts it, boosts its confidence, or puts it at ease. These two basic feelings, attraction and repulsion, are the founts of a whole sea of conflicting emotions.

Out of fear of the world and others, out of dread of suffering, out of anxiety about living and dying, we imagine that by retreating inside the bubble of ego, we will be protected. We create the illusion of being separate from the world, hoping thereby to avert suffering. In fact, what happens is just the opposite, since ego-grasping and disproportionate self-cherishing are powerful magnets to attract suffering.

Some Western psychologists share this Buddhist perspective. In a theoretical paper and review of the subject (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011), it was argued that the perception of a structured self that takes the form of a seemingly unitary, permanent, and independent entity leads to a self-centered psychological style and seems to be a significant source of both

affliction and fluctuating, hedonic, happiness. Conversely, a selfless psychological style emerges when perception of the self is a dynamic network of transitory relations, and this seems to be a source of durable eudaimonic happiness.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) also distinguish between an independent self and an interdependent self. They postulate that individuals have strikingly different concepts of their self, and these variations are a function of differences in cultural settings. These different self-constructs affect the ways in which individuals experience themselves and others, and also affect their cognitions, emotions and motivation.

One of the characteristics of entering a state of 'flow', a very rewarding mental state, is precisely the vanishing of the self. According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi[2], at such times, one becomes…

> completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time
> flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous
> one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills
> to the utmost.

In the West, transient and spontaneous states of 'no-self', such as in shamanic trances, are often identified as altered states of consciousness and are said to reflect an abnormal psychological functioning (Ward, 1989). This contrasts with the various Eastern traditions where the concept of 'no-self' is often associated with an optimal way of being, awareness and wisdom. In Buddhism, the understanding of the lack of reality of an independent, unitary self corresponds to a state of great lucidity and wisdom. It represents the culminating point of a thorough analytical and contemplative investigation, which is very different from an uncontrolled, confused state of trance.

According to Buddhism, an erroneous sense of self forms the basis of all mental affliction, be it hatred, clinging, desire, envy, pride, or confusion. From that point on, we see the world through the distorting mirror of our illusions. We find ourselves in disharmony with the true nature of things and that inevitably leads to frustration and suffering.

This notion is also found in Western psychology, which recognizes that cognitive distortions, resulting from various egocentric biases, are also associated with self-centeredness (Greenwald, 1980).

The Buddhist analysis leads us to conclude that the self does not reside outside the body, or in any part of the body, nor is it some diffuse entity permeating the entire body. We willingly believe that the self is associated with consciousness, but consciousness too is just a flow or experience: the past moment of consciousness is dead (only its impact remains), the future is not yet, and the present doesn't last. How could a distinct self exist, suspended between something that no longer exists and something that does not yet exist?

Where then is the self? It cannot be exclusively in my body, because when I say, 'I am proud,' it is my consciousness that is proud, not my body. So is it exclusively in my consciousness? That is far from certain. When I say: 'Someone pushed me,' was it my consciousness being pushed? Of course not. The self obviously cannot be outside either the body or the consciousness.

The only way out of this dilemma is to consider the self as a mental or verbal designation linked to a dynamic process, to a series of changing relations that incorporate the perception of

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the outer world, sensations, mental images, emotions, and concepts. The self is merely an idea that does not match any real entity.

When the self ceases to be the most important thing in the world, we find it easier to focus our concern on others. The sight of their suffering bolsters our courage and resolve to work on their behalf, instead of crippling us with our own emotional distress.

Psychologist Paul Ekman has been inspired to study 'people gifted with exceptionally human qualities.' Among the most remarkable traits he has noted among such people are "an impression of kindness, a way of being that others can sense and appreciate, and, unlike so many charismatic charlatans, perfect harmony between their private and public lives." (Ekman, 2001)[3] They emanate goodness. Above all, notes Ekman, they exhibit "an absence of ego. These people inspire others by how little they make of their status, their fame—in short, their self. They never give a second thought to whether their position or importance is recognized." Such a lack of egocentricity, he adds, "is altogether perplexing from a psychological point of view." Ekman also stresses how "people instinctively want to be in their company and how, even if they can't always explain why, they find their presence enriching. In essence, they emanate goodness." According to Ekman, the Dalai Lama is someone who embodies all these qualities.

8. Craving

No one would dispute the fact that it is natural to desire and that desire plays a driving role in our lives. But let us not confuse the deep aspirations of making oneself a better human being, of working for the good of others or of achieving spiritual awakening, with the desire that is mere hunger and tortures the mind.

As natural as it may seem, desire degenerates into a 'mental toxin' as soon as it becomes a craving, an obsession, or an unmitigated attachment. Such craving is all the more frustrating and alienating in that it is out of synch with reality. When we are obsessed by a thing or a person we misconstrue them to be one hundred percent desirable; and possessing or enjoying them becomes an absolute necessity. As the Buddha Shakyamuni taught: prey to craving, like a monkey in the forest you jump from branch to branch without ever finding any fruit, from life to life without ever finding any peace.

9. Hatred

Of all the mental poisons that cause suffering, hatred is the most toxic. It is one of the chief causes of unhappiness and the driving force of countless acts of violence. When someone hits us, instinct would have us hit back. Likewise, human societies give their members the right to retaliate in varying degrees of justice, depending on the societies' level of civility. Tolerance, forgiveness, and understanding of the aggressor's situation are generally considered to be optional. We are rarely able to see the criminal as a victim of his own hatred. It is even harder to understand that the desire for vengeance stems from basically the same emotion that led the aggressor to assault us. So long as one person's hatred generates another's, the cycle of resentment, reprisal and suffering will never be broken. If hatred responds to hatred, hatred will never end, taught the Buddha Shakyamuni. Eliminating hatred from our mind stream is therefore a critical step in our journey to happiness.

Hatred exaggerates the faults of its object and ignores its good qualities. We perceive the hated person or group as 100% detestable (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 1998).

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[3] The preceding quoted passage as well as the ones that immediately follow come from personal communication with Paul Ekman in 2001.

Under the influence of anger our mind sees things in an unrealistic way, the source of endless frustration and sorrow. As noted by the Dalai Lama:

> By giving in to anger, we are not necessarily harming our enemy but we are definitely harming ourselves. We lose our sense of inner peace, we do everything wrong, we cannot sleep well, we put off our guests or we cast furious glances at those who have the impudence of being in our way. We make life impossible for those who live with us, and even our dearest friends are kept at a distance.

This rigid frame, the prison of the mind, is responsible for much of the hate and violence that plague us. By forming the image of the 'enemy' as despicable, we generalize it as being the whole person or the entire group. The mind, steeped in animosity and resentment, encloses itself in illusion and is convinced that the source of its dissatisfaction is entirely exterior to itself. Our perception of being wronged or threatened leads us to focus exclusively on the negative aspects of a person or a group. We solidify the 'evil' or 'disgusting' attributes we see in them as being permanent and intrinsic traits, and turn away from any reevaluation of the situation. We thus feel justified in expressing our animosity and retaliating. By then, we have obscured the basic benevolence that makes us appreciate everyone's aspiration to avoid suffering and achieve happiness. This process has also been clearly recognized in Western psychology (Beck, 1999). According to Ekman (2003), anger is inaccurate in its assessment of reality in that it does not perceive a situation in a balanced way, but views it through the distorted filter of 'me, I, my, and mine.' He also writes of a 'refractory' period during which only perceptions that support our anger come to mind and we do not register any interpretation that contradicts our view.

As one of the Dalai Lama's teachers, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1993, pp. 126-127) wrote: "Instead of hating so-called enemies, therefore, the real target of your hatred should be hatred itself." As appropriate as patience, without weakness, may be towards those we consider our enemies, it is entirely inappropriate to be patient with hatred itself, regardless of the circumstances.

One day, the Dalai Lama received a visit from a monk arriving from Tibet after spending twenty-five years in Chinese labor camps. His torturers had brought him to the brink of death several times. The Dalai Lama talked at length with the monk, deeply moved to find him so serene after so much suffering. He asked him if he had ever been afraid. The monk answered: "I was often afraid of hating my torturers, for in so doing I would have destroyed myself."

10. Is it possible to be free of afflictive emotions?

How can one develop constructive emotions while ridding ourselves of destructive ones? As emphasized by the Dalai Lama (1998):

> [R]ecognition of the nature of the mind and an accurate understanding of the phenomenal world are essential for our quest for happiness. If the mind relies on totally erroneous views about the nature of things and maintains them, it will be very difficult for us to transform ourselves and achieve freedom. Developing a correct view is not a question of faith or adherence to dogma but of clear understanding. This arises from a correct analysis of reality.

In addition, we need to work on our thoughts one by one, analyzing the way they emerge and evolve and gradually learning to free them as they arise, defusing the chain reactions that allow thoughts to invade the mind. Furthermore, being able to repeatedly free oneself of such

afflictive thoughts as they occur gradually erodes their very tendency to form again, until they stop appearing altogether. Just as our emotions, moods and tendencies have been shaped by the accumulation of countless instantaneous thoughts, they can be transformed through time by dealing in a mindful way with such thoughts.

The experience of introspection shows that the negative emotions are transitory mental events that can be obliterated by their opposites, the positive emotions, acting as antidotes.

We have to gradually familiarize ourselves with each antidote—loving-kindness as antidote to hatred, for instance—until the absence of hatred becomes second nature. The Tibetan word *gom*, which is usually translated as 'meditation,' more precisely denotes 'familiarization,' while the Sanskrit word *bhavana*, also translated as 'meditation' means 'cultivation'. *Gom* is about familiarizing oneself with a new vision of things, a new way to manage one's thoughts, of perceiving people and experiencing the world.

10.1 The use of antidotes

The first method of freeing oneself of afflictive emotions consists of neutralizing afflictive emotions with a specific antidote, just as we neutralize the destructive effects of poison with anti-venom, or of acid with an alkali. One fundamental point emphasized by Buddhism is that two diametrically opposed mental processes cannot form *simultaneously*. We may fluctuate rapidly between love and hatred, but we cannot feel, *in the same instant of consciousness*, the desire to hurt someone and to do him good. The two impulses are as opposed to each other as water and fire.

In the same way, by habituating your mind to altruistic love, you gradually eliminate hatred, because the two states of mind can alternate but cannot co-exist at the same time. So the more we cultivate loving-kindness, the less there will be space for hatred in our mental landscape. It is therefore important to begin by learning the antidotes that correspond to each negative emotion, and then to cultivate them.

Since altruistic love acts as a direct antidote to hatred, the more we develop it, the more the desire to harm will wither until it finally disappears. It is a question not of suppressing hatred, but of turning the mind to something diametrically opposed to it: love and compassion.

It is equally impossible for greed or desire-passion to co-exist with inner-freedom, which allows us to taste mental peace and to rest in the cool shade of serenity. Desire can fully develop only when it is allowed to run rampant to the point where it monopolizes the mind.

As for anger, it will be neutralized by patience. This does not require us to remain passive, but to steer clear of being overwhelmed by destructive emotions. As the Dalai Lama (1999) explains, patience safeguards our peace of mind in the face of adversity; it is a deliberate response (as opposed to an unreasoned reaction) to the strong negative thoughts and emotions that tend to arise when we encounter harm. There are many other such methods to free ourselves from afflictive mental states.

Another way to deal with afflictive emotions is to dissociate ourselves mentally from the emotion that is troubling us (Ricard, 2010). Usually we identify with our emotions completely. When we are overcome by anxiety or by a fit of anger, we are at one with that feeling. It is omnipresent in our mind, leaving no room for other mental states such as inner peace or patience, or to consider reasoning that might calm our discomfort. However, if at that moment we are still capable of a little presence of mind—a capability that we can be trained to develop—we can stop identifying with our anger.

The mind is, in fact, capable of examining what is happening within it. All we need to do is observe our emotions in the same way we would observe an external event taking place in

front of us. The part of our mind that is aware of the anger is just simply aware—it is not angry. In other words, awareness is not affected by the emotion it is observing. When we understand that, we can step back, realize that this emotion has no solidity, and allow enough space for it to dissolve by itself.

By doing so, we avoid two extremes, each as bad as the other: repressing our emotion, which would then remain in a dark corner of our consciousness like a time bomb; or letting the emotion explode at the expense of those around us and of our own inner peace. Not identifying with emotions is a fundamental antidote that is applicable to all kinds of afflictive emotions.

11. Happiness and 'goodness'

In Plato's *Georgias* it is stated that: The happiest man is he who has no trace of malice in his soul. During a five-day meeting with scientists at Dharamsala in India, psychologist Paul Ekman, one of the world specialists on emotions, and his daughter Eve sat near the Dalai Lama for a private conversation. Throughout their conversation, as he often does, the Dalai Lama casually held Paul's hand in his. Paul was very moved by this moment and confided later: "I felt some kind of compassionate warmth flowing from his hand. I never thought that goodness could be palpable."

The Dalai Lama is one of the few people in this world who enjoys a high moral stature. He inspires respect and deep sympathy in millions of people, as do Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and Desmond Tutu. As the Dalai Lama's long-time student and friend Robert Thurman writes:

> Everyone tends to like the Dalai Lama even when they don't think they will. The question is "Why?" […] I have witnessed this strange phenomenon time and again over the years whenever the Dalai Lama appears in public, as well as in private meetings with noted scientists, dignitaries, and heads-of-state. (2008, p. ix)

More than anything else, the Dalai Lama is a good human being. When he says, "My religion is good heart," his words ring true because he embodies them. When he was asked why, wherever he goes, tens of thousands of people come to see him and listen to him, he first answered with his usual simplicity: "I don't know." Then, after a pause, he added: "I have no special qualities, but perhaps it is because all my life I have meditated on love and compassion with all the strength of my mind."

I remember one evening when the Dalai Lama was leaving a meeting with students at Bordeaux University in France and walked through the crowd of people who had not managed to get a seat in the theatre. An old couple was standing to one side, afraid of getting caught up in the crush. The husband was standing behind his frail wife, who was in a wheelchair. The Dalai Lama's ever-alert gaze lighted on them. He broke through the crowd and went and took the old lady's hands in his and looked at her closely, smiling. His only words were inexpressible words of loving-kindness. After those few minutes, which seemed like an eternity, the old man said to his wife, "You see, he is a holy man."

The Dalai Lama would certainly not describe himself as a 'holy man'—'nonsense'—he would reply and add: 'We are all basically the same human beings. We all share the wish to be free from suffering, we all strive towards happiness and have the same kinds of emotions, whether in the East or in the West.'

In fact, another characteristic of the Dalai Lama is his authenticity. He is exactly the same in public and in private, with heads of states or with the person who works in a hotel where he is

staying, seeing them as a fellow human being and showing them all exactly the same kindness, concern, and openness, being fully present with them. I have seen him at the Strasbourg European Parliament, disappearing in the kitchen to greet the cooks, while the chief representatives of the fifteen European countries watched with charmed amusement, standing at the banquet table waiting for him to sit.

He is not concerned with his image and laughs with the same glee when he hears a Chinese official calling him 'a wolf in monks' clothes' and other people describing him as a 'living god.' He enjoys saying, having undergone gall-bladder surgery in India in 2008: "Now it is scientifically proven that the Dalai Lama has no healing power." I believe that this is a manifestation of his inner peace and freedom from the preoccupations that so often afflict our minds: gain and loss, praise and blame, fame and anonymity, pleasant and unpleasant circumstances.

It is not surprising that both in the Dalai Lama's life and in Buddhist contemplative practice, the notions of wisdom and compassion are intimately intertwined with the notion of happiness.

Altruism does not preclude in any way pursuing our own aspirations to flourish in life. In fact, the best way to achieve happiness is to be altruistic. So, according to Buddhism, wishing that *all beings* be free from suffering and achieve happiness, which is the heart of compassion, surely includes yourself, since you are one of those many beings. Your happiness is as desirable and legitimate as anyone else's. This is known as the 'two-fold accomplishment of other's and our own aspirations.'

12. Conclusion

So when the Dalai Lama declares that 'the main purpose of life is happiness' (Dalai Lama and Cutler, 1998), I have come to think that in his mind happiness is inseparable from wisdom (the understanding of the true nature of reality) and compassion. Happiness is incompatible with various mental states that cause us to see reality in a distorted way and to give rise to afflictions such as hatred, jealousy, arrogance and selfish greed.

After having been fortunate to have known the Dalai Lama intimately for many years, I am convinced that the goal of life is a deep state of wellbeing and wisdom, accompanied by love for every being: the immutable simplicity of a good heart. It is therefore only at the price of constant cultivation of wisdom and compassion that we can become really the guardians and inheritors of happiness, true 'felicitators'.

The Dalai Lama's message is always the same and he repeats it to anyone willing to hear it:

> Anyone, even if they are hostile, is a living being like me who fears suffering and aspires to happiness. They have every right to be spared suffering and to achieve happiness. That thought makes us feel deep concern for the happiness of others, whether friends or enemies. It is the basis of genuine compassion.

In essence, someone who looks for happiness outside takes everything from the world, someone who cultivates happiness within, has something to give to the world.

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No-one is unmusical: Elizabeth, everyday cheermongery, and active musical citizenship

Neil Thin

Abstract: Everyday cheermongers spread positive emotion through social contagion. This capability is illustrated here through a portrait of Elizabeth, a 'Suzuki method' violin teacher in Edinburgh. Through this example, we can learn about the important ways in which children and parents alike rely on skilled and dedicated felicitators to help them through the difficult balance between enjoyable and sociable music-making on the one hand, and the pursuit of musical excellence on the other. After presenting the philosophical and practical aspects of Shinichi Suzuki's 'everyone-is-talented' approach to instrumental music instruction, this paper argues for recognition of the key roles of music in facilitating happiness, and explores cultural variety in the promotion of musicality. While also recognizing that music education needs a democratic 'no child left behind' approach, the argument is that the full benefits of music are better realised through active musical engagement and social music-making. When not treated simply as an optional leisure activity or as a means to other ends, music can be a pathway to self-transcendent 'peak experiences' that can be achieved not only via the extraordinary performances of elite musicians, but also by savouring the very imperfect musical sounds produced by children.

Keywords: music, happiness, parenting, children, education, perfectionism, self-transcendence

1. Introduction

This paper argues for stronger recognition of music facilitators and music itself as sources of happiness. Focusing particularly on the joys of collective amateur music and on the tricky business of helping children and parents through the tribulations and delayed gratifications of early-stage instrument-learning, I present Elizabeth, a violin teacher, as an inspiring example of the 'everyday cheermonger', someone who spreads positive emotion through social contagion without consciously specialising in this function or advertising it as a professional service. Observation of music teachers who have this ability also offers us important lessons concerning the synergies and trade-offs among the various goods that music-making can provide. Elizabeth enables pupils and parents to enjoy progression towards better musical abilities without detracting from the joy of savouring every musical moment along the way. Her calm and supportive responses to children's mood swings teach children and parents how to cope with the inevitable stresses of learning difficult instruments. She spreads musical and social empathy through her facilitation of duets, jazz improvisations, and larger ensembles, and of parental and toddler participation. So unlike mere entertainers, Elizabeth's role goes beyond temporary mood-lifting. Those who witness her teaching feel more substantially elevated, persuaded to lead more exemplary and fulfilling lives than they otherwise would.

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Elizabeth has played a central role in the development of the 'Suzuki' approach to instrumental music instruction in Scotland. In portraying this approach, I also aim to link the understanding of music-making to broader themes of love, perfection, and self-transcendence. The arguments here about the importance of music for happiness, and about cultural variety in the promotion of musicality, can be extended in various ways to include other arts, leisure activities and therapies. I discuss several qualifiers to the common association of music and happiness: music education needs a democratic 'no child left behind' approach with a sensible balance between the momentary enjoyment of music as a process, and the longer-term pursuit of excellence; full benefits of music are best realised through active musical engagement and social music-making and music must be recognized as not just an optional leisure activity or means to other ends, but as a pathway to 'peak' or 'self-transcendent' experiences (also commonly called 'ineffable' or 'sublime' by music psychologists and philosophers).

Two further happiness-facilitation themes are broached here. Concerning upbringing in general, I want to emphasise that joy-spreading and music are fascinating capabilities for which we all have inborn talent. But these potentials are only realised if they are nurtured through good parenting, good schooling and a supportive cultural environment (Creech, 2010). Finally, the case study touches on a theme which has repeatedly cropped up in happiness scholarship and in lay theories of happiness: the importance of savouring ordinary everyday pleasures (Bryant and Veroff, 2007). When teachers like Elizabeth help children to enjoy music practice and to link it with other enjoyable activities, and when they persuade parents to enjoy the very imperfect musical sounds produced by children, and to enjoy the here and now rather than reducing childhood learning to the status of a pathway towards adult capabilities, they are teaching us how to savour. The western 'academic' or 'elite' classical music tradition has produced exquisite music but has also done a great deal of damage by scorning the more ordinary pleasures of simpler music and less polished musical performances.

2. Grand twinkle

Eleven children aged from 3 to 5 line the stage, all with home-made toy violins. Their teacher Elizabeth, a bundle of energy in her mid-70s, watches them in delight from the edge of the stage, and gestures to the pianist, who plays a chord. The children all bow, to rapturous applause, before Elizabeth herds them carefully towards the waiting arms of their moist-cheeked grinning parents. Another line is quickly assembled, this one of slightly bigger children, all with real violins, some of which are improbably small - 1/32 size, little bigger than an adult hand. These little cherubs bow, then together with Elizabeth they play a rhythmic adaptation of Twinkle Twinkle, and bow again. And so on, via Swedish and Scottish folk tunes, blues, and Shostakovich sonatas, the informal but masterfully regimented concert continues for a couple of hours with an interval for juice and home-baked goodies.

It is in a school hall, but it is not a school event: it is a Sunday afternoon event co-organized by a few violin teachers and parents. No-one is forced to sit still for too long, and children's performances, though ritualised and neatly structured, are nonetheless smiley and informal. The youngsters listen to and enjoy a lot of the music, but are also allowed to get up and run around. Parents do not sit passively either: they are up on their feet chaperoning the young ones or preparing snacks. School concerts can be fun and informal too (and in Scotland they most definitely are more so now than they were a generation ago), but here the parents are active participants in their offspring's education. They are heavily involved: they have helped make the event happen, they know all the tunes, some have learned violin together with their children, and they have been co-responsible for their children's music practice.

One or two of the children are stunning prodigies, playing difficult concerto and sonata excerpts beautifully at early ages. Less excellent musicians of variable abilities perform solo or in groups but with no noticeable reduction in commitment or in applause levels. Unlike the school concerts I remember from my youth, there is little sign here of anxiety about performance, or of reluctance among the performers. Partly, we can attribute this relaxed ambience to the supportive cultural ethos and social network, but a still more important clue is available by watching Elizabeth's body language. Whether sitting or standing as each child performs, and whether in a concert or in a lesson or group practice session, Elizabeth cannot help but give an unambiguously clear bodily display of involvement in the music, of empathy with the player, and of hedonistic savouring of every note.

If happiness is infectious, so is hunger. There are no limits to Elizabeth's appetite for the music that children play, and parents, too, seem to acquire an appetite for performances that can be deeply moving even when they are squeaky, out-of-tune, and rhythmically suspect. They are not alone in finding children's music-making uplifting: Placido Domingo, one of the greatest singers the world has ever heard, wept at a concert by the Venezuelan 'El Sistema' Youth Orchestra, saying they had evoked the strongest emotions he had ever felt (Gould, 2005); the cellist Pablo Casals wept "copiously" at a performance by 1,000 young Japanese pupils of Suzuki's violin school in 1961 (Suzuki, 1983: 101-2).

It is often hard to empathise with other people's sources of enjoyment. To some, music clubs and events like this one no doubt imply a heady mix of pushy parenting, unrealistic self-esteem promotion, and enforced merriment. I'm confident, though, that most parents get a strong and comforting sense of social and pedagogical progress from events like this. Doubtless many participants came reluctantly to today's event. In the run-up to the concert, children will have been wailing at being dragged away from their electronic nannies, parents stressed by the requirement to disrupt their Sunday routines by baking brownies and mending violins. But few are able to resist the compelling force of Elizabeth's organizational and motivational zeal, and once here they all enter happily into the spirit of the occasion. The iconic moment is when all the children and teachers, including the sonata and concerto players, join with the beginners in a 'Grand Twinkle' at the end. No doubt the beginners notice that this big rich sound that surrounds them and fills their bodies is a bit larger than their usual squeaks. But they also feel part of it, and they get a hopeful sense of where the squeaks might one day be heading. In the Grand Twinkle, they experience self-transcendence, to which we'll return later.

Have you ever allowed a piece of music to remove you gently from a foul mood and into a state of blissful calm or exhilaration? Have you felt similarly persuaded by a person whose mere presence, like beautiful music, seems effortlessly to invade those who come within their thrall, who seems to float above the troubles and indignities that cause so much anguish to the rest of us? What if the same person has the gift of spreading both music and joy? Elizabeth has no doubt always spread happiness, but since taking up the violin in her late 40s and becoming a teacher in her 50s, she has developed a genius for facilitating people's social and musical wellbeing.

3. On social entrepreneurs and foot soldiers

> Teaching music is not my main purpose. I want to make good citizens, noble human beings. If a child hears fine music from the day of his birth, and learns to play it himself, he develops sensitivity, discipline, and endurance. He gets a beautiful heart. (Shinichi Suzuki, 1983: 105)

Readers familiar with the 'Suzuki Method' of learning to play musical instruments will recognize that the above event follows the teachings of the Japanese violin teacher and 'Talent Education' promoter Shinichi Suzuki (Suzuki, 1983; Haugland, 2009). Inspired by a variety of western composers, musicians, philosophers, education theorists and scientists, Suzuki revolutionised music education in his native Japan and the social movement he inspired is a shining example of the benefits of multidirectional cultural globalization. His philosophy and practical instruction have inspired many thousands of teachers and musicians in North America and Western Europe and has been a crucial influence on the astonishing success of the Venezuelan 'El Sistema' youth music and social justice programme mentioned above (Gould, 2005). He is a classic example of a social entrepreneur who energetically promotes good simple ideas for human betterment through social transformation.

Not all witnesses of such Suzuki events describe them as benign sources of happiness. When first introduced to Europe in the 1970s, the Suzuki Method attracted expressions of concern about the semi-militaristic organization and 'Japanification' of music education. Like Montessori and Steiner schooling, it remains marginal to mainstream music education (in contrast to its more dominant role in North America). But Suzuki certainly qualifies for membership among the happiness promoters' of fame: his steadfast insistence on the importance of loving nurturance of young children's musical potential, his tireless promotion of parental involvement in musical education, and his recognition of the crucial lifelong strengths that adults can learn from observing the natural capabilities of children, have all been immensely important sources of wellbeing for thousands of people worldwide since the 1930s. Social movements rely on footsoldiers, though, not just on charismatic founders. So here I want to focus on the everyday niceness and loving energy that flows from one implementer of the Suzuki approach, Elizabeth, who has promoted the approach in Scotland since the 1970s. What is distinctive about 'everyday' cheermongers like her is that they spread good feelings and good happiness prospects unobtrusively and without fanfare or explicit happiness philosophy. They make no specific professional claim to happiness expertise. Whether through innate character, learned capabilities, or sheer willpower, they are exceptionally good at spreading happiness. They enhance the lives of those they interact with, both directly by making them feel good about themselves, but also over the longer term by helping other people find paths to lifelong happiness. It makes sense to acknowledge this, and to learn from their example. There are no doubt many millions of people worldwide who make exceptional contributions to the sum of human happiness in fairly direct and everyday ways not by producing grand plans or culture-defining new capabilities, but by helping people help themselves and others in various ways.

Suzuki's core assertions are that everyone has the potential to become 'talented', and that every child ought to be given the chance – with parental support, encouraging lessons, and a supportive cultural environment – to develop their innate musical abilities, just as they are given the chance to develop their ability to understand and speak a language. The fact that such assertions are regarded as noteworthy underlines the uncomfortable truth that while the virtue of universal schooling has caught on worldwide, there is a long way to go before the nurturing of musical capability is seen as a universal priority. The idea that everyone could and should learn to read and write developed thousands of years after the invention of literacy. It will take a little longer to get over the false belief that only a few people can be musical.

4. Music and happiness

To introduce the concept of happiness into a conversation or into policy analysis is to ask questions about what our activities are *for* – what their value or importance is, what they mean to us, what joy they bring, whether that joy lasts and is compatible with other sources of wellbeing. Music is universally valued and the enjoyment of it is a fundamentally important innate capability, as researchers in the emerging field of evolutionary music psychology have been showing (Grinde, 2000; Peretz, 2006; Levitin, 2007; Sacks, 2008; Hodges & Sebald, 2010). Yet its power and beauty are elusive and mysterious. So it is not surprising that discussion of music is linked with discussion of happiness and with the healing of social rifts and of individual minds and bodies. Plato argued that "music…gives a soul to the universe" and Shakespeare described it as the "food of love"; both recognized our astonishing ability and willingness to transcend ourselves through music. Even the notoriously miserable philosopher Schopenhauer admired music as the bath of the soul.[1]

Musicians and avid music listeners need no research evidence to convince them of the importance of music for personal happiness and social quality. Advocates of music therapy, music education, and community music have for decades been producing evidence in support of music, but most of this has been partisan, anecdotal, and lacking in scientific rigour (for a critical overview, and an outline of a scientific approach, see Skingley *et al.*, 2011). While some recent scholarship treats the happiness benefits of music as akin to those of other 'leisure' activities (Hill and Argyle 1998), or as a kind of 'therapy' at personal level (Bunt, 1994; Darnley-Smith & Patey, 2003) or group level (Jenkyns *et al.*, 2002; Pavlicevic, 2003; Oldfield, 2006), or as a temporary influence on emotions and moods (Kreutz & Lotze, 2007), there is also a long tradition of more fundamental respect for music's role in the development of fulfilling lives and good societies. Like happiness, the forms and experiences of music can be exhilarating as well as calming; private or collective; active and deliberate or passive and unconscious; and they involve fleeting moments of exquisite pleasure as well as the lifelong musical narratives through which our engagement with culture and our private and collective identities are developed.

The aspects of musical experience that Elizabeth promotes most effectively are active and socially engaged musicianship – active musical citizenship, if you like. The difference between passive and active enjoyment of music is a bit like the difference between stimulating the brain's pleasure centres artificially with drugs, and doing so naturally through exercise or dance. As Roland Barthes put it, there are "two musics that are totally different arts: the music one listens to, and the music one plays" (1977: 149). Although most music therapy and education focuses on active musicianship, the rewards of listening (which can of course be conscious and in some senses active) are well researched (Menon & Levitin, 2005). In Csikszentmihalyi's discussion of "the body in flow" he argues that although flow often arises from listening to music, "even greater rewards are open to those who learn to make music" (1990/2002: 111). Although at a personal level it is debatable whether the rewards of active music-making are necessarily 'greater' or just different, it is clear that playing music in *groups* entails both immediate and lifelong social benefits that are much more complex and significant than collective listening (Coffman, 2002). Music producers and the inventors of mp3 players can take a lot of credit for massively improving the ability of millions of people to listen to music. But if this detracts from active musicianship, then many of us will have lost something vitally important for our wellbeing and fulfilment.

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[1] These quotes can be found in Plato *The Republic,* Shakespeare *Twelfth Night*, respectively.

The Suzuki Method encourages both passive and active musicianship from the earliest stages of life. Families are reminded of the importance of a supportive musical environment in which children learn to enjoy and remember a variety of kinds of music. And the democratic insistence on everyone's potential to become good active musicians serves as a powerful antidote to those who assume that only an elite minority should play musical instruments. Numerous studies have confirmed that in music, as in many other specialised capabilities, it takes ten thousand hours of practice (e.g. 3 hours a week over a decade) to become a world-class expert (Levitin, 2007: 193), but on a small fraction of that you can become really good, and a time investment comparable to tooth-brushing and having a shower is all it takes to get some sense of the joys of active music-making. But in any case, 'investment' is misleading: most of the fun is in the process, not the final achievements.

5. Music clubs and social capital

Robert Putnam's image of "bowling alone" (2000) is now well known as a metaphor representing the decline of informal social engagement in the USA. Music is rather more varied and versatile than bowling, and you can actually spend a lifetime deriving intense enjoyment from playing or listening to music alone. When necessary, fellow players and audiences can simply be imagined. But most musicians would agree that participation in musical ensembles, and performing to audiences, provide some of the most rewarding and deeply-felt sources of fulfilment in their lives. The economistic and instrumentalist metaphor of 'social capital' is woefully inadequate to describe the value of musical participation, but it is also true that music plays crucial functions in many of the most valued forms of associational life worldwide. Unsurprisingly, not long after scholars and policy-makers began taking an interest in social capital during the 1990s, a steady stream of interest in music-making and social capital followed (Dowling 2008; Langston & Barrett, 2008)

Elizabeth's weekly fiddle club involves a small cross-section of the children who played in the above concert. Here they play a mix of jazz, folk, and classical pieces. Sometimes the club makes excursions to a local old people's home or goes busking on the Royal Mile during the Edinburgh Festival. Here again, people often have to be prodded into participation, and it is rarely stress-free. But if asked to evaluate the importance and value of the club, parents and children alike will be unequivocal in their gratitude to Elizabeth for making it happen. They know they've been dragged into a collective self-help system that often intrudes on other parts of their lives, but which they wouldn't want to do without.

Elizabeth is impressive in her ability to organize large-scale concerts and workshops with cheerful informality, but it is in her smaller-scale engagement with fiddle club that her exceptional capabilities are most evident. Every child and every parent knows that they will get some of her attention at fiddle club, and that Elizabeth will notice and feel their absence when they miss a week. Just as they sense her involvement in their music when they're playing, they sense that their participation in the events she organizes matters to her in an intensely personal way. It's not that she needs them to make up the numbers or that she feels that one class missed is a delay on their path to excellence: it's simply that she seems to feel the intrinsic value of everyone she encounters more keenly and more democratically than most of us do.

In his blockbuster bestseller *How to Win Friends and Influence People,* Dale Carnegie reminded readers that whereas most of us try hard to get others to like or admire us, or be influenced by us, a few exceptional individuals achieve much better results simply by showing a genuine loving interest in other people. This describes Elizabeth perfectly, and I'm sure Carnegie would have been the first to admit that people like her don't need to read self-help literature.

6. On talent, effort, love, and self-transcendence

The keystone of Suzuki's musical pedagogy is that "talent is not inherited" but must, like language, be nurtured from birth by loving parents and by a supportive cultural environment (Suzuki, 1983: 9). His hunches have since then been supported by a mass of research that has comprehensively demolished the common myth that musical 'talent' is some kind of inborn genius, possessed by a few individuals, that simply expresses itself effortlessly. In reality, many thousands of hours of hard practice are the main factor in the production of musical excellence (Sloboda, 2005, chs. 15 & 16; Levitin 2007, ch. 7), but to persuade children to spend even a fraction of that time practising requires teacher and parent motivators who facilitate what the psychologist Carol Dweck has called a "growth mindset" (Dweck, 2006, especially ch. 7).

All cultures value music highly, but in some cultures – especially literate and stratified ones – active musicianship is marginalised to a small minority of specialists who are labelled as genetically destined to this occupation and/or capability. Even in contemporary western societies, where music pervades almost every aspect of our everyday experiences and almost limitless musical choice is available to all, for most people music remains largely a passive listening experience, and many schools offer pitifully inadequate opportunities for children to learn to play music or even sing.

If we agree with most musical educators that the capability of active musicianship should be democratized, the question then arises as to whether the objective is to aim for ultimate excellence or to emphasize the enjoyment of the process, including those thousands of hours spent practising. To learn a musical instrument you need to get used to delaying gratification, promising yourself that things will go better for you in the long run. This can be approached masochistically as a form of long-term self-mortification, or more positively you can turn the pains and frustrations of practice into a process of 'flow', in which endless repetitions and infinitesimal signs of progress become a source of absorption and fascination. You need a balance between recognizing nasty sounds that you can do something about, and hearing or at least imagining better sounds that might eventually come under your control. You also need a balance between effort and gratification: if you can enjoy the imperfect sounds you make while practising, this is good so long as this enjoyment doesn't amount to lazy satisfaction that stops you from trying to improve.

Playing with others can help you through this process, giving you a positive aural illusion of sounding much better than you are, while also showing you a bigger and better sound to aim for. It is amazing how good a sound can come out of ten beginners playing together. According to the music philosopher Jeanette Bicknell, music moves us primarily because all kinds of musical engagement, even solitary listening, are intrinsically social: music gives us compelling reminders of our need for attachment to others (2009: viii). Perhaps this is why, when people describe moments of extreme passion in musical listening, they tend to refer to puzzling combinations of pleasure and anguish or pain, a 'poignancy' which as Jerrold Levinson (2004) has argued reflects the bittersweetness of life itself. You experience momentarily the unbelievable beauty of passionate union with Beethoven's soul, yet at the same time he was some weird grumpy guy who died in Germany a long time ago and the people playing his music to you are very uncool people in penguin suits. The feeling of empathy with composers is extremely powerful yet often deeply puzzling (Putman, 1994). The combination of psychotropic rhythms and crowds is a heady mixture leading to unforgettable and seemingly magical altered states of consciousness (Sylvan 2005; Ehrenreich 2006; Aldridge & Fachner, 2009). More mundanely, if you're going to play music with other people, you also need to learn that social participation often means expanding your interests demographically

and spatially as well as temporally. You need to do things that appear to be largely dutiful and altruistic rather than self-interested, and you need to develop musical empathy with fellow players (Schögler & Trevarthen, 2007; Laurence 2008).

For many of us, these important ways of stretching or moving the self across time and into larger social wholes don't come easily. Without felicitators like Elizabeth we'd be a lot less good at it. Other people can be hell. Not only can they ruin our musical fun by making the wrong musical noises, but they can be downright antisocial even in the presence of a good facilitator. Elizabeth doesn't ignore a misbehaving child, but neither does she draw attention to misbehaviour. When forced to reprimand children she achieves what few parents can achieve, quickly persuading the child that there are more interesting and fun things to do than cause trouble. Educational theorists may advise us to reprimand and punish the behaviour and not the child, yet for Elizabeth it comes naturally to brush bad behaviour gently aside with no hint of anger, hatred, or moral outrage. Parents attending her lessons and group practices get free instruction in good parenting, and several have agreed with me that they often find themselves, when in the midst of family traumas, asking themselves 'what would Elizabeth do?' We can only learn so much from parenting manuals, and in these socially fragmented days the opportunity to learn social skills like this first-hand is gold dust.

The violin is not the most obvious choice of instrument for three-year-olds to take up. More biddable instruments such as recorders, ukuleles and pianos give young children at least some instant gratification. Nowadays computers, electronic keyboards, soundbeam technology, and programs like 'sing star' on PlayStation provide ample opportunities for giving children an immediate sense of musical power. By contrast, the violin stubbornly holds out for months or years before rewarding the beginner with something that sounds like music. Elizabeth, now in her mid-seventies and a good amateur violinist herself, knows that her main gift is in helping children and parents through the difficult early years. She passes pupils on to other teachers when they begin to need intense technical instruction. But by that stage most of her pupils have developed a sustainable love of all aspects of music: they enjoy their lessons, their practice time, performing solos, performing in groups, and playing together informally in fiddle club sessions.

There is a fascinating consistency between Elizabeth's unconscious instruction in how to deal with troublesome behaviour, and her conscious instruction to children in how to get through the potential nightmare of a difficult practice session. Just as parents quickly become infuriated with misbehaviour, children quickly become livid when their fingers and instruments refuse to express the sounds they were hoping to hear. Elizabeth, like all good music teachers, has a raft of tricks for helping children get through the tantrums that music practice inevitably provokes. If their fingers misbehave by playing the wrong notes, or their bows misbehave by going squint and scratching, you don't ignore it but you don't dwell on it as if it were a moral outrage. It's to be expected, and when it happens repeatedly it's time to get those fingers and bows to do something more fun, such as playing with finger puppets or 'hunt the bow', before returning to more serious practice afterwards. Children learn to treat their fingers and instruments lovingly and with a good mixture of discipline and indulgence.

What is produced by Elizabeth and through the events and processes she facilitates is not limited to musical capabilities, important though they are. It includes also a wide range of abilities and dispositions that are perhaps best summarized by the concept of love. To progress in music, you must learn to make long-term commitments to your instrument that are quite distinct from the instant gratifications of making any noise by banging a drum or crashing a cymbal. Attachment to the instrument develops over a long period and requires recognition

that your relationship with it will at times be problematic. Just as the concept of romantic love is often expressed as a feeling of self-transcendence, of being at one with the lover, so musicians describe their relationship with their instruments and with music in terms of life-long passions that dissolve and extend the self into something more profound or ineffable than could be included within a bounded self.

Like happiness, love is an important value in all cultures, though widely variable in the way in which it is treated. Whether the expected objects of love are actual or potential partners, kin, friends, society in general, activities, or the natural environment, love is often conceived of as a force external to ourselves over which we have little or no control. Similar attitudes to happiness have been common throughout history and around the world. But as we learn to anticipate and promote happiness, we can and must also learn to nurture love. Our inborn dispositions and abilities to love are, like our felicific dispositions, highly variable; but they can also be cultivated through individual and collective effort. As the ethnomusicologist Blacking long ago observed, music tends to play crucial roles in preparing humans for the "hard task" of loving other people (1973: 103); it does so, I would argue, by opening us up to self-transcendence, making us not only recognize but also enjoy the fact that we are a lot less individual than we sometimes imagine ourselves to be.

Self-transcendence is commonly recognized by psychologists and therapists, and religious leaders, as being essential for both wellbeing and virtue, an essential complement to self-concern and self-enhancement (Meulemann, 2009). But if you have browsed through some of the copious literature on self-transcendence that has emerged since Viktor Frankl's 1966 essay on it, you can't help but have noticed that most of it focuses on transcending selves that are exceptionally problematic due to moribundity, illness or emotional dysfunction. You could be forgiven for thinking that unless you are dying, ill, or mad you don't need to bother with self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is a crucial capability for all of us, not just a therapy for exceptionally vulnerable or damaged selves.

Self-transcendence can be about escaping the confines of the everyday self and its associated identities and roles. But it can also, more positively, be about a sense of harmony or union with other people, with our previous or future selves, and with broader nonsocial environments. More radically, we could also question the notion that there is, by default, a coherent and relatively isolated self that can be 'transcended' – and this kind of radical questioning is encouraged, if only temporarily, by mystical experiences such as trance states, communion with nature, and passionate involvement in music. As many anthropologists have shown, belief in a discrete, integral self may be dominant in western cultures but much less, or not at all, dominant in nonwestern cultures (Christopher, 1999). Baumeister (1991) considers music as one among many techniques we must sometimes use for escaping the "burden of the self" (other such escapes include alcohol, dance, and meditation), yet his metaphor of escapism perhaps wrongly presupposes an entity from which we can escape. A better metaphor might be that of tuning in to a different kind of conversation in our heads, a less egotistical and perhaps less analytical and more holistic and fluid one. Self-transcendence is an elusive concept. It is about 'going beyond' normal everyday self-concepts and normal coherence, and experiencing feelings and thoughts that free us from narrow self-concern and self-interest.

The study of music in action, whether solo or ensemble, practice or performance, reveals uniquely human ways in which our souls or identities are inescapably informed and inscribed by other people – listeners, composers from the past, fellow players. Much of the magic that music works, both immediately and over a lifetime, seems to have something to do with our transcendental existence, or 'self-transcendence' if you must imagine a core being to be

transcended. For those who have invested perhaps unrealistically in particular versions of the self, such as the concept of a uniquely admired discrete entity, musical engagement is a vitally important and humbling experience. If listening to profoundly moving music is a bit like gazing at the firmament in a clear night sky, being moved while playing is like being a star-gazer, star-mover, and star at the same time. Musicianship gives us crucial opportunities to feel an ineffable sense of creative fusion with wider social and nonhuman universes.

At a simple, concrete level, Elizabeth's evident propensity to engage with other people and with music-making illustrates clearly the self-transcending value of musical citizenship. Whereas an elitist teacher might enjoy their star pupil's performance largely with a view to boosting their own ego and that of their pupil (and hence their disparagement and discouragement of more ordinary pupils), Elizabeth enjoys and reveals the beauty of democratic musicality. Pupils may try to emulate her playing and her enjoyment of music, but they aren't trying to produce in themselves a carbon copy of magisterial excellence. They recognize that through musical participation they become part of a much more important wider whole.

But although Elizabeth's example illustrates the 'social' nature of music, I think we should pause before accepting at face value Bicknell's assertion that "music and the experience of music are fundamentally social, *rather than* strictly personal or individual" (2009: 89, my emphasis). Bicknell argues most persuasively that the musical self is a social one, yet seems unable to shake off entirely the metaphor of a socially isolated, pre-social self, a separate person who then engages socially through music. Though some of us act out this illusion more than others, and some are more troubled by the vulnerability of the self than others, there is no escaping the fact that our selves are 'social' from before we were born. For example, hearing music while in the womb is an important form of prenatal socialization. I agree with Bicknell (2009: viii) that music's significance lies in its "elemental social character": there is fascinating overlap and synergy between the experiences of absorption in music and absorption in society. But I wonder in what sense she thinks this is different from a 'personal' conception of musical enjoyment. As Daniel Goleman's synthesis of recent research on 'social intelligence' has amply demonstrated, we are "wired to connect" with other people, and we do so, for example musically, using our mirror neurons (Goleman, 2007: 13). Now that research on mirror neurons has shown that other people – in the form of our subconscious reflections of their emotional states – are in a rather literal and biological sense inside our heads, the idea of a non-social isolated self is hard to sustain.

When you watch someone who expresses musical social engagement as clearly as Elizabeth does, you can't help but recognize the artificiality of our distinction between 'individual' and 'society'. Nor can you help but wonder whether failure to recognize this artificiality is perhaps at the root of a great deal of human unhappiness. If music does help us to escape the self, this is perhaps because it enables us to *feel* our total absorption in society even if we find this very hard to *think*. Strangely, music is also often said to help us escape society, when for example we hide away in a musical bubble using headphones to screen off the outside world (Sloboda, 1999). What seems to happen is that we use music to drown out either troublesome inner chatter or external chatter, or both. And if the absorption we achieve through active rather than passive musical engagement is that much more total, so much the better.

I've asked other parents of Elizabeth's pupils what they understand as the core of the magic that she works with children and parents alike. Often, they have referred to the boundless love she seems to feel for everyone who enters her ambit, and her loving commitment not only to pupils but also to the tiniest detail of her every activity. Love, like happiness, is both an

experience and a character trait. Perhaps more than any other human experience or virtue, love reminds us of the everyday importance of self-transcendence. Both love and music tend to involve bittersweet poignancy, and it seems no accident that love tends to be expressed musically or that music tends to experienced as a peculiarly ineffable and transcendent kind of love (Hodges, 1996: 36). Happiness and love are related but different, and if there are other goods that can rank alongside happiness as 'ultimate' values, love must surely be among them.

7. Enjoyment, excellence, and learning to savour normality

Recently, pushy parenting has again loomed large in public debate with the publication of the Yale law professor Amy Chua's *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011). In this wilfully controversial autobiography, which makes no attempt to engage with many decades-worth of serious scholarship on the adverse life outcomes of authoritarian parenting and perfectionist instruction, Chua tells of her relentless hyperparenting project that drove her two daughters to academic and musical 'success' via Chua's interpretation of the 'Suzuki' method. This entailed getting her daughters to practice several hours a day from the age of three and denying them nearly all the social joys and relaxations of normal childhood.

As every kind of educator knows, bringing up children involves seemingly irreconcilable trade-offs between enjoyment and excellence, between the ordinary masses and the ultra-talented elite, and between present fun and future capabilities. And if you have a lot of children in your charge, it is never easy to promote simultaneously the ordinary flourishing of the majority and the extraordinary capabilities of the exceptionally quick learners. Inevitably, some individuals and some institutions either take the elitist path of favouring and promoting exceptional excellence, while others go for common enjoyment of the masses at the expense of excellence. If educational success is measured by the exceptional achievements of the gifted few, at least some of the aspects of the wellbeing of the masses must be damaged as they become second-rate witnesses to the elite's pursuit of excellence.

The same trade-offs also map onto trade-offs between childhood and adulthood, and between educational processes and educational outcomes: if excellence is the privileged objective, schooling is reduced to a means by which deferred benefits are to be achieved, whereas if the joy of learning is privileged then at least some of the anticipation of future excellence must be foregone in the interest of a happy childhood.

Elizabeth's biography is instructive in this regard. She grew up in the profoundly elitist musical tradition that prevailed in posh Edinburgh schools until recently. Music was mainly focused on a select few 'musical' people, usually from 'musical' families, playing almost entirely the elite repertoire of a few musical geniuses in the western 'classical' (or 'academic', or 'high art') tradition. The masses were meant to appreciate, but not participate except passively as consumers. After just a year of learning the violin at school, Elizabeth, like perhaps a majority of instrumental beginners in those days, was told that there was little point in continuing as she lacked talent and had no prospect of becoming an excellent violinist. 25 years later little seemed to have changed in the Edinburgh classical music tradition: her son returned from one of his violin lessons to say that after he'd played through the piece he'd practiced all week, his teacher had slumped onto the piano and wept at his incompetence. By then in her late forties, Elizabeth responded by buying herself a violin and teaching herself. Within a few years, she had introduced the Suzuki method to Scotland and was helping several thousands of individuals grow up to enjoy playing and listening to music from a wide variety of musical traditions, and to participate in a vibrant social network.

I would argue that the Suzuki approach to music education provides substantial reconciliation of these trade-offs, but that this effect relies very strongly not only on the inspirational philosophy of the movement's charismatic founder, but on the character and sheer effort of practitioners like Elizabeth. All too often, music teachers succumb to the temptation to focus most of their efforts on the long-term and selective grooming of a few exceptionally gifted musicians. The results are often breathtakingly beautiful musicianship that contributes to the most stunning achievements of humanity. But the human cost in this production process may include untold miseries for the vast bulk of children who learn to despise their own modest musical capabilities, and who end up seeing the whole process of learning and practising as a waste of time if it doesn't lead to exceptional excellence.

When Csikszentmihalyi interviewed musicians, he found many whose enjoyment of music had clearly been badly spoiled by the perfectionism of their teachers and parents (1990/2002: 112). Many parents quite correctly entertain ethical doubts about making children perform musical solos. Musical biography studies in the United Kingdom have shown that happy memories of childhood musical performance are rare, and massively outnumbered by painful memories which frequently put children off active musicianship for life (Sloboda, 2005: 186). Levitin argues that contemporary Western society has seen a widening of the 'performance chasm' that separates the musical elite minority from the masses who gave up all musical ambition in childhood. Western musical culture, he argues, is uniquely discouraging to all but the experts: not only is musical amateurism more disparaged in the West than are other kinds of amateurism (such as cooking or sport), but other cultures don't suffer the same obsession with extremes of excellence to the detriment of more modest capability registers (2007: 194).

I share Levitin's worries about elitism, but I doubt whether trends are quite as bad as he portrays. For example, Elizabeth's approach to musical education is in Scotland far less exceptional today than would have been the case in the 1960s. In contrast to the elitist music teachers who discouraged her in the 1950s and her son in the 1970s, she encourages children and parents to enjoy and savour music at all levels of capability, while also teaching children that hard work can lead to deferred rewards too. An ethnographic study of active amateur musicianship in Milton Keynes in the early 1980s found a wide diversity of highly committed musicianship, much of it based on self-instruction and self-discipline as well a community support (Finnegan, 1989). This nonperfectionist approach to music sounds similar to what Margaret Mead said was normal in Bali in the 1930s, where everyone gets to take part and every man is at least at some key ritual moments a kind of musical 'professional': when villagers watch young people doing a show "the interest … fastens not on the final performance, as it does in America … but on the rehearsals" (Mead, 1941; cited in Merriam, 1964: 160).

Despite her earlier maltreatment by the musical aristocracy, Elizabeth is not driven by any compensatory demophilic dogma or cult of mediocrity. She adores musical excellence and glows with pride when her pupils, as some inevitably do, progress quickly to extraordinary ability at an early age. It's just that she genuinely enjoys and savours, just as much, the more ordinary capabilities of the rest. She gives all of them strong encouragement to strive for ever better capabilities, but also, perhaps more inconspicuously, encourages them to enjoy whatever they can do at every stage along the way. Her pupils can have their cake and eat it (and by the way it isn't at all uncommon for her pupils to come away from her lessons literally with crumbs on their lips, having mixed the pleasures of music with the enjoyment of snack time).

8. Conclusions: on music, social progress, and life enhancement

I opened by arguing that participation in the musical events that Elizabeth organizes gives a pleasing sense of social progress. Democratizing the business of music-making, and doing so in child-friendly and parent-friendly ways which enhance the social experiences of music-makers, seem to me to be extremely important ways in which societies can progress. Plato recognized this at the level of individual pedagogy but his thinking on the social benefits of music never led to a strong tradition in studying and celebrating the role of music in facilitating good lives and good societies. Although there have been occasional attempts to discuss links between music and social progress (Frith, 2007; Allen, 1946), most writing linking music with progress is either about individual progress towards musical excellence, or else takes the form of obscure and irresolvable aesthetic and philosophical debates about the artistic, literary, and sonic qualities of musical compositions and performances. Music certainly does have ineffable intrinsic value that can't be reduced to its psychological or sociological uses, but the extrinsic values of music need to be understood and celebrated too.

Looking at Elizabeth, particularly in her capacity as an exponent of the Suzuki approach to music education and parenting, has given us opportunities to recognize a number of important cultural themes in happiness studies that would certainly merit more careful attention. First, the ability to facilitate happiness is an important life skill that combines character traits with hard altruistic work. Though highly valued when we bother to pay attention to it, the social function of the cheermonger is not often highly rewarded with money or status. Nor is it necessarily focused explicitly on the production of happiness. Elizabeth has never, to my knowledge, tried to justify her work in the name of happiness. She simply believes passionately in the various activities that she promotes – active musicianship, cooperative play, early learning with supportive parental involvement, noncompetitive pursuit of excellence, and social engagement. We could call cheermongery 'emotional labour', a term coined by the Marxist-feminist sociologist Arlie Hochschild with reference to the mood management of air hostesses (Hochschild, 1983). I agree with Hochschild that the value of this work needs more recognition, but unlike her I don't want to look at it primarily in terms of exploitation and pathology: when emotion work (let's at least give it a more morally neutral label) is done well and willingly it is a beauty to behold, and there is no doubt that exponents like Elizabeth take great pride and joy in their emotional contribution to society.

Second, like many other skills, those we have looked at (musicianship, good parenting, prosocial behaviour, enjoyment of work, deferred gratification, etc) are 'inborn' in all of us but nonetheless don't just 'come naturally': they need to be cultivated, and they require cultural support for their expression. We need educational systems (and of course not just schools but communities, social networks, and value systems) that cultivate and celebrate the full variety of capabilities that everyone is born with the potential to develop.

Third, musical abilities – practising, anticipating improvement while enjoying the moment, making music, performing individually and collectively, listening – are some of the life skills that are most crucial for happiness, and yet these tend in many cultural contexts to be inadequately nurtured. All cultures recognize the value of music, some (e.g. youth cultures) perhaps more than others. But music tends to sit awkwardly with other values and its power is not always seen as an unmixed blessing. Those who play music, or create it, teach it, or otherwise facilitate it, are not always the culture heroes we might expect them to be. Active music-making and composition are often seen as ultra-specialist activities best left to a tiny gifted and/or marginal and even deviant minority, and often based on elitist and/or authoritarian, creativity-inhibiting instruction (Merriam, 1964; chs. 7 & 8). Many schools

worldwide make little or no attempt to nurture musical abilities, and those that do often fail due to the neglect of the importance of early learning. Even in Western schools, where there is nearly always some kind of musical instruction albeit mainly focused on listening and discussing rather than playing, it is still often not effectively mainstreamed within the curriculum, nor incentivised with public recognition, nor properly evaluated. Instead it is seen as an optional activity like sport or religion.

Finally, goods whose value is not adequately theorised and measured, or whose absence is not necessarily perceived immediately as catastrophic, tend to be taken for granted. We all know, surely, how much we collectively rely on the goodwill and energy of cheermongers like Elizabeth. They keep us sane, they spread good feelings contagiously through social networks, they foster peace and love, they inhibit our tendencies to get angry and upset over petty quarrels and temporary setbacks. But we rarely think about happiness promotion as a critically important social function that could be better incentivised and celebrated. Music promotion is similarly undervalued and undernourished not because we don't value music, but because we can't see it as a critically important component in social processes and in cultural achievements which vary widely from one culture to another, or from one family or school to another, depending on how well they are nourished.

Two of the key insights from positive psychology are that we can derive a great deal of happiness through the expression of thanks, and from the regular habit of savouring the good things in life (Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Emmons 2007). To promote my own happiness, I would like to offer thanks to Elizabeth, while savouring and promoting recognition of her extraordinary gift for joy-spreading. Just as the sublime qualities of music can't be captured in words, so the ineffable niceness of a person can only be indirectly apprehended by watching their actions and relationships. We can nonetheless learn a lot more about music, and about everyday niceness, by doing our best to work out how everyday cheermongers work their magic.

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