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An Interdisciplinary Series of Reflections and Research

# CONVERSATIONS

ON PHILANTHROPY

Volume V  
Philanthropy and the Pursuit of Happiness

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## CONVERSATIONS ON PHILANTHROPY

*Conversations on Philanthropy* is an occasional publication of the Project for New Philanthropy Studies at DonorsTrust. *Conversations* will typically feature essays or academic papers by scholars, philanthropists, social critics and activists, along with critiques by one or more invited commentators.

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**CONVERSATIONS ON PHILANTHROPY**

An Interdisciplinary Series  
of Reflections and Research

*Volume V*  
*Philanthropy and the Pursuit of Happiness*

Lenore T. Ealy

SERIES EDITOR

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# Conversations on Philanthropy

Volume V, Philanthropy and the Pursuit of Happiness

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CONTENTS

**PHILANTHROPY AND THE  
PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS**

INTRODUCTION . . . . . v

**CONVERSATION 7**

ESSAYS

Robert F. Garnett, Jr. . . . . 1

*Positive Psychology and Philanthropy:  
Reclaiming the Virtues of Classical Liberalism*

Hans L. Eicholz . . . . . 17

*Pursuing the Happy Society: Faculty Versus Positive Psychology*

Michael Strong . . . . . 35

*Investing in Happiness: Philanthropy as a Guide to  
Positive Psychology*

Richard B. Gunderman . . . . . 49

*Authentic Flourishing*

COMMENT

Steven D. Ealy . . . . . 57

*On Happiness—Personal and Political*



## INTRODUCTION

The problem of human happiness—how to attain it and how to preserve it—is perennial. It may be, however, that the psychological imperative to achieve our own happiness as well as the philanthropic imperative to promote the happiness of others on a global scale are ascending to ever new heights. The psychological pursuit of happiness and the philanthropic impulse toward benevolence find their intersection in the socio-biology of human beings, who seem readily to experience a fellow-feeling variously described as compassion or sympathy. The Confucian sage Mencius (fl. 4th century BCE) aptly described this visceral commiseration typical of mankind:

1. Mencius said, 'All men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others. ...
2. 'When I say that all men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others, my meaning may be illustrated thus:—even now-a-days, if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress. They will feel so, not as a ground on which they may gain the favour of the child's parents, nor as a ground on which they may seek the praise of their neighbours and friends, nor from a dislike to the reputation of having been unmoved by such a thing.
3. 'From this case we may perceive that the feeling of commiseration is essential to man ....' (Mencius, Book II, Chapter 6)<sup>1</sup>

The observation of the natural sympathy of men for one another is also the starting point of Adam Smith's considerations in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. "How selfish soever man may be supposed," Smith wrote, "there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it."

The papers in this volume of *Conversations on Philanthropy*, "Philanthropy and the Pursuit of Happiness," shine light on the complex interplay between our understanding of happiness and our use of

<sup>1</sup> Mencius. James Legge, Translator. Chinese Classics, Vol. 2 [1895], available online at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cfu/menc/>.

philanthropy to pursue happiness for ourselves and others. What is happiness? What are its conditions, circumstances, and causes? Is happiness in itself the ultimate end of human action? How do we know when we, or the objects of our beneficence, have obtained it?

The reflections offered here grew out of a 2007 colloquium in which participants looked to the emerging field of positive psychology to assess its potential for improving our understanding and practice of philanthropy. Positive psychology has begun to explore more deeply the meaning of happiness by turning psychological researchers and clinicians away from behavioralist presumptions and toward a recovery of a richer cultural discourse about strengths and, yes, even virtues as critical constituents of a life well-lived.

At first glance, the move of positive psychology toward a more asset- and character-based approach to promoting human well-being seems a welcome correction in the course of modern psychology, which has tended to focus on the diagnosis and treatment of disease and dysfunction rather than on the positive questions of how to promote health and well-being by cultivating skills and strengths of character. The agenda of positive psychology, however, is ambitious, and there are whispers that positive psychology will not only help us improve our personal chances for “authentic happiness” but may also help us redesign social organizations and institutions through both policy and philanthropy. With the promises so alluring, we wanted to take a closer look at positive psychology to understand better its potential for promoting gains in happiness for individuals and communities.

Such questions are important. Theories of psychology and philanthropic concern have often come together in history in the form of policy. Bernard Sheehan, for instance, has described how Enlightenment confidence in the idea of progress during the Jeffersonian era led to an aggressive philanthropic plan to civilize the American Indian. According to Sheehan, “Jeffersonian philanthropy” required “that the Indian abandon the hunter-warrior culture, the tribal order, and the communal ownership of land. It commanded him to become civilized.” Far from precipitating happy and flourishing tribes of Native Americans, however, the plan of improvement planted the “seeds of extinction.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973).

Sheehan quotes Alexis de Tocqueville's trenchant observation in *Democracy in America* about the difficulties inherent in the encounter of European and native cultures in North America:

From whatever angle one regards the destinies of the North American natives, one sees nothing but irremediable ills: if they remain savages, they are driven along before the march of progress; if they try to become civilized, contact with more-civilized people delivers them over to oppression and misery. If they go on wandering in the wilderness, they perish; if they attempt to settle, they perish just the same. They cannot gain enlightenment except with European help, and the approach of the Europeans corrupts them and drives them back toward barbarism. So long as they are left in their solitudes, they refuse to change their mores, and there is no time left to do this, when at last they are constrained to desire it.

This observation seems as relevant as ever as pressures on the nations of the world to accommodate cultural pluralism persist in this era of globalization. We are often left on the horns of a dilemma: do we enshrine our distinctive cultures, promulgating them or defending them as necessary, or do we abandon our care for them altogether, which seems a sure route to a life of anomie? Can either policy make us happy?

In the preface to his cautionary tale *Brave New World*, written for a post World War II republication of his 1932 novel, Aldous Huxley predicts that "The most important Manhattan Projects of the future will be vast government-sponsored enquiries into what the politicians and the participating scientists will call 'the problem of happiness'—in other words, the problem of making people love their servitude" (Huxley 2005). Huxley's dystopian imaginings of a brave new world in which genetically engineered human inhabitants are propelled through their days in a soma-induced complacency, eerily foreshadowed the ethical dilemmas in which we now find ourselves in a world where clinical psychopharmacology is widespread and the human genome has been made legible.

After a century in which philanthropic eugenics, behaviorist psychotherapy, and postmodernist-inspired self doubt have each had their

turn, positive psychology's appearance on the scene is largely welcome in restoring our focus on the common humanity among cultures and in recovering considerations about the role of character and virtue in our personal pursuits of happiness. Whether positive psychology holds seeds of promise for attaining the collective goal of the greatest happiness for the greatest number needs to be carefully considered, however, for in setting our sights on such goals that would necessitate policies of philanthropy we may neglect to our detriment other equally important ends of human life.

In acknowledging commiseration as a feeling common to all men, Mencius did not neglect to point out the other guiding principles of man's life:

4. 'From this case we may perceive that the feeling of commiseration is essential to man ..., that the feeling of shame and dislike is essential to man, that the feeling of modesty and complaisance is essential to man, and that the feeling of approving and disapproving is essential to man.
5. 'The feeling of commiseration is the principle of benevolence. The feeling of shame and dislike is the principle of righteousness. The feeling of modesty and complaisance is the principle of propriety. The feeling of approving and disapproving is the principle of knowledge.
6. 'Men have these four principles just as they have their four limbs. When men, having these four principles, yet say of themselves that they cannot develop them, they play the thief with themselves, and he who says of his prince that he cannot develop them plays the thief with his prince.
7. 'Since all men have these four principles in themselves, let them know to give them all their development and completion, and the issue will be like that of fire which has begun to burn, or that of a spring which has begun to find vent. Let them have their complete development, and they will suffice to love and protect all within the four seas. Let them be denied that development, and they will not suffice for a man to serve his parents with (Mencius as cited above, enumeration continues from earlier passage).'

Benevolence given free reign in a man's life without the necessary checks and balances of the principles of righteousness, propriety, and knowledge may merely alleviate the pain we feel when seeing others suffer without elevating us or others to something called happiness. Neither Mencius, nor

Aristotle, nor Cicero, nor St. Paul, nor Maimonides, nor Adam Smith, nor many other philosophers and theologians ancient and modern would be likely to describe a benevolent life lived without shame, without modesty, and without reflective approval of our actions as a genuinely happy life. Philanthropic policy that seeks to promote happiness apart from a deeper conversation about the full range of virtues that contribute to a man's satisfaction in life and in the human community may fail us in the end. It is to this conversation that our authors here ultimately contribute.

The paradoxes that surround the elusive pursuit of happiness are many, which brings me to a brief comment on our cover art for this volume. "Smiley" has become an ubiquitous companion to the Baby Boomer generation and its descendants. Flashed briefly before us, his grin invites a fleeting burst of cheer. A more penetrating gaze into his changeless demeanor, however, invites a less comfortable response. Wikipedia has an intriguing catalogue of the appearance of Smiley's face in popular culture, where he appears in deeply ironic motifs associated with murderers, werewolves, aliens, and the Ku Klux Klan, among others. Whether this irony is merely humor or deeper social comment, study of the list leaves one with a strange feeling that one should beware of Smileys bearing gifts.☺

—Lenore T. Ealy  
*Series Editor*

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## CONVERSATION 7

*Positive Psychology and Philanthropy:  
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# POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILANTHROPY: RECLAIMING THE VIRTUES OF CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

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*Robert F. Garnett, Jr.*

In his afterword to the 1993 edition of *Reclaiming the American Dream: The Role of Private Individuals and Voluntary Associations* (1993 [1965]), Richard Cornuelle laments that so few libertarians have embraced his vision of a flourishing voluntary community beyond the commercial sphere: “Most of my libertarian friends were willing to discuss possible market solutions to public problems, but, lacking any analytical device but market theory, continued to believe that anything that could not be done profitably should probably not be done at all” (186). Cornuelle’s remark points to an enduring gap in modern liberal thought. Most philosophical liberals celebrate philanthropy—“voluntary giving and association that serves to promote human flourishing” (Ealy 2005, 2)—as a Tocquevillian alternative to the welfare state, yet their stock in trade conceptions of the free society tend to omit philanthropy, theorizing voluntary cooperation as an exclusively commercial affair.

Nowhere is this gap more evident than in the writings of F. A. Hayek. Hayek lauds voluntary associations for their uniquely effective “recognition of many [philanthropic] needs and discovery of many methods of meeting them which we could never have expected from the government” (1979, 50). He also praises Cornuelle’s *Reclaiming the American Dream* as an “unduly neglected book” which “seems to me to be one of the most promising developments of political ideas in recent years” (186 and 51). At the same time, Hayek develops his influential theory of the modern liberal order by way of a sustained critique of philanthropic action. Our desire to “do good to known people” is, he argues, an atavistic legacy of our tribal past and “irreconcilable with the open society” (1976, 168). Modernity has spawned a new moral code in which humane ends are better served by commerce than philanthropy, by “withholding from the

known needy neighbors what they might require in order to serve the unknown needs of thousands of others” (1978, 268; 1979, 165; see also 1976, 90, 136, 144-45; 1978, 19, 59, 60, 65-66; 1979, 161-62, 168).

While leading scholars in the liberal tradition have begun to turn away from this narrow view of social cooperation in modern commercial societies (Murray 2006; McCloskey 2006; Gregg 2007), our mental maps still tell us that commerce and philanthropy are separate orders that don’t mix well. We continue, therefore, to wrestle with the question posed four decades ago by Cornuelle: How can we theorize a “free and humane” liberal order composed of market processes and “aggressive and imaginative voluntary action in the public interest” (Cornuelle 1993 [1965], xxxiv; 1992, 6)? Cornuelle’s goal was, and is, to forge a compelling theory of philanthropic action that would allow thinkers across the ideological spectrum to understand and embrace “the rationality and moral legitimacy of . . . [the] voluntary social process as completely as we now understand and embrace [the] market process” (1993 [1965], 198).

In this essay I seek to advance the Cornuellian project by placing it in dialogue with the emerging literature of positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Seligman 2002; Haidt 2006; Keyes and Haidt 2003; Gable and Haidt 2005). The positive psychologists’ conceptions of human nature, freedom, and happiness strike a fresh synthesis of classical (especially Aristotelian) and modern views of the human. Their approach offers a valuable corrective to the Cold War liberalism of Hayek and others whose positions were crafted in strategic opposition to traditions they regarded as precursors to socialism, including much of Aristotle’s ethics, politics, and economics (Hayek 1967 [1947]; 1988). I employ the positive psychologists’ approach here as a means of enriching Cornuelle’s account of philanthropic action in *Reclaiming* and to envision new lines of classical liberal conversation regarding the nature and significance of philanthropy in contemporary commercial societies.

### ***The Hayekian Impasse***

A good starting point in seeking to understand Hayek’s exclusion of philanthropy from his vision of the Great Society is his 1947 address at the inaugural meeting of the Mont Pélèrin Society:

“The basic conviction which has guided me in my efforts [to bring this meeting about] is that if the ideals which I believe unite us, and for which, in spite of abuse of the word, there is still no better name

than liberal, are to have any chance of revival, a great intellectual task is in the first instance required before we can successfully meet the errors which govern the world today. This task involves both purging traditional liberal theory of certain accidental accretions which have become attached to it in the course of time, and facing up to certain real problems which an oversimplified liberalism has shirked or which have become apparent only since it had become a somewhat stationary and rigid creed" (Hayek 1967 [1947]).

Aristotle's ethics and theory of social order were among the chief targets of Hayek's effort to "[purge] traditional liberal theory of certain accidental accretions which have become attached to it in the course of time." Hayek saw modern socialism as a tragic misapplication of Aristotle's concept of *oikos*—a face-to-face community in which order arises as "the result of deliberate organization of individual action by an ordering mind . . . and only in a place small enough for everyone to hear the herald's cry, a place which could easily be surveyed" (1988, 11, 45-47). Through a series of essays beginning in the 1950s and culminating in *The Fatal Conceit* (1988), Hayek argued that the socialist ideal of an economy in which distributive justice and efficiency could be systematically engineered was based on an intellectual error: a failure to appreciate the profound difference between ancient and modern forms of economic order.

Carrying his argument one step further, Hayek classifies philanthropy as a species of Aristotelian socialism. Like socialism, philanthropy enjoins us "to restrict our actions to the deliberate pursuit of known and observable beneficial ends" (Hayek 1988, 80). From Hayek's perspective, this diminishes, rather than enhances, each individual's capacity to assist others. In a memorable turn of phrase, he claims that a social order in which "everyone treated his neighbor as himself would be one where comparatively few could be fruitful and multiply." Persons committed to finding "a proper cure for misfortunes about which we are understandably concerned" (13) should devote less attention to charity per se and more "towards earning a living," because the latter will "confer benefits beyond the range of our concrete knowledge" (81) and provide "a greater benefit to the community than most direct 'altruistic' action" (19).

Hayek's thinking about philanthropy is thus structured as a series of binary oppositions, roughly inverting the orthodox Marxist distinctions between socialism and capitalism (Hayek 1976; 1978; 1979; 1988):

**Commerce**

Great Society

(modern, open, *cosmos*, cattalaxy)

modern morality

(serving unknown others via markets)

Adam Smith

**Philanthropy**

tribal society

(ancient, closed, *taxis*, community)

tribal morality

(serving known others via gifts and solidarity)

Aristotle

While acknowledging that altruism and philanthropy “continue to retain some importance by assisting voluntary collaboration” and that this frequently requires us to “live in two sorts of worlds at once” (1988, 18), Hayek insists that these “old instinctual responses” play no *necessary* role in the modern liberal order. The ancient moral imperative for man to do “visible good to his known fellows (the ‘neighbor’ of the Bible)” is ultimately “irreconcilable with the open society to which today all inhabitants of the West owe the general level of their wealth” (1978, 268).

Interestingly, near the end of his brief discussion of Cornuelle and the independent sector in volume 3 of *Law, Legislation, and Liberty* (Hayek 1979), Hayek expresses a desire to explore more fully “the actual and potential achievements of the independent sector”: “I wish I could write about the subject at length, even if it were only to drive home the point that public spirit need not always mean demand for or support of government action. I must, however, not stray too far from the proper subject of this chapter, which is the service functions which government might usefully perform, not those which it need not take upon itself” (51).

Without overreading the passage, it seems clear that the philosophical and narrative structure of Hayek’s larger argument imposed constraints that prevented him from exploring this particular avenue of thought. Had he done so, Hayek might have been able to develop a different and arguably richer vision of civil and commercial society. Had he found a way to theorize the role of voluntary and philanthropic associations in a modern liberal order, he might, for example, have crafted a more philosophically consistent vision of how to enhance equality of opportunity (“the chances of anyone selected at random”) without disabling the market process (Hayek 1976, 132). Instead, Hayek’s dogged efforts to defend market processes against their socialist critics seem to have placed severe limits on his ability to integrate philanthropy into his baseline conception of the Great Society.

### ***The Aristotelian Liberalism of Positive Psychology***

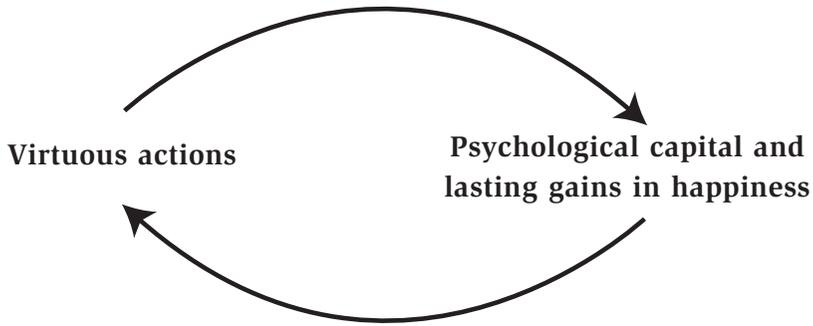
Positive psychology emerged in the late 1990s as an internal critique of mainstream psychology, somewhat parallel to Cornuelle's intervention into mainline libertarianism in the 1960s. Both laid claim to neglected regions of human action and benefaction by reasserting a "positive" view of human nature. Cornuelle's faith in the energy and self-organizing potential of the independent sector was based on the assumption that human motivation includes an irreducible "hunger to help others" (1993 [1965], 62) "as powerful as the desire for profit or power" (61). For their part, the positive psychologists have endeavored to offset mainstream psychology's "inappropriately negative view of human nature and the human condition" (Keyes and Haidt 2003, 3), particularly its "obsession with pathology" (Haidt 2006, 167). Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, Haidt, and others aimed to shift the emphasis of psychology from "disease, weakness, and damage" to "the study of happiness, strength, and virtue" (Seligman 2003, xiv), "the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing . . . of people, groups, and institutions" (Gable and Haidt 2005, 103). As Seligman explains: "The disease model does not move us closer to the prevention of [many] serious problems. Indeed, the major strides in prevention have resulted from a perspective focused on systematically building competency, not on correcting weakness. Positive psychologists have discovered that human strengths act as buffers against mental illness. . . . The focus of prevention . . . should be about taking strengths—hope, optimism, courage, interpersonal skill, capacity for insight, to name a few—and building on them to buffer against depression" (Seligman 2003, xv-xvi).

The positive psychologists situate their view of human nature within the Aristotelian branch of the liberal tradition. This in itself is an important complement to Cornuelle's liberal philanthropy project because Cornuelle does not provide an explicit philosophical rationale for his brand of humanism. The positive psychologists' commitment to an Aristotelian liberalism is reflected in their distinctive account of human happiness and its relationship to virtue. Happiness for positive psychologists refers not to joys or pleasures of the moment but to each individual's "enduring level of happiness" (Seligman 2002, 45), a sense of well-being achieved through "good living." This is Aristotle's *eudaimonia*: happiness as "activity in accord with virtue" (Aristotle 1999, 163; see also 1-17, 116-17, and 162-66) that "cannot be derived from bodily pleasure, nor . . . chemically induced or attained by any shortcuts. It can only be had by activity consonant with noble purpose" (Seligman 2002, 112).

By making virtue a necessary condition for happiness, positive psychologists underscore the freedom and responsibility of each individual to discover and enact his or her own path(s) to greater happiness. Seligman, in fact, deems the role of voluntary action in the achievement and elevation of each individual's happiness "the single most important issue in positive psychology" (2002, 45).

The positive psychologists also recognize the complexity and contingency of an individual's pursuit of happiness. The fruits of good living always take time to emerge, and good living by itself is never a guarantee of happiness. (Aristotle emphasizes the latter point in his discussion of happiness and fortune in Book 1, Chapter 10, of *Nicomachean Ethics*.) Seligman explains it this way: The perennial question, "How can I be happy?" is not the right question, since "without the distinction between pleasure and gratification, it leads too easily to a total reliance on shortcuts, to a life of snatching up as many pleasures as possible," which Seligman sees as a chief cause of depression (2002, 116). The right question is the one Aristotle posed 2,500 years ago: "What is the good life?" (120-121). Haidt observes, similarly, "Happiness is not something that you can find, acquire, or achieve directly" (2006, 238). Instead, the pursuit of happiness is an emergent process in which: "Some of the conditions [for happiness] are within you, such as coherence among the parts and levels of your personality. Other conditions require relationships to things beyond you. . . . It is worth striving to get the right relationships between yourself and others, between yourself and your work, and between yourself and something larger than yourself. If you get these relationships right, a sense of purpose and meaning will emerge" (238-239).

Another key contribution to the Cornuelliian rethinking of philanthropy is the positive psychologists' "virtuous cycle" model of personal growth and development. Building on the notion of happiness as an emergent effect of good living, this model depicts the pursuit of happiness as a long-term process of personal growth in which each person's virtuous actions generate new psychological resources (knowledge, skills, character traits) which further expand his or her capacity and desire for future virtuous actions. This provides a rudimentary but fruitful starting point for thinking about the basic psychological, economic, and sociological elements of voluntary action and interaction beyond the commercial sphere. Schematically, we can envision it as follows:



Virtuous actions are variously defined by positive psychology literature as gratifications (Seligman 2002, 116), excellences (Haidt 2006, 170), or flow activities (Csikszentmihalyi 1990): activities that “engage you fully, draw on your strengths, and allow you to lose self-consciousness and immerse yourself in what you are doing” (Haidt 2006, 170). By linking virtue to each person’s unique strengths, the positive psychologists emphasize the subjective, discovery dimension of virtuous action. In Haidt’s translation of Aristotle, “a good life is one where you develop your strengths, realize your potential, and become what it is in your nature to become” (156-157). Virtuous action is also linked to happiness. Even if we do not experience them as pleasurable in the moment, virtuous actions may contribute to a lasting increase in our happiness if they immerse us “in a task that is challenging yet closely matched to [our] abilities” (95). We derive lasting happiness from such activities because they engage us at a deeply personal level, drawing upon and cultivating our unique strengths and interests. They generate positive feelings we can legitimately call our own because we have earned them. “It is not just positive feelings we want, we want to be *entitled* to our positive feelings” (Seligman 2002, 8, original emphasis).

Seligman uses the economic metaphor of capital to describe the future benefits we derive from virtuous action. Virtuous activities (as opposed to short-term pleasure-seeking) build our psychological reserves. They are “investments” that build “psychological capital for our future” (Seligman 2002, 116). This parallels Hayek’s broad economic definition of capital as “a stock of tools and knowledge . . . which we think will come in useful in the kind of world in which we live” (1976, 23). Like economic capital, psychological capital serves both as a buffer against adversity and as a means of producing or acquiring additional resources. One’s psychological capital would therefore include one’s accumulated stock of psychological strengths and capacities (“tools and knowledge”), including

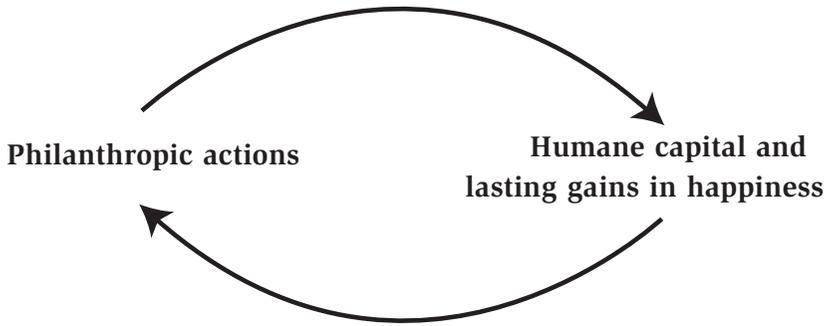
our hard-won knowledge of which activities constitute our “signature strengths” (Seligman 2002, 125-164)—in short, one’s capacity to pursue and attain happiness.

In good Aristotelian fashion, positive psychologists see happiness as being instrumentally valuable in addition to its intrinsic value. Happiness and psychological growth signal the achievement of good living and are valued ends in every human life. They also become or beget the tools, knowledge, and desire to engage in further virtuous actions. They enhance, in Seligman’s suggestive phrase, our “commerce with the world” (Seligman 2002, 43). Citing Barbara Frederickson’s path-breaking work, Seligman contends that psychological growth and its attendant positive emotions (“feelings of happiness”) make “our mental set . . . expansive, tolerant, and creative” and enable us to “build friendship, love, better physical health, and greater achievement” (35-36, 43). Psychological growth helps us to engage more effectively in commerce, broadly defined: the give and take of living and learning. Even in difficult times, our psychological capital provides the means to recognize and pursue new opportunities for win-win encounters, new opportunities to discover, exercise, and strengthen our capacities for virtuous (growth-generating) action. Positive psychologists therefore see each person as capable of achieving lasting increases in happiness through a self-sustaining process in which psychological growth is both a principal cause and consequence of virtuous action.

### *Implications for Philanthropy*

The positive psychologists’ model of human action and well-being carries rich implications for philanthropic theory. Seligman invokes these connections frequently, to the point of defining positive psychology as an attempt to “[move] psychology from the egocentric to the philanthropic” (2003, xviii). He and his colleagues view philanthropy as a uniquely effective means of “commerce with the world” that not only causes but also is “caused by” happiness (2002, 43, 9; Haidt 2006, 97-98).

For my own purposes in this essay, I wish to explore briefly the contours of a specifically philanthropic analogue to the positive psychologists’ model of virtue-centered growth and discovery—a “virtuous cycle” in which philanthropic action fuels the extension and refinement of our humane capabilities, and vice versa:



This variation on the basic positive psychology model strikes me as a useful contribution to our understanding of the motives and mechanisms of voluntary action beyond the commercial sphere and thus as a potentially valuable underpinning for the Cornuillian vision of a liberal, post-Progressive philanthropy in which philanthropic action serves not just as a means of transferring resources but also as a locus of mutual uplift and social learning between donors and recipients (Cornuelle 1993 [1965], xxxiv; Ealy 2005).

Seligman and Haidt each describe the first phase, in which philanthropic actions generate new humane resources, via compelling examples of the ways in which philanthropic action creates uplift for donors. Seligman describes “the exercise of kindness” as “a gratification, in contrast to a pleasure,” since it “calls on your strengths to rise to an occasion and meet a challenge” (2002, 9). He and Haidt each cite experimental results showing measurable differences in the level and quality of happiness obtained from philanthropic actions versus activities that were considered “fun” (Seligman 2002, 9; Haidt 2006, 97-98, 173-174), lending empirical support to the Biblical adage that “it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Philanthropic actions thus expand our individual capacity and desire for philanthropic giving. In addition to material resources, “humane capital” includes the individual’s unique strengths and virtues, the local and tacit knowledge of where and how these strengths and virtues might most effectively be exercised, and what Amy Kass calls (borrowing from the story of Prometheus) the *philanthropos tropos*: a disposition to promote the happiness and well-being of others (Kass 2005, 20).

Humane capital can also be generated by and for *recipients* of philanthropic giving. Kass reminds us of this neglected dimension of the philanthropic process by describing gifts as mutually beneficial interactions (2005, 21). For every giver, there must be a receiver; hence the receiver’s presence and receptivity are a form

of gift to the donor. Today's receivers are also tomorrow's potential givers, enriched by the resources they have received and inspired by the gratitude they feel in response to these gift(s), and guided by the philanthropic know-how they gained in the process. More generally, gratitude and other positive emotions make one more aware of one's capacities and desires to give. This is a key element in Richard Gunderman's expansive vision of liberal philanthropy as the cultivation of each person's "entrepreneurial" awareness of his or her unique capacity for giving: "The aim of philanthropic activity should be to transform people in need into people who believe they have something important to share, and who want to share it" (7).

In the second phase of the philanthropic virtuous cycle, higher levels of humane capital and *happiness* among donors and recipients create greater potential for sustained giving and civic engagement (Gable and Haidt 2005). This phenomenon is well documented in the positive psychology literature. Seligman reports, for example: "In the laboratory, children and adults who are happy display more empathy and are willing to donate more money to others in need. When we are happy, we are less self-focused, we like others more, and we want to share our good fortune even with strangers. When we are down, though, we become distrustful, turn inward, and focus defensively on our own needs" (2002, 43; Haidt 2006, 173-74).

In addition to this "happiness effect," the growth of one's humane capital also conveys (indeed, consists of) more skills and know-how for achieving mutual uplift by aligning one's philanthropic actions with the needs and actions of others.

This simple model helps us to conceptualize philanthropy as a process of discovery, learning, and social cooperation in which our pursuit of happiness (not pleasure but Aristotelian/liberal flourishing) leads us to continually adjust our actions in response to feedback—to (re)invest our philanthropic resources in ways that are more rewarding to us and to the known and unknown neighbors who benefit from our actions. Put differently, it helps us to see philanthropy as a generative process of human betterment, creating positive-sum interactions among donors and recipients rather than one-way, zero-sum transfers. It thereby affirms and extends Gunderman's vision of liberal philanthropy: "When we see philanthropy as part of a fixed-sum system, we perceive its mission in terms of redistribution. . . . [In contrast,] the most enlightened philanthropy aims at

increasing non-fixed-sum relationships throughout a community. In other words, decreasing want is ultimately less important than increasing generativity, our capacity to contribute to our own flourishing. In this vision, philanthropy . . . enhances both our capacity and our inclination to make a positive difference in the lives of others” (2007, 41-42).

### ***Beyond the Hayekian Impasse***

Like Hayek in 1947, classical liberals in our post-Cold War era face a “great intellectual task,” of “purging traditional liberal theory of certain accidental accretions which have become attached to it in the course of time, and [to face] up to certain real problems which an oversimplified liberalism has shirked or which have become apparent only since it had become a somewhat stationary and rigid creed” (Hayek 1967 [1947]).

One area in which received liberal thought stands in need of substantial revision is the role of philanthropy in modern commercial societies. Growing numbers of liberal scholars are pushing forward on this front, seeking—with Cornuelle—to preserve the central lessons of the Hayek/Mises critique of central planning while reclaiming the humanitarian potential of commercial society by theorizing philanthropy as a form of social cooperation distinct from, yet complementary to, the commercial order. A necessary first step in this rethinking process is to move beyond the “oversimplified liberalism” of Hayek’s commerce-only view of voluntary social cooperation and his denigration of philanthropic motives as a nostalgic survival of pre-modern (and proto-socialist) cultural and intellectual mores.

Positive psychology adds a valuable voice to contemporary conversations about freedom and human flourishing by reasserting an Aristotelian view of the human condition and an Aristotelian liberal psychology geared to “promoting the best in people” rather than “preventing the worst from happening” (Keyes and Haidt 2003, 5). The positive psychologists’ work enriches classical liberal discussions of freedom in particular by articulating the value of both the negative freedom from coercion and the effective or “positive” capacity to pursue the good life as one defines it, including the freedom “to experience meaningful personal engagement in community life” (Ealy 2005, 4). From this perspective, philanthropic action serves to cultivate and extend our positive freedom to serve others, to develop and exercise our humane capabilities of

“loving, befriending, helping, sharing, and otherwise intertwining our lives with others” (Haidt 2006, 134). In modest but significant ways, it helps us to imagine how to multiply the number of “personal outlets for the service motive” so that our humane desires and resources might be more effectively harnessed to address “complex modern problems” (Cornuelle 1993 [1965], 62).

The potential gains from this intellectual exchange are by no means one-sided. Positive psychologists can profit from the ideas and legacy of Cornuelle and those of leading-edge Hayekian scholars who have begun to explore the role of social capital in local and extended orders of human cooperation.

Positive psychologists seeking to better understand and support “positive institutions” could also benefit greatly from the large body of Hayekian and classical liberal thinking on the dialectical interplay between social institutions (formal and informal) and emergent processes of social cooperation. The writings of Hayek and other liberal economic thinkers could help to inform the positive psychologists’ accounts of the epistemological open-endedness of each individual’s pursuit of happiness exemplified in Seligman’s claim that “Building strength and virtue is not about learning, training, or conditioning but about discovery, creation, and ownership” (2002, 136), suggesting that individual strengths and virtues are not “given” but discovered via a process of moral entrepreneurship. The Austrian/Hayekian theory of individual action and the market process could also go a long way toward sharpening the incipient logic of the positive psychologists’ vision of the “pursuit of happiness,” in which individuals engage in ongoing processes of specialization and discovery, seeking to identify and hone their signature strengths, which in turn influence their capacity not only for philanthropy but also for economic trade and capital accumulation.

A further area in which mutual learning opportunities appear to be especially fruitful is the burgeoning literature on emergent cooperation within decentralized, nonmarket networks in which a new generation of Austrian economists is exploring, from a Hayekian perspective, the nature and importance of social capital as a means of generating the personal and interpersonal resources to sustain local and extended networks of voluntary cooperation outside the commercial order (Chamlee-Wright 2004; 2006; 2008; Chamlee-Wright and Lewis 2008; Chamlee-Wright and Myers 2008). These Austrian social capital theorists share the positive psychologists’ vision of individuals as socially embedded beings whose character and capacities are

shaped by the social networks in which they live. Yet they have gone much further in their efforts to define and analyze social capital, in contrast to the positive psychologists, who have only begun to articulate their notion of “psychological capital” vis-à-vis the larger process of individual action, learning, and mutual adjustment they call the “pursuit of happiness.” This new Austrian work could help to clarify the overlaps and interplay between the psychological capital we possess individually and the social capital that resides in the intersubjective spaces of “informal (non-contractual) *networks* of [personal] relations, and the beliefs and norms which arise from and govern these structures” (Chamlee-Wright and Lewis 2008, emphasis added). In turn, the Austrian social capital project could itself be enriched by the positive psychologists’ focus on the cultivation and consequences of virtuous and philanthropic action.

Further conversation among positive psychologists and students of liberal philanthropy would help all of us tackle the Aristotelian, liberal task of theorizing a “free society” that leads to and depends on “flourishing human lives of virtue” (McCloskey 2006, 497).

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# PURSUING THE HAPPY SOCIETY: FACULTY VERSUS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

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*Hans L. Eicholz*

History does not repeat itself, but some questions are worth asking repeatedly. Such are questions about the nature of the good life: What is it? How do we get it? Every age has posed these queries, but because the answers have been so varied, the hope of many has been to seek a core element in a common human nature that will finally settle the matter.

It is no surprise that in our present age we try to bring the powers of science to bear upon these questions. This has been the object of positive psychology. It is an appropriate inquiry in America, where a concern for the pursuit of happiness was set down at the outset of our political life. That concern was itself influenced by an earlier idea of human understanding that historians have termed faculty psychology (Howe 1997, 63-103). So the question arises: Is our current pursuit of this question in line with our earlier notions of what constitutes a life worth living, and do these notions sit well with the institutional structures we have put in place? Or do the implications of positive psychology fundamentally challenge the very foundations of our civil life?

Faculty psychology was the basis from which the critical distinction between government and society was most fully developed in the modern era. The higher faculties of the mind were seen as constituting the basis for what the ancients had regarded as the higher virtues of private morality, epitomized by a regard for others and a rational, long-range view of one's self-interest. Whereas the ancients looked to the well-ordered city as the means of controlling the base passions of the multitude so that a few might be free, the contributors to faculty psychology had a more expansive object. They saw the corruption of power as the central cause of the degradation of social life for the many, and tried to distinguish between the base passions unleashed by unrestrained governments and the creative energies fostered by a society of individuals enjoying equal liberties. The two realms were inextricably

connected, but their distinction was critical to a proper conceptualization of a *free society*. Without a limited government dedicated to the administration of equal laws, the liberty of individuals could never be secure, and society would languish. Daniel Walker Howe takes note of this distinction between government and society when he observes, “The disposition of the Scottish thinkers to minimize the importance of law as compared with other social forces had lasting consequences. It helps explain the determination of their followers, across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to rely whenever possible on custom, moral exhortation, voluntary societies, and education as instruments of virtue in place of legal sanction” (1997, 54).

There is much to recommend what we now call positive psychology. It has thrown off the limitations of nineteenth and twentieth century clinical psychology and its almost exclusive focus on pathology, moving on to investigate the potential of individuals to seek and find happiness. It does so by attempting to work with the person’s inner capacities for making choices among ends that are consonant with a proper sense of self. Like earlier faculty psychology, it even recognizes that the mind is composed of parts that “sometimes conflict” (Haidt 2006, xi). The key is to find the right way to mediate these conflicts.

### ***Limitations of Positive Psychology***

What positive psychology lacks, however, may be far more important than what it has discovered or rediscovered. It seems to lack a clear idea of the limitations of human nature. Where faculty psychology posited the existence of base passions that must be controlled and even suppressed, positive psychology speaks of overcoming the negative emotions with positive thoughts and therapy. As Jonathan Haidt observes, “Life itself is but what you deem it, and you can—through meditation, cognitive therapy and Prozac—redeem yourself” (2006, 44). This is a strategy for happiness no matter what we do, as opposed to a considered reflection on the different ethical circumstances in which human activity takes place. The former strategy leaves morality entirely subjective, while the latter attempts to find a basis for morality that is *objectively* grounded in a common human nature. Positive psychology reasons as if the normative and political order of society were a given, and leaves aside the institutional aspects that were so much a part of faculty psychology’s

focus. Yet positive psychologists make no end of prescriptive recommendations for the better ordering of our individual and even *collective* selves.

Here we find an interesting bifurcation among positive psychologists. There are those who see the individual as the primary unit for analysis and celebrate the *capacity* for making meaningful choices, and then there are those who look to the external environment as the critical factor in managing the happiness of individuals through the communal or collective regulation of choice.<sup>1</sup> David G. Myers, for example, writes, “To counter radical individualism and cultural corrosion a new, inclusive social renewal movement is emerging; one that affirms liberals’ indictment of the demoralizing effects of poverty and conservatives’ indictment of toxic media models; one that welcomes liberals’ support for family-friendly workplaces and conservatives’ support for committed relationships; one that agrees with liberals’ advocacy for children in all sorts of families and conservatives’ support for marriage and co-parenting.” He concludes, “A new communitarian movement offers a ‘third way’—an alternative to the individualistic civil libertarianism of the left and the economic libertarianism of the right. It implores us, in the words of Martin Luther King Jr., ‘to choose between chaos and community.’” (2000, 1-12). The implications of such expostulations for policy run the gamut from the voluntary to the politically mandated.

This disparity within positive psychology may arise from a modern unwillingness to make moral judgments about emotional states or behaviors. Rather, the positive psychologist would prefer to describe such states as either more or less healthy, or more or less useful to the attainment of a positive mental state, but not right or wrong in some objective moral sense. That same hesitancy to pass moral judgment on individual actions and attitudes makes it difficult to conceptualize the question of responsibility as it pertains to individual choices. Consequently, the discipline passes over those aspects of personal behavior that informed the conceptual distinction between government and society that was central to faculty psychology. Personal choice becomes just one of many possible approaches to seeking happiness, but there is little or no concern with assigning ethical responsibility for those choices. Without the moral distinction that sets choice apart from compulsion, positive psychologists offer no principled opposition to public interventions but instead ask only if they are efficacious to their utilitarian calculus. Consequently they

run the danger of fostering, not a society of persons capable of internalizing the values and actualizing the capacities for personal self-government, but a brave new world of external stimulus management and control. Such a world would do the very thing faculty psychology warned against: it would unleash the power of some over the many. That would not be an advance but a throwback to a very ancient way of thinking about individual potentialities.

Throughout most of human history, monarchical absolutists denied the capacity of individuals *on a general scale* to give order to their own lives. Only the great had such ability, and if they were sometimes arbitrary, it was better to submit than to resist, for order of any degree was thought to flow from the supremacy of an elite. The multitudes were considered ungovernable without the terrors of a prince to hold them in line. Order was external and flowed from those who were regarded, either by accident or divine right, to be superior. As different as they are in their philosophical approaches, both Robert Filmer and Thomas Hobbes gave voice to this ancient belief. Hobbes noted that “men have no pleasure (but on the contrary a great deal of grief) in keeping company, where there is no power able to over-awe them all” (1986, 185). Filmer simply stated, “There is, and always shall be continued to the end of the world, a natural right of a supreme father over every multitude” (1991, 11).

### ***Sense of the Good***

The rise of commercial society in modern times altered perceptions of the naturalness of order in society, however. The increase of wealth through trade occurred at the same time as the growth of the sciences and a belief in the ability of men to discern the natural laws governing an orderly universe. That experience stimulated efforts to discover equivalent grounds for orderliness in human relations, to find sources of human order that were independent of force and fear. It was by the general application of the idea of a naturally occurring capacity for reasoned social intercourse that the Scottish philosophers began the search anew into man’s faculties and potentialities for the prospects of a truly *free society* (Appleby 1992, 60).

If it could be shown that men in general had some means built in, by design or by nature, through which to internalize a sense of the good and perceive correctly their own interests in relation to that good, then the perceived need for princely terrors would be substantially undermined. John

Locke had invested much in the capacity for reason itself as providing the means to happiness, enjoining his readers to make a careful distinction among ends. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke argued, “the highest perfection of intellectual nature lies in a careful and constant pursuit of true and solid happiness, so the care of ourselves, that we mistake not the imaginary for real happiness, is the necessary foundation of our liberty.” Those who followed in Locke’s footsteps, however, were less impressed by his reliance on unaided reason for individual and social flourishing. They wanted to understand the general contours that defined human motivations themselves. Reason, they observed, was a means to any number of ends, but what, they asked, was the moral quality of those ends, and how did men know them to be good?

Henry Home, Lord Kames, for example, wrote, “But self-preservation, is of too great moment to be left entirely to the conduct of reason” (2005, 47). Expressing similar doubt about the sufficiency of reason in moral considerations, Francis Hutcheson wrote, “The weakness of our Reason, and the avocation arising from the Infirmitie and Necessities of our Nature, are so great that very few Men could ever have form’d those long Deductions of Reason, which shew some Actions to be in the whole advantageous to the Agent, and their Contraries pernicious” (1725, 9).<sup>2</sup>

What came to be called Scottish moral theory developed a line of thought that tried to supplement reason by way of an inborn moral sense or sentiment. A number of variations on this idea were hammered out in the voluminous debates that characterized the Scottish Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, and these ideas profoundly altered the course of liberal or Whig ideas in the English-speaking world.

As opponents of monarchical absolutism, the Whigs were drawn to the Scottish moralists’ robust conception of social order, rooted as it was in natural faculties supposedly available to most people. The faculty of the moral sense required only the right social conditions to provide the opportunity for its development and exercise to be widely realized. Thus if the depredations of a few could be effectively constrained by law, and the incentives of commercial life were left free to operate to their fullest, civil society would flourish. Government, therefore, had only to be restricted to a few basic operations to allow for the incentives of society to draw men into associations for all manner of good purposes, both philanthropic and self-interested.

Thus the Scots underscored the need to limit the abuses and corruptions of arbitrary power in human society. According to this perspective, individuals could be trusted with their liberty. Indeed, not only could they be trusted with freedom, they required it as a precondition for the exercise and development of those faculties or capacities necessary for personal self-government. Thus Benjamin Franklin proposed in 1732, to the group he helped found for self-improvement and education, that the essence of good character constitutes a “faculty of reasoning justly and truly in searching after and discovering such truths as relate to my Happiness. Which Faculty is the Gift of God, capable of being improved by Experience and Instruction into Wisdom” (1732, 210).<sup>3</sup> This did not mean that all persons would exercise their faculties to the fullest, but it was nevertheless something each must be left free to attempt without force or the threat of force. Francis Hutcheson, one of the early Scottish moralists, argued powerfully, as early as 1725, that to be coerced into virtue made no sense and was ultimately counterproductive because such coercion takes “away all the pleasures of generosity, honor, charity, which cease when Men can be forced to these Actions” (1725, 187). Underscoring the need for limited government, he later asked, “what plan of polity will ever satisfy men sufficiently as to the just treatment to be given themselves, and all who are particularly dear to them, out of the common stock, if all is to depend upon the pleasure of magistrates and no private person allowed any exercise of his own wisdom or discretion in some of the most honorable and delightful offices of life? Must all men in private stations ever be treated as children, or fools?” (1755, 322-323).

The reason for confidence in “men in private stations” was elaborated in 1751 by Hutcheson’s student Henry Home, Lord Kames: “Nothing contributes so much to improve the mind and confirm it in virtue, as being continually employed in surveying the actions of others, entering into the concerns of the virtuous, approving their conduct, condemning vice, and showing an abhorrence at it, for the mind acquires strength by exercise, as well as the body” (2005, 18). In the absence of the opportunity to exercise their moral sense freely, men would fall back into a brutish existence, he argued: “for passions, as they gather strength by indulgence, so they decay by want of exercise,” and, “Were everything furnished to his hand without thought or labor, he [humanity] would sink below the lowest of brute creation” (21-22).

### ***The Centrality of Liberty to Happiness***

It was by the happy accident of western history that such a free civil society had evolved. Commercial civilization was seen to constitute the highest stage of both refinement and personal independence. It was in this milieu that the Americans imbibed their notions of self-government (Howe 1997, 53).

Just five years before penning the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson both recommended and paraphrased Kames directly in a letter to his soon-to-be brother-in-law, Robert Skipwith:

“I answer, everything is useful which contributes to fix in the principles and practices of virtue. When any original act of charity or of gratitude, for instance, is presented either to our sight or imagination, we are deeply impressed with its beauty and feel a strong desire in ourselves of doing charitable and grateful acts also. On the contrary when we see or read of any atrocious deed, we are disgusted with its deformity, and conceive an abhorrence of vice. Now every emotion of this kind is an exercise of our virtuous dispositions, and dispositions of the mind, like limbs of the body, acquire strength by exercise” (Jayne 1998, 71).

Thus happiness helped constitute a society in which individuals internalized a sense of their moral obligations and achieved fulfillment by exercising those obligations *voluntarily* for all manner of purposes, whether commercial, philanthropic, social, or religious. Politics was certainly a part of this equation, but it was only one aspect of a far richer set of social relations embraced by the eighteenth century idea of civil society.

Under liberty, individuals could and would experience the consequences of their actions more directly, because they could not deny that they were the product of choice. Liberty was thus a moral instructor, informing everyone positively by drawing us together through our natural dispositions. Thomas Paine put the distinction between the free and forced at the very opening of his essay on *Common Sense*, the work that helped distill Americans’ resolve for independence, observing, “Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections, the latter negatively by restraining our vices” (1955, 6).

The problem of political life is the problem of coercive power. Unconstrained power insulates people from the consequences of their bad

choices. Without the ability to experience the social costs of one's decisions, the individual need not accommodate him- or herself to others' feelings. Without the need to accommodate others, even the signals of individuals in society would be distorted. The fawning disposition of a courtier, for example, masked his contempt, fear, or ingratitude toward the magistrates or lords. How, then, could the magistrate act knowledgeably regarding the wellbeing of others *even if* motivated by his or her higher faculties or capacities? At all levels of society, power unconstrained by law distorts the information that occurs naturally in a society of equal liberty, and power becomes a license for the expression of baser instincts. Those passions are certainly natural, but their consequences, when unconstrained, foster social dislocation, inefficiencies, dependencies, and individual personalities characterized by aggression, lust, subservience, and fear.

Where Franklin, Jefferson, and Paine spoke of society in its best form as understood by faculty psychology, it was Madison who applied this understanding to the realm of government and coercive power. One need only look to the tenth, thirty-ninth and fifty-first essays of Publius to see its application. Many have detected an ancient quality in Madison's ethics because he often spoke of finding ways to ensure the representation of the general interest in the offices of the senate, executive, and judiciary. But Madison's ultimate hope was not with the virtue of men in politics but instead with the cancellation of their base passions or interests by other such passions in an elaborate system of checks and balances. It was through a careful consideration of how powers could be limited by other powers in government that he hoped to ensure the effective containment of coercive force and its potential abuses (Howe 1997, 96-100).

The sovereignty of the people, Madison argued, would be channeled through various offices at both the state and federal levels, and these would in turn be divided according to the powers and responsibilities of executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Each branch would have some means of exercising power over the other branches, and in each case it was hoped a wide expanse of territory would make it less likely that some regional interest would hold sway over the whole. Passion would check passion, and government would be so limited by its structure as delineated in a written constitution and later the added check of a bill of rights, that society would be

left free to enjoy the flourishing of a highly developed civil associational life.

In sum, faculty psychology had a robust sense of the individual in both political and associational capacities. I say *associational* because voluntary organization was the basis for a wide variety of different activities about which we tend to forget when we use the more current designation of “private.” Individuals might well associate for reasons of commerce and profit, but this by no means exhausted all the possible reasons for organizing; others include reasons of faith, fellowship, and philanthropy. In a society under law that respected the equal liberty of each person’s most basic rights, individuals could be trusted to follow their natural inclinations toward these various endeavors and to associate freely to pursue them. With the collective containment of quarrelsome and contentious persons who abuse their strengths, and with legal limits placed upon public authority, the natural affections of the heart would serve as the springs to action of the higher faculties of personal self-government. The baser passions would be strictly controlled by carefully crafted institutional limits on political power that directed the use of force towards proper ends such as defense and the enforcement of law.

Today, this basic understanding of the two realms is nearly forgotten. Now we speak of self-government as if it were synonymous with the rule of the majority or the casting of a ballot. The personal element of the older definition of government of the self is even designated as antiquated by some modern sources.<sup>4</sup> It should come as little surprise, therefore, that in our present age positive psychology makes prescriptions without considering their wider institutional and social ramifications.

### ***Challenges for Positive Psychology***

In its effect on the individual, positive psychology does make valuable contributions. In many ways we might say that positive psychology has reinvented the wheel of faculty psychology. Like the latter, positive psychology points to certain intrinsic motivators that seem to undergird the happiness of individuals in society. A powerful orientation toward others and a sense of altruism and of the long-run benefits of paying attention to opportunities all reveal the social complexity of motives that define individuals’ social engagements in both positive and faculty psychology. The difference is that modern science has given positive

psychology the empirical tools to verify what for the Scottish moralists was only a strong inference backed by anecdotal evidence.

Reminiscent of Adam Smith, Martin Seligman notes that a happy disposition reinforces positive-sum transactions: “Almost every technological advance (for example, the printing press or the hybrid tea rose) is a win-win interaction. The printing press did not subtract an equivalent economic value from somewhere else; rather it engendered an explosion in value” (2002, 43-44). The principle of mutual gains from trade was of course at the heart of Smith’s explanation for the rise of a highly complex and spontaneous commercial system of exchange. Of more particular note is Seligman’s fascination with recent rediscoveries of moral sense theory that root positive emotions in an internal propensity toward cooperative behaviors. Robert Wright’s *NonZero* is just one of a number of such works, including articles by Stephen Pinker and Matt Ridley, that consider the biological basis for moral actions. Seligman is moved by Wright’s research to ask a question that was at the very heart of faculty psychology: “Could it be that positive emotion, then, has evolved to motivate and guide us through win-win games? When we are in a situation in which everyone might benefit,... joy, good cheer, contentment, and happiness motivate us and guide our actions” (257)

Kames asked much the same thing:

“May we not apply to justice, what is so beautifully reasoned concerning society, in a dialogue upon happiness, ‘If society be thus agreeable to our nature, is there nothing within us to excite and lead us to it? No impulse, no preparation of faculties? It would be strange if there should not,’ If we be fitted by our nature for society; if pity, benevolence, friendship, love, dislike of solitude and desire of company, be natural affections, all of them conducive to society, it would be strange if there should be no natural affections, no preparation of faculties, to direct us to do justice, which is so essential to society” (Home 2005, 54).

The comparison with the Scottish moralists holds true for Jonathan Haidt as well. How like Kames he is when he writes, “Reason and emotion must both work together to create intelligent behavior, but emotion ... does most of the work” (2006, 13). Kames took exactly the same position, “that, supposing our duty could be made plain to us by an abstract chain of reasoning, yet we have

good ground to conclude, that the Author of nature has not left our actions to be directed by so weak a principle as reason.... Is nature so deficient, as to leave the duty we owe our neighbor, which stands in the front rank of duties, to be directed by cool reasoning? This is not according to the analogy of nature; nor is it fact; witness compassion, friendship, benevolence, and all the tribe of the social affections” (Home 2005, 69).

Haidt also mentions the empirical work of three psychologists who “reviewed the available evidence” and found that voluntary activities, “the things that you choose to do, such as meditation, exercise, learning a new skill, or taking a vacation,” have the most lasting influence on character: “because such activities must be chosen, and because most of them take effort and attention, they can’t just disappear from your awareness the way conditions can” (2006, 91). Thus, like Kames or Jefferson he affirms the necessity of exercising the positive capacities for social engagement as an essential part of the individual’s psychological development. These similarities between Haidt and Kames or Jefferson, however, can mask critical differences between positive and faculty psychology. Positive psychology seeks to discover the conditions and characteristics of happiness, and thereby find the formula for being happy. Faculty psychology not only tried to understand the lineaments of *happiness* but also attempted to say what was *moral*. Another name for the program of the Scottish Enlightenment was *moral philosophy*.

Positive psychology, by contrast, doesn’t say what actions are right or wrong. It tries only to discover what is harmful to health and well-being. Both schools are utilitarian in some sense, but the Scots at least tried to define the good in relation to actions that were the result of *choice*. Thus a harmful choice could properly be judged as wrong, such as when government abuses its power or a thug takes your property. On the other hand, helpful choices, such as trading for mutual gain or a helping act of kindness, were regarded as an exercise in the good. Because personal responsibility was located in moral persons, by definition liberty was a necessary condition of the right order of society.

Positive psychology, by contrast, does not make personal responsibility a necessary condition of happiness. *All* conditions are subject to the happiness formula. Thus Locke’s early encomium to be careful to distinguish real from imaginary happiness receives little or no consideration from positive psychology. Religion may or may not be true, for example, but positive

psychologists will only say that faith tends to make you happier and more optimistic. Pessimists may or may not be more accurate in their predictions, but positive psychologists will tell you only that optimists are happier. Thus in their review of the literature, Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi observe, “unrealistically optimistic beliefs about the future can protect people from illness” (2000, 10). The rightness or wrongness of the beliefs is no part of their concern.

Likewise, a real challenge for positive psychologists comes when they try to examine the external conditions for happiness, and here is where the differences from faculty psychology become most pronounced. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi invoke what they call “collective well-being,” which they say is to be understood as a “systemic perspective.” Without much explanation of what constitutes an external, collective measure of happiness, they observe that certain actions within society can be zero-sum, without inquiring about the context in which those actions occur. Thus they pose the question, “If running a speedboat for an hour provides the same amount of well-being to person A as reading from a book of poems provides to Person B, but the speedboat consumes 10 gallons of gasoline and irritates 200 bathers, should the two experiences be weighed equally? Will a social science of positive community and positive institutions arise?” (2000, 12).

If closer attention were given to their intellectual predecessors, to the Scottish moralists and the American Founders, positive psychologists would find ample grounds on which to reflect on these questions. They would certainly know to ask a few more questions respecting the institutions of property and rule of law. Who owns the lake? Did the people on shore accept the rules of the owner? Is the driver of the speedboat in compliance? Is he a trespasser? Upon what basis does he acquire the ten gallons of gas to run the boat? Did he steal it? How is the gas produced? Is it produced through competitive private enterprise or a subsidized, state-run monopoly? They do not pose these more meaningful distinctions because positive psychologists do not use the tools that could address them. The questions require sustained consideration of the basic rules that make society possible in the first place. As their discipline stands now, positive psychologists and their fellow travelers are threatening to reinvent rather badly what already exists—a social science of institutions.

***Crucial Difference Between State and Society***

In an essay dedicated to this very project, John McKnight illustrates the potential challenges and pitfalls of this threatened new “science” of positive institutions by providing a road map to “safe, wise, and healthful communities.” His analysis begins promisingly enough. Like the Scottish moralists, he sees the complexity involved in the processes of economic growth: “We misunderstand economic development if we believe it grows from programs involving the creation of business plans. The soil that has nurtured enterprise and a burgeoning economy is the experiences, relationships and culture of a rich associational life.” Taking advantage of dispersed information through voluntary exchange and association was a central part of Adam Smith’s project, and McKnight recognizes the importance of such local knowledge. He acknowledges that civil associations are various and the extended order from which they spring is complex and dynamic. Hereafter, however, McKnight’s way of grappling with this complexity departs from the Scottish approach. He lumps business in with a number of “growing service systems” and concludes that associations are separate from such “systems.” McKnight then argues that it is these service systems, including business, that are displacing authentic community. If we wish to preserve associations, he argues, policymakers will “need to enhance community power while diminishing system authority” (1996, 18, 20).

This distinction between associations and services, and the incorporation of commerce into the latter, is based on an inadequate definition of both. McKnight asserts, “The system is designed for mass production of goods and services. The community of associations is not designated to produce services. Rather it is the context where care is manifested. Care, unlike service, cannot be produced. Care is the consenting commitment one has for the other, freely given. Care cannot be mandated, managed, or produced as a service can” (1996, 7).

Although McKnight’s critique rings true for the broad host of government-based social services in which bureaucratic administration displaces genuine care, he adopts a basic conceptual confusion about business, one that is common in current academic and popular thought. Because businesses are managed to achieve particular ends, some people think that they do not entail consent or that they lack the element of free choice, but the only condition in

which this is so is under a system of total public ownership. Under a legal regime of private property it is exactly the opposite.

Businesses in an open and free economy are involved in a highly variegated order of dispersed information that rests upon nothing else but the consent of those who organize them and those who enter into exchanges with them. Absent special privileges dispensed as political favors or cartel behavior, the voluntary nature of commerce sets businesses firmly within the realm of voluntary social arrangements in which we find civil associations. Just as business enterprises organize to pursue a variety of purposes, so civil associations (and social enterprises) also organize around a diversity of ends: some groups serve purposes of philanthropy of specific kinds; others serve ends of a social nature such as fellowship, education, or personal growth; and some also provide direct goods and services. Businesses and civil associations are thus alike in their voluntary foundation on *consenting commitment freely given*. This points to a far more crucial distinction when we want to consider civil society writ large: the distinction between the realm of the voluntary and the realm where compulsion is the ultimate principle.<sup>5</sup>

Even in the most democratically organized governments, consent is only crudely approximated by majority rule. Majorities reserve to themselves the ultimate right to compel individual compliance, and that sets even the most democratically elected government apart from associations that are voluntary. An elective government can even be tyrannical. In his first inaugural address, Thomas Jefferson observed that the will of the majority, “to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate would be oppression” (1801, 492-493). All choices entail costs, but few would find it difficult to distinguish the missionary who converts by the sword and the one who asks for a voluntary commitment, even if the former was approved by a majority of the heathen.

How stunning, then, the statement that leaves our social direction in the hands of *policymakers*, democratically chosen or otherwise. What an unconscious eliding into the hands of raw power is this: “The navigating principle here is a shift in the economics so that income and enterprise are the primary goals enhancing individuals and communities.... Therefore resources will be diverted from secondary service systems to provide choice making income for individuals who are especially vulnerable. The pre-purchase of

services will become investment of last resort” (McKnight 1996, 21). Although we can applaud the intention to elevate the vulnerable by empowering them with greater choice-making opportunities, we must reject the dependence upon policy instead of commerce and civil association as the chief means to this end. Who will be the policymakers who direct this outcome? Who will supply the definitions of the “especially vulnerable?” Who will command that “resources will be diverted?” Who will decide when these goals have been achieved? At the heart of McKnight’s assumptions is what the philosopher Maurice Mandelbaum called the “self-excepting fallacy.” As he sets course by his map and prepares the ship called society for its journey, it never occurs to him to ask, from what source derives the power of these policymakers? How will they define happiness? Can we trust them? He simply assumes that they will be such as himself, sharing his understandings and benign goals (Green 1984, 1216-1217).

The real distinction we need to make is not between systems and associations, but once again between society and government. We need a realistic appraisal of human nature as it is subject to the discipline of different circumstances, whether they be based on voluntary agreements or a matter of command. Faculty psychology had a good balance of optimism about the possibilities for happiness within the voluntary realm of society and pessimism about policymakers wielding force for collective ends. Thus Madison, that faculty psychologist extraordinaire of politics, observed in *Federalist* 51, “In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.”

Because the basic distinction between state and society is so little considered today, positive psychologists flirt with power in ways that promise to undermine the very kinds of self-determination and happiness many of them claim to be advancing. By blurring important distinctions between self, society, and polity, they actually invite power to convert them all into “systems”—the very antithesis of an associational life based on freely committed choices. McKnight cites Karl Polanyi as an authority, and Polanyi was one of the great advocates of social planning (McKnight 1996, 20). What could be more systematizing than a political or communal or collective policy directing the allocation of resources?

In a powerful rebuttal to another current advocate of social intervention, philosopher David Schmidtz recently noted that government redistribution removes responsibility from exactly where a thriving civil society needs it to be: the freely choosing individuals who compose it. The key to personal happiness, he argues, “lies in background institutions, especially property institutions, that lead people to take responsibility for their own welfare.” Happiness, then, is to be found not in the compulsory realm of policymakers but in “whatever helps people to pursue their projects in peaceful and productive ways. It is people living peaceful and productive lives, and the institutional structures that encourage them, that make people better off in the long run. And what helps poor people in the short run—internalized responsibility, and the synergistic combination of self-reliance and spontaneous mutual support that goes with it” (Schmidtz and Goodin 1988, 94-95). Lord Kames, Jefferson’s favorite moral philosopher, understood exactly this in 1758, and the positive psychologists would do well to reconsider what was then a fundamental insight of faculty psychology in general: “[N]ature has not failed us here, more than in the other parts of our constitution. We have a sense of property, we have a sense of obligation to perform our engagements; and we have a sense of wrong in incroaching [sic] upon property, and in being untrue to our engagements. Society could not subsist without these affections, more than it could subsist without the social affections, properly so called. We have reason, a priori, to conclude equally in favor of both, and we find upon examination that our conclusion is just” (Home 2005, 54).

## NOTES

- 1 On the problems of choice as considered by other positive psychologists, see also Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000, 8, 10).
- 2 See also Howe (1997) on the question of the Scottish moralists and their consideration of Locke.
- 3 As always, Franklin is among the more complex personalities of the Founding, and his views on human nature are no less difficult to nail down. Howe finds convincing Franklin’s conjecture to James Logan in 1737 that Hobbes’ idea is “somewhat nearer the Truth,” but in actuality Franklin went on to reflect that the “Truth perhaps lies somewhere in between both Extreams [sic].” What was this other extreme? He called

this a “State of Love.” But of course this is more radical than Locke’s position or that of his Scottish followers, who sought only to explain a propensity for cooperative social behavior, not some millenarian state of heavenly beatitude. Given Franklin’s close relationship with Kames and his own indefatigable dedication to voluntary improvement and association, we can reasonably assume that he was making a rhetorical play for some strategy known only to himself, while actually remaining firmly within the Whig camp regarding the faculties of human sociability. See Howe (1997, 23-24).

- 4 Encarta online, for example, lists the definition “the ability to exercise self-control” as archaic (see [http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary\\_/Self%252dgovernment.html](http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/Self%252dgovernment.html)). Today the primary definition is the political: the right of citizens to choose their own government.
- 5 The philosopher Michael Oakeshott made a more helpful distinction than McKnight’s when he noted the differences between *enterprise associations* and *civil associations*. Enterprises produce specific products or perform specific services, but a civil association serves to create the rules that allow for enterprise associations to more effectively pursue their varied objects, what the Scottish moralists called civil society. The real mistake is to confuse government, and therefore civil society in general, with being an enterprise association; that is to say, an organization set up to produce a single product or outcome such as equality of condition or some other specifically envisioned order of community, instead of as the enforcer of a basic set of rules that allows for both voluntary associations and individuals to seek their own ends (Oakeshott 1975, 111-122).

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# INVESTING IN HAPPINESS:

## PHILANTHROPY AS A GUIDE TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

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*Michael Strong*

After a century in which behaviorism and Freudianism were the dominant schools of psychological thought, positive psychology is a breath of fresh air. Behaviorism assumed that humans were reactive mechanisms whose internal mental, emotional, and spiritual lives could be dismissed as mere epiphenomena. Freudianism reduced the complexity of human motivation to a few fundamental “drives” associated with sex and aggression, and dismissed our understandings of our motives as delusions. Both regarded as irrelevant nonsense any view of human beings as intentional agents.

Positive psychology, by contrast, has rediscovered that our experience as intentional beings is intimately related to our ability to experience happiness. It has thereby validated many traditional notions of well-being, including the importance of meaning and purpose in our lives and the importance of virtue, character, and transcendent belief. After a hundred years in which the field of academic psychology promulgated paradigms alien to the experience of our lives as human beings and hostile to the world’s wisdom traditions, it is gratifying that academic psychology has finally come around to a perspective that is more attuned to our lives as we experience them.

However, although positive psychology validates much of human experience and traditional beliefs, it includes a highly questionable assumption: that through the experimental method it has derived evidence-based findings that afford it an expertise on the issue of happiness that is superior to what is available to people through their own experience. Given the historical biases of social science (against common sense, wisdom and classical liberalism), philanthropists interested in investing in endeavors they think will increase human happiness ought to examine carefully the assumptions of positive psychology as a social science, to ensure that their investments bring a positive return.

### ***Positive Psychology and Traditional Notions of Virtue and Character***

Martin Seligman, the founding father of positive psychology, explains in *Authentic Happiness* that positive psychology has three pillars:

“First is the study of positive emotion. Second is the study of the positive traits, foremost among them the strengths and virtues, but also the “abilities” such as intelligence and athleticism. Third is the study of positive institutions, such as democracy, strong families, and free inquiry, that support the virtues, which in turn support the positive emotions” (2002, xi).

He goes on to assert that “in times of trouble” the positive emotions and the virtues prevent the most extreme experiences of unhappiness. Most people are happy sometimes, and positive psychology aspires to explain why some more consistently experience happiness more than others. It turns out that happier people more consistently focus on their more positive emotions and have character virtues that support them when times are tough, according to positive psychology.

Making reference to Abraham Lincoln’s appeal to the “better angels” of human nature, Seligman acknowledges the role of character and virtue in nineteenth century America: “These words, ‘the better angels of our nature,’ by Lincoln, exhibit several rock-bottom assumptions held by most educated minds of mid-nineteenth century America:

- That there is a human ‘nature’
- That action proceeds from character
- That character comes in two forms, both equally fundamental—bad character and good or virtuous ‘angelic’ character

Because all of these assumptions have almost disappeared from the psychology of the 20th century, the story of their rise and fall is the backdrop for my renewing the notion of good character as a core assumption of Positive Psychology” (Seligman 2002, 126).

Seligman goes on to specify the intimate relationship between the rise of social science and the decline of a belief in virtue and character:

“By 1886, violent confrontations between labor (largely immigrant workers) and the enforcers of management were epidemic. . . . The ‘obvious’ explanations of bad behavior to the man in the street were entirely characterological. . . . Bad character caused bad actions, and

each person was responsible for his or her actions. . . . Theologians, philosophers, and social critics . . . suggested that the mission of preachers, professors, and pundits should change from pointing out how every person is responsible for his or her actions to finding out how their ranks were responsible for the many who were not. The dawn of the twentieth century thus witnessed the birth of a new scientific agenda in the great American universities: social science. Its goal was to explain the behavior (and misbehavior) of individuals as the result of not their character, but of large and toxic environmental forces beyond the control of mere individuals” (2002, 127).

It is helpful that Seligman so clearly acknowledges that opposition to character and personal responsibility was fundamental to the social scientific outlook from the start.

It is little remembered today that the genre of “self-help” was founded by Samuel Smiles with his book *Self Help* published in 1882. But Smiles’ advice to individuals on how to cultivate their strengths and virtues so as to be happier and more successful came to be regarded as “reactionary” in the face of the new social sciences that were premised on the notion that individuals were not responsible for their fate. Had social science not been categorically opposed to the idea of personal responsibility, generations of parents, educators, journalists, and policymakers might have continued to develop and deepen the insights of Smiles and others. Of course, many did persist in doing so despite the almost unanimous opposition, neglect, and hostility of the social science community. But there is reason to believe that social science had some impact on the beliefs of the public in the twentieth century, and insofar as the discipline’s impact on public beliefs was in the direction of undermining personal responsibility, that impact contradicted the more recent findings of positive psychology as well as common sense.

### ***Positive Psychology and “The Study of Positive Institutions”***

To return to the Seligman quotation above, “Positive psychology has three pillars. . . . Third is the study of positive institutions, such as democracy, strong families, and free inquiry, that support the virtues, which in turn support the positive emotions” (Seligman 2002, xi). Although positive psychology has made good strides in recovering attention to human nature and human character,

Seligman and others say less about the exact relationship between positive psychology and positive institutions. This is generally acknowledged to be the most underdeveloped aspect of positive psychology. Seligman, for example, provides extensive research on the ways that positive emotions and virtues contribute to happiness, but he provides no evidence that democracies and free inquiry actually contribute to happiness. In fact, there is much evidence, some of it cited by Seligman, that strong families contribute to happiness more than other social institutions do (Diener and Seligman 2002).

The inclusion of democracy and free inquiry as “positive institutions that support the virtues” seems more like boilerplate academic piety than evidence-based social science. The inclusion of free inquiry, in particular, is ironic insofar as there is evidence that religious belief and homogeneity of religious community contribute to happiness and well-being.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that such communities are necessarily inimical to free inquiry, nor that free inquiry is necessarily inimical to happiness, but based on the evidence it might have been more natural to suggest that “strong families, religious belief, and religious homogeneity” are “positive institutions that support the virtues.” Thus it turns out that “the study of positive institutions that support the virtues” amounts to the banality that strong families support the virtues, combined with reflexive but unproven praise for democracy and free inquiry.

Elsewhere we find that one of Seligman’s goals is to create a positive alternative to *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), that may then be used to design public school programs. Diagnoses based on the DSM carry significant legal authority in decisions made in courtrooms and by insurers, and have spilled over the boundaries between health care and education to influence public school authorities in the design and implementation of educational programs.

Seligman recounts the genesis of this research agenda at a weekend conference devoted to “sponsoring and disseminating some of the best positive interventions for youths.” The project to create a positive alternative to DSM was first suggested by a comment at the retreat by Joe Conaty, the head of the U.S. Department of Education’s half a billion dollar after-school education programs: “We can’t intervene to improve the character of young people until we know more exactly what it is that we want to improve. First we need a classification scheme and a way of measuring character” (Seligman 2002).

Despite the lack of clarity about the relationship between positive psychology and positive institutions, the creation of a positive psychology DSM is an ambitious project that might have far-reaching implications for public policy and legal interventions into the family, the workplace, schools, and other institutions in our society.

Seligman's desire to reshape the public institutions that grew up in the twentieth century under behaviorism and Freudianism and the general hegemony of the turn-of-the-century social sciences reveals a characteristic social science blindness. In his search for "positive institutions that support the virtues," it seems not to have occurred to him that public schools may not be effective at supporting the virtues. Instead of rigorously examining and fundamentally questioning a broad array of institutions, positive psychology thus far has taken for granted mainstream institutions.

### ***The Case for School Choice as an Application of Positive Psychology***

In the absence of an external philanthropic nudge, social scientists are unlikely even to consider the hypothesis that school choice may be the policy option that most effectively fosters increased happiness in our society because only in private schools is it possible to create a coherent virtue culture for young people.

William Damon is a leading expert in the moral development of children. Because of the intimate role between moral development, character, virtue, relatedness, and well-being, Damon's work is often included in the literature of positive psychology. I once heard him give a talk to a group of educators about moral development, in which he pointed out that it was important for young people to belong to a community with a shared moral vision and in which they had close relationships to mentors who supported their participation in that shared moral community. During the Question and Answer after the talk, I said that in my experience as an educator it had proven easier to create the type of moral community specified by Damon in a private or charter school than in a public school. Before a room full of public school educators, he prevaricated, saying that although it was difficult to do so in a public school, we must try anyway. Afterwards, at the wine and cheese reception, I asked him again, and he acknowledged directly that, yes, it was easier to form a moral community at a private or charter school than in a conventional public school.

I began my career as an educator in Mortimer Adler's Paideia Program, in which we were attempting to create a sense of moral community in public schools based on a commitment to free inquiry. This experience made me acutely aware of the difficulties in creating a moral community in a public school. It also made me acutely aware that many parents, especially religious ones, regard free inquiry as a dangerous instrument that often undermines virtue and character. Having seen educators use Socratic inquiry irresponsibly, I would have to agree that it can be used to undermine respectful behavior. Although Socrates is a martyr to intellectuals everywhere, there are numerous parents today who would argue that Socratic questioning corrupts youth and undermines belief in the gods.

Despite these fears, we found that it is indeed possible to create a moral community founded on free inquiry seen as a virtue. I had studied at St. John's College, where there is an intense moral community focused on the Greek passion for pursuing ideals of the true, the good, and the beautiful by means of free inquiry. I attempted to replicate this experience of a coherent moral community in the programs I developed. After years of classroom work, my colleagues and I discovered that it was possible to cultivate new inquiry virtues in a particular classroom, but that it was difficult to do so if the teacher in the next period undermined those virtues.

In addition, it became clear that the program would work only if teachers elected to participate in it. When I first began training teachers in classroom Socratic inquiry, the programs involved schools at which philanthropists had donated funding for training, and the administrator had signed on to the program, but many rank and file teachers were indifferent or hostile to changing their way of teaching to an unfamiliar and more challenging approach. In addition, many teachers have seen wave after wave of school reform and are largely cynical about each new fad. Thus, wherever possible, we shifted to a "school within a school" model in which teachers self-selected into the program.

These programs were more effective at engaging students in authentic learning, but their long-term survival depended on the support of a sympathetic principal, district administrator, or school board member. One by one I saw successful programs, developed through years of effort, gradually dissolve after the key advocate left. This erosion of successful special public school programs

is in fact widespread. Deborah Meier, who won a MacArthur Genius Award for her work in creating Central Park East, a great inner-city school in Manhattan, has said that it is too painful to visit her old school because it has regressed back toward the norm (Levin 2006).

In *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, James Collins and Jerry Porras document the practices of a set of companies that have dramatically outperformed their peers over many decades. Their discovery is that these companies create a very strong internal culture that is independent of any particular leader. Such companies are rewarded with success in the marketplace—thus there are direct payoffs to the creation of a strong corporate culture. In addition, these companies reinforce their cultures through diverse policies, rhetoric, criteria for hiring and promotion, corporate symbols, celebrations, and other ways of communicating an integral commitment to a coherent vision, set of values, and culture (2004).

These widely embraced tools for corporate success are not available to public schools. The latter typically enroll students regardless of performance, and when their performance is evaluated by the state, it is typically based on test scores. Faculty are largely hired and promoted by means of formal criteria established by governments and union contracts. A superintendent's performance is evaluated by political popularity, and the school is evaluated based on compliance with state and federal regulations. A public school principal must satisfy the politically appointed superintendent, the media-sensitive state department of education, and legalistic federal mandates before satisfying the immediate "customers"—the parents and students. Thus educational leaders in government systems lack the autonomy necessary to create and cultivate a community of educators united by common moral commitments. The mechanisms of government control prevent the creation and deepening of virtue cultures for young people at public schools.

The charter school movement was founded in an attempt to free public school educators from some of these conflicting multiple layers of control and thereby encourage greater innovation. There is, to date, conflicting evidence on the extent to which charter schools result in improved academic performance, but there is unambiguous evidence that charter schools result in greater parental and student satisfaction and fewer disciplinary problems (see Imberman 2007; Gill et al. 2007). Given this suggestive evidence, one might

expect adherents of positive psychology to place structural reforms, such as charter schools and educational vouchers, on their list of “positive institutions that support the virtues.” Unfortunately, like Damon when speaking to the public school teachers, if they believe that school choice could be a prerequisite for the creation of schools more closely resembling “positive institutions that support the virtues,” they have been quiet about such beliefs. To his credit, Damon endorses charter schools in two of his books on adolescent moral development, but that endorsement has not been widely publicized.

Paul Tough, an editor at *The New York Times Magazine*, summarizes the evidence that charter schools provide a superior environment in which to instill the character virtues that lead to greater happiness and superior academic performance:

“[T]he last decade—and especially the last few years—has seen the creation of dozens, even hundreds, of schools across the country dedicated to . . . delivering consistently high results with a population that generally achieves consistently low results. The schools that have taken on this mission most aggressively tend to be charter schools—the publicly financed, privately run institutions that make up one of the most controversial educational experiments of our time. . . . [T]hey make a conscious effort to guide the behavior, and even the values, of their students by teaching what they call character. Using slogans, motivational posters, incentives, encouragements, and punishments, the schools direct students in everything from the principles of teamwork and the importance of an optimistic outlook to the nuts and bolts of how to sit in class, where to direct their eyes when a teacher is talking, and even how to nod appropriately” (2006).

David Levin, a founder of the KIPP Academy, the most successful of all charter school chains, and Dacia Toll, a founder of Amistad Academy, another successful charter school chain, both profiled in Tough’s article, are explicitly implementing Seligman’s ideas. One of Seligman’s graduate students recently published a paper studying charter schools, in which she documents the importance of these efforts: “noncognitive’ abilities like self-control, adaptability, patience, and openness—the kinds of qualities that middle-class parents pass on to their children every day, in all kinds of subtle and indirect ways—have a huge and measurable impact on a child’s future success” (Tough 2006).

Tough also quotes Toll, who has rediscovered the nineteenth century idea of a work ethic: “I think we have to teach a work ethic in the same way we have to teach adding fractions with unlike denominators. But once children have got the work ethic and the commitment to others and to education down, it’s actually pretty easy to teach them” (2006). While Toll deserves credit for stating this fact and successfully implementing a program based on these principles, some older readers might be forgiven for being somewhat nonplussed that such a statement qualifies as newsworthy, cutting-edge educational practice in 2006 (when the *New York Times Magazine* article was written). Pretty much all of our great-grandparents knew this.

Regardless of whether social scientists ultimately conclude that a movement toward charter schools and/or private schools is the most effective means of applying the insights of positive psychology, there is enough prima facie evidence that the thesis ought to be considered. Again, it is peculiar that Seligman lists “free inquiry” as an institution that supports the virtues (after all, Socrates was put to death for “corrupting the youth”) while it never occurs to him that privately supplied education ought to be considered such an institution.

### **The Bias of Social Science Against Classical Liberalism**

The bias of social science against classical liberalism is the greatest factor preventing obvious candidates for positive institutions, such as school choice, from being recognized as a policy implication of positive psychology. In the nineteenth century before the rise of the social sciences, classical liberal thinkers such as William Graham Sumner sought to explain the institutions that had produced the dramatically increasing standard of living taking place at the time: “Some men have been found to denounce and deride the modern system—what they call the capitalist system. The modern system is based on liberty, on contract, and on private property” (Sumner 1883, 64).

Sumner’s defense of free institutions came as the emerging social sciences were launching their efforts to manage the complexities of modern life by influencing government, social, and educational policies and institutions. A key organizing concept for many in this new academic professional class was social control, a concept that would be pitted against traditional American concepts of liberty.

Only now are economists beginning to rediscover the importance of free

institutions. Compare, for example, Sumner's description of key institutional elements with that from Elhanan Helpman's recent survey *The Mystery of Economic Growth*, which reaches the following conclusion after 141 pages summarizing the current state of academic debate on economic development: "Although it has been established that property rights institutions, the rule of law, and constraints on the executive are important for growth, the exact ways in which they affect income per capita are not well understood" (2004, 141).

Cautiously, hesitantly, after 120 years during which academic opinion almost unanimously rejected "the modern system . . . based on liberty, on contract, and on private property," we have come full circle. Had Sumner's institutional insights been considered expert opinion throughout this period and successfully implemented in nations around the world, poverty could have been eliminated long ago.

Scholars who were not so dismissive of classical liberal principles in the twentieth century are now seeing their convictions validated. Milton Friedman, among others, attributed Hong Kong's remarkable economic success to the policies implemented by Sir John Cowperthwaite, a British civil servant who believed passionately in nineteenth century classical liberalism when he became the financial secretary of Hong Kong in 1961 (Friedman 2006). By 1964, Leonard Read was arguing that Hong Kong should be considered a model for economic development and the alleviation of poverty (Read 1964, ch. 13). In 1960, Hong Kong's GDP per capita was 28 percent of Great Britain's and 33 percent of Venezuela's (Friedman 1998; Dorn 1998, 171). Today it is about 110 percent of Great Britain's and 520 percent of Venezuela's, despite the latter's oil wealth, according to my calculations based on IMF PPP estimates. Cowperthwaite's attitude toward social science is telling: when Milton Friedman met him in 1963, Friedman asked about national statistics. Cowperthwaite replied, "If I let them compute those statistics, they'll want to use them for planning" (Friedman 1998).

Adam Smith had articulated the basic principles of economic development in 1776, and for the next hundred years economists and political philosophers elaborated Smithian economics. The United States and Great Britain became the first two nations on earth to raise the working class standard of living steadily, decade by decade, and their accomplishment was based on the twin pillars of free enterprise and personal responsibility.

As Seligman notes, there was indeed labor unrest, poverty, and squalor during this time of steady economic growth and spreading of wealth. Yet when academic social science originated, informed by the assumption that behavior was to be explained by “large and toxic environmental forces beyond the control of mere individuals,” there was no body of evidence suggesting that any other economic system could raise living standards more effectively than free enterprise, nor was there any body of evidence showing that people were more likely to be happy or successful if they believed that their lives were dictated by large and toxic environmental forces.

Academic social science was founded in opposition to classical liberalism, and only after a hundred years has it been forced to acknowledge, in economics and positive psychology, that classical liberal insights seem to have been at least partly valid. Whatever modifications and concerns may have been legitimate in the face of late nineteenth century suffering and labor violence, any need for modifications of classical liberalism in no way justified a wholesale, century-long rejection of sound principles.

As philanthropic investments go, twentieth century social science may have been the worst one in history. Had academic social science maintained a commitment to classical liberal economics and the importance of personal responsibility, we might have avoided some portion of the 100 million deaths due to Marxism, the post-colonial poverty of the developing world (imagine if every post-colonial government had had an indigenous Cowperthwaite), and the massive unhappiness associated with the innumerable failures resulting from an educational world that for generations did not believe in cultivating responsibility or virtues. The scale of this tragedy and the responsibility of specific academics for leading us in this direction have yet to be documented.

The collapse of communism has taught us all that central planning does not work, but due to a misguided belief that “public education” is a necessary foundation for democracy, most social scientists still assume that “improving education” means improving government-run schools while retaining the system in which they lost their way. In most other fields, creative destruction through new enterprise creation is an accepted fact. In the 1970s, for example, Wang, DEC, Cray, and IBM were leading names in the computer industry. Today only IBM remains as an influential corporate presence, and even there it is more of a service provider than a manufacturer of business machines. Similarly, KIPP

academies and other charter school chains ought to be free to expand to the point where they can put the public school system out of business if parents find they serve their children best, and new entrants into the market ought to be in the pipeline now that will later put KIPP and the current generation of charter school companies out of business. If Seligman's ideas are superior and do indeed achieve the desired results, then not only KIPP but other school chains will continue to implement them. If not, his ideas will gradually be placed in the dustbin of history.

Physicists and engineers anticipate a world of constantly changing and developing technology, but social scientists almost invariably aspire to influence policy instead of work to create a better product or service. Seligman, to his credit, is very much an entrepreneur who has developed potentially useful knowledge and products, but he has not yet envisioned a dynamic market in education in which his ideas (and better ones) are rapidly brought within reach of millions of young people.

Given modern academia's bigotry against classical liberalism, philanthropists must take the leadership in guiding research to include possibilities beyond the ken of most of those currently in the academy. These academicians may be intelligent, well-intentioned, and highly regarded experts in their field, but they are too often blinded by professional assumptions that have prevented them and their predecessors from seeing the obvious for a hundred years. It is a blessing that the obvious, in economics and psychology, is beginning to be seen again in the halls of academe. Philanthropists today must understand, however, that knowledge does not necessarily result in good judgment. We must not let another hundred years of bad social science impoverish generations of children. Hence our best course today is to try to help positive psychology come alongside and complement the knowledge already embedded in human experience and the best traditions of free societies.

## NOTES

1 For instance, a 2005 Pew Charitable Trust Survey of a nationally representative sample of 3,014 adults found 46 percent of those who worship weekly or more were “very happy,” compared with 26 percent of those who attend seldom or never (Taylor, Funk, and Craighill 2006). The oft-cited Diener and Seligman study, by contrast, found no correlation between “very happy people” and participation in religious activities—among a sample of 222 college undergraduates (Diener and Seligman 2002). For research on religious homogeneity and suicide rates, see Ellison, Burr, and McCall 1997, 273-299.

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# AUTHENTIC FLOURISHING

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*Richard B. Gunderman*

*I thought, "I am perishing of cold and hunger, and here is a man thinking only of how to clothe himself and his family, and how to get bread for them. He cannot help me." When he saw me he frowned and became still more irritable and passed me by on the other side. I despaired. But suddenly I heard him coming back. I looked up, and did not recognize the same man. Before, I had seen death in his face. But now he was alive, and I recognized in him the presence of God.*

—Tolstoy, *What Men Live By* (1881)

Is happiness an elevated mood? Can any amount of neural, hormonal, or pharmacological stimulation ever make us truly happy? In cases of depression, such stimuli may indeed open the door to happiness. Yet perhaps there is more to happiness than just chemicals; perhaps it includes something that cannot be imposed from outside. Perhaps the gateway to happiness is one through which we must walk on our own power. I would suggest that the happy person is a thriving person, someone who is firing on all cylinders and genuinely blossoming as a human being. In this case, someone else can no more make us happy than make us free or wise.

The idea that happiness is a simple good on a single axis implies a false symmetry between happiness and unhappiness. If the water coming out of a faucet is too cold, we can warm it in one of two ways: turn down the cold water or turn up the hot water. Can we find happiness by merely taking away some of the things that bring us down? Eradicating poverty, hunger, and disease would certainly give us fewer reasons to be unhappy. So would reducing humiliation, frustration, and despair. Yet their removal might not make us happy.

It seems that happiness is more than the absence of unhappiness, just as health is more than the absence of disease. To suppose that happiness is something we can install by correcting the factors that make us unhappy is to

promote a “restorative” approach to happiness, with potentially unfortunate ethical and political consequences. Without doubt, relieving human misery is a noble calling. Yet the effort to promote human flourishing must look beyond mere restoration. There are situations in which we need to focus less on restoration and more on enhancement.

### *Happiness*

Just as drawing a proper map powerfully shapes the outcome of a journey, so framing the discourse of happiness powerfully influences the degree to which our lives truly amount to something and make a difference in the lives of others. An inadequate conception of human good will promote stunted philanthropic discourse, policy, and practice. We need to expand our philanthropic horizons to encompass a more expansive, far reaching, and deeper vision of human happiness, on behalf of which we can fully engage our highest aspirations for compassion and generosity.

Is happiness directly attainable? Madison Avenue misleads us in this regard. Happiness is not a commodity we can buy off the shelf. We cannot acquire it by attending the right seminar, reading the right book, or talking with the right person. To be sure, some books and conversations do more than others to point us in the right direction. Yet happiness remains elusive. Like water, if we attempt to clutch it too tightly, it slips through our fingers. It is difficult to do good when our principal motive is our own happiness, and we would do well to avoid treating the good as a mere means to our own satisfaction.

Is happiness an idle state where nothing changes? Not likely, since the circumstances of our lives are constantly changing. We grow, develop, learn, enter into new relationships, take on new responsibilities, and find new opportunities to contribute to the lives of others. Doing well under such circumstances will require that we regularly reexamine and sometimes reformulate our approach to life. Such reexamination can be painful. It can involve questioning cherished assumptions and trying out new ideas with no guarantee of success. If things do not work out well, to keep going will require a measure of resilience.

Resilience involves bouncing back. Yet it is not merely a return to a baseline. It also means responding creatively. We are capable of achieving new equilibrium states that prepare us to do even more than we could before. The

loss of a job, for example, can be psychologically devastating, yet it might also open up new opportunities. It might enable us to move beyond a position that represents nothing more than a means of paying the bills. It might present new possibilities for growth and professional fulfillment. The same might be said of defeat in athletic competition. It is unpleasant, but it might help us see more clearly what we are really striving for, and why it matters so much to us.

Change offers an opportunity to learn to do things better, and to learn to do new and better things. In 1950, we used typewriters to communicate in print. By 2000, we were processing words in a quite different way. A firm that clung obstinately to the typewriter business would have expired. This principle also applies on the societal level. What if no society had been able to contemplate the possibility of life without slavery? Do we want communities that are brittle, or ones that are dynamic and capable of experimentation and learning? No less than human beings, organizations must be prepared to change if they are to become truly generative.

Saying that change is necessary, however, does not imply that everything is up for grabs. Certain aspirations can and should remain at our moral center of gravity. Consider, for example, the desire to know. No matter what we may discover, inquiry itself remains a definitive human activity. This is why Socrates named *misology*, the hatred of inquiry, the worst fate that could befall a human being. Ironically, Socrates himself was placed on trial precisely because his fellow Athenians had grown reluctant to examine their own lives.

### ***Suffering***

Suffering, too, has an important role to play in the pursuit of happiness. What would happen if we never suffered losses or made mistakes? Our depth of moral insight would remain stunted. Losing something we hold dear, or at least contemplating its loss, provides a vital opportunity to appreciate its true preciousness. This applies not only to our property but also to our health, our family and friends, and even our faculties. Only when we have known suffering do we fully understand and value our lives.

In fact, many of our greatest works of art and poetry are born of suffering. In his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, for example, John Donne reflects on his encounter with mortal illness, arriving at an extraordinary conclusion: "Affliction is a treasure, and scarce any man has enough." Donne is suggesting

that a life completely shielded from suffering would be impoverished. To Donne, the foggy pharmacological satisfactions offered up in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* would appear abhorrent. They dull our perception of the very reality to which we must attend if we are to lead fully human lives.

A slavish fear of pain and suffering does not befit a mature human being. Siddhartha, in Herman Hesse's novel of the same name, needed to get outside his hermetically sealed pleasure palace and directly witness poverty, aging, disease, and death, before he could even begin his quest for enlightenment. There is something seriously mistaken about the idea that a perfect life is characterized by a perpetual smile. Pursuing such idols actually spawns fragility and superficiality. Relying on psychoactive substances to avoid all unpleasantness and challenge bespeaks neither courage nor wisdom. In the end, what would we be filling ourselves with but emptiness?

Similarly, a stubborn devotion to positive thinking blinds us to human situations where sadness is a perfectly appropriate response. Who could feel merry at the death of a spouse or child, for example? If such losses do not cut us to the bone, we have failed to accord our loved ones their due and have failed to recognize their true importance. Being human means accepting the vulnerability that such devotion implies. Suggesting that people experiencing such losses should keep a stiff upper lip or seek pharmacologic sanctuary demeans them as human beings.

Misguided notions of generosity that arise from such an insufficiently rich and complete vision of those we are intending to help do more harm than good. They create whole groups of people whose sense of responsibility, capacity for self-support, and devotion to others remain stunted. They foster an attitude that psychologists call "learned helplessness," in which we recognize the toxicity of our situation but feel absolutely powerless to do anything about it. In the end, we simply hang our heads in resignation and despair.

Of all the human resources that philanthropic organizations can protect and promote, the greatest is hope. Hope makes doubtful and difficult times bearable. It also opens up new possibilities for flourishing. It is not self-delusion but active imagination, the creative human spirit striving to realize richer ways of being and doing. Life is not a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing. Even in the most difficult circumstances, hope reveals opportunities to know and to love, and to help others do the same.

## *Flourishing*

As hope reveals opportunities for action, so happiness is a matter of doing, not a passive state of being. Like hope, happiness is not diffused but focused, stemming from a clear sense that we belong, that we have something worth doing and contributing. It is less a noun than a verb. It is something we *do*, something in which we participate, instead of something we are. A life is called happy not because it is locked in a single mood state. A life is called happy because we have been able to realize our nature, what we are meant to be, giving it full expression in our daily life. Satisfaction pertains to what merely suffices, but fulfillment implies excellence, doing our best.

Flourishing is less a matter of satisfying our appetites than expressing our nature. Both Plato and Aristotle stressed that, in order to lead good lives, we must educate desire. This is necessary because our desires are, to a large extent, the products of our own habits of choosing. No one is born aspiring to be a pianist or an astronaut, though for some people these become overarching life objectives. For human beings, as distinct from other creatures, understanding must take precedence over desire.

Our mission is to train our desires to seek the good. The good, moreover, is not what we happen to desire, but what is most worthy of desire. Hence cultivating goodness means learning to desire whatever is best and most important. Vices such as greed, lust, and pride are failures of understanding, in which we mistake the lower for the higher. After all, what is greed, but valuing what someone has over who they are? What is lust but valuing the superficial over the deep? What is pride if not mistaking the part for the whole?

Economists have coined the term “free riders” to describe people who reap the benefits of others’ efforts without paying the price themselves. Perhaps there are some spheres of life in which we can play the role of free rider, tagging along on someone else’s coattails. In the moral sphere, however, there are no free riders. We cannot reap the benefits of apparent goodness without actually striving to be good ourselves. It is no good merely mouthing prayers or just pretending to take our vitamins.

Flourishing requires a sense of purpose in life. Pretending to have a purpose can be worse than having no purpose at all, because the pretense can lull us into a sense of complacency. In addition, all possible purposes in life are not equally fitting. If our overarching purpose is to pay as little as possible

for commodities, then our prospects for leading a full life appear dim. There is too little at stake in such a life. The best prospects for happiness involve adventure, because adventurous people see each day in light of a larger purpose, around which they organize their lives.

In fact, we feel more alive, more real, when we know what we are about. This sense of purposefulness can prove energizing, even extraordinarily so. When we focus on something larger than ourselves, something really worth living for, we tap into a well-spring of energy and vitality that permeates all the domains of our lives, integrating them into a larger sense of calling. Let's call this sense of purpose vitamin P. Even if we eat right, get plenty of exercise, and follow all our doctors' recommendations, we may still suffer a deficiency of vitamin P. If so, happiness will elude us.

### ***Fulfillment***

We are not simple beings who need only focus on a single activity to be at our best. We are complex creatures, for whom a full life requires multiple domains of activity. Some essential functions we share in common with plants, such as metabolism. Other powers, such as desire, including the desire to join with other members of our species to form families and communities, we share with other animals. Still others seem unique to human beings, such as the power to reflect on and discuss the patterns by which we organize our lives.

A life in which our need for physical nourishment remains unmet would not constitute a full human life. Nor would a life in which we lack the companionship and love for which we so deeply and naturally long. Nor would what Socrates called "the unexamined life," a life in which we have not reflected long and well on what life is about. A complete human life requires fulfillment in each of these domains, ordering them appropriately. In this light, the life of the gourmand or consumer must appear incomplete, because it mistakes the lower for the higher and realizes only part of our potential.

As for health, so for happiness—a balanced and integrated symphony of multiple elements is required. Work, worship, family, friendship, play, citizenship—perhaps no single axis of human activity encompasses happiness. No matter how high we rise on any single axis, we cannot engage our whole being through any single aspect of life. And if our whole being is not engaged, we cannot be fully alive. Who conducts this symphony? Each part may have its own proper place in the orchestra, but the thinking and talking part must

stand at the podium, organizing the others.

Plato and Aristotle suggest that philosophers tend to manifest a melancholic disposition, because anyone who was completely content with the spontaneous course of life would not pause to reflect on why things are as they are or how they could be improved. Philosophers are not content merely to watch the spectacle of life unfold; they want to know what it is all about, why events emerge as they do in space and time. Philosophers want to know what purposes life might serve, and to discern which among these purposes is the most fitting for human life. This is all true, except that philosophy is not for the few. Philosophy is for every one of us. Every one of us is called to philosophize in this way.

If we want to flourish, it is not sufficient to immerse ourselves in idle amusements or fantasy. Flourishing requires curiosity, honesty, and even courage. Whether we are talking about a single person or a large organization, it is difficult to act wisely unless we understand what we are doing. Thus our organizations should invest a little less time and energy in facilities and equipment and a bit more in people, in how we understand ourselves and the work we are doing. Before we can do good, we must know what good is.

To excel at generosity requires that we invest the very best we have to offer. It is not easy to give the appropriate thing to the appropriate person at the appropriate time in the appropriate way and above all for the appropriate reason. Unless we get all of this right, would it really matter how much we give? As people who aspire to generosity, knowing the purpose of our giving may be our highest calling.

Our calling is not to distract ourselves from life—it is to immerse ourselves fully in it. At our best, we plumb the depths of life, knowing and experiencing it as fully as we can. Far from indulging ourselves in every pleasurable sensation, this approach asks of us something much more akin to sacrifice—not sacrifice in the sense of foregoing something, but sacrifice in the sense of pursuing something.

What is most worthy of pursuit? What is the highest and best reality in the unfolding of our lives? If we understand the value of sacrifice, the happiest life is the sacramental life, one that acknowledges the higher purposes around which our lives can be organized, a life devoted to what is truly sacred. If this is so, the key to flourishing will lie less in mood-altering stimulants than in the answer to a question: What is most real, most authentic in our lives, and what can we do to bring it more fully into being?



# COMMENT

## ON HAPPINESS—PERSONAL AND POLITICAL

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*Steven D. Ealy*

As the preceding essays illustrate, the new field of positive psychology offers a fuller picture of human flourishing than does disorder-oriented clinical psychology, but it also presents certain dangers itself that need to be recognized and either avoided or, if possible, corrected. In my comments I will touch on each essay and then close with a few general observations about positive psychology.

Robert Garnett uses the insights of positive psychology to analyze and correct F. A. Hayek's critique of philanthropy as an atavistic activity incompatible with the modern extended order. In Garnett's account, Hayek argues that "Modernity has spawned a new moral code in which humane ends are better served by commerce than philanthropy by 'withholding from the known needy neighbors what they might require in order to serve the unknown needs of thousands of others' " (Garnett 2008, 1-2). This touches on one of the problems Hayek investigated throughout his career—"the knowledge problem." If all we can know is what we can see with our own eyes, we are necessarily tied to the biblical world of one's neighbor or Aristotle's world of a small, face-to-face economic community that can be organized and controlled by one man. As Hayek's discussion of Adam Smith shows, however, the great advantage of markets is that they provide signals that allow individuals to act in ways beneficial to people far beyond their circle of personal acquaintance.

Hayek's appreciation of Smith is linked to Smith's articulation of the advantage of division of labor and the non-personal economic system that can be developed on the basis of market signals (Hayek 1978, 268). Market signals provide knowledge to each individual far beyond the person's ability to see for himself. The new moral code of modernity, however, requires a commitment

to the exchange-oriented mechanics of the market system. One might even argue that if we take the most radical view of Hayek's argument, this commitment to base one's actions on "the abstract signs of the prices" constitutes the totality of the new moral code spawned by modernity.

### *Hayek's Critique of Philanthropy*

Thus we arrive at the "Hayekian impasse" that concerns Garnett, which I will reformulate: the moral commitments undergirding the open or free society require that we restrain our own freely chosen actions to assist our friends and neighbors and replace that personal foundation of action with a commitment to the impersonal and abstract demands of market signals. I realize that Hayek could respond that such actions are not really "freely chosen" but are merely the residual effects ("inherited instincts") of the earlier morality of "the horde or the tribe" (Hayek 1978, 268).

Before offering Hayek a tentative way out of this impasse, I will simply note two ironies of this position. First, as Garnett suggests, it seems to be paradoxical in that it wants to restrict the free activity of members of the free society. Second, this argument contains echoes of the critique of charity offered by American progressives during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The general view of progressivism was that individual charity was harmful because it not only targeted specific "known individuals" for aid and left others out but also failed to identify the causes of the social distress under attack. Thus according to the progressive critique, private charity had to be replaced, not supplemented, by a scientific analysis of social dynamics which would effectively target underlying causes (Ealy and Ealy 2006). While Hayek would undoubtedly argue that the progressives assumed they could achieve a level of knowledge which is in fact unobtainable, his view that a system can deal with these problems more effectively than individual effort does seem to parallel the progressives' position. Also, interestingly, it seems to deny the importance of local knowledge that elsewhere is crucial for Hayek in laying a groundwork for understanding entrepreneurial discovery and places maximum emphasis on abstract and universal market signals.

Hayek's reservations concerning philanthropy seem to stem from his view that philanthropy provides the moral impetus for socialism's pursuit of "social justice," a concept Hayek finds totally without content and groundless but that he recognizes energizes much political activity. Hayek's primary target is

socialism, and because many socialists have used the religious and moral language of the traditional concern for one's neighbor, philanthropy itself is subject to collateral damage.

This reasoning can be seen in Hayek's brief newspaper article on "Adam Smith's Message in Today's Language". Smith's great achievement in articulating the importance of the division of labor, Hayek argues, "was the recognition that men who were governed in their efforts, not by the known concrete needs and capacities of their intimate fellows, but by the abstract signals of the prices at which things were demanded and offered on the market, were thereby enabled to serve the enormous field of the 'great society' that 'no human wisdom and knowledge could ever be sufficient' to survey" (1978, 267-269).

It is crucial to note that this argument for division of labor and the importance of market signals focuses on the increased productivity this system makes possible. Hayek's basic critique of socialism is that it claims to know *a priori* what men want and need and proceeds to make command decisions about what goods and services should be made available to society. Just as the socialist does not have knowledge of what should be produced, neither does the philanthropist, and therefore neither the socialist nor the philanthropist is in a position to direct the productive capacity of society.

It is also crucial to note that this argument concerning the division of labor provides no guidance on how the individual entrepreneur should spend his new wealth, and Hayek himself recognizes this in this discussion of Smith. "It is an error that Adam Smith preached egotism: his central thesis said nothing about how the individual should use his increased product; and his sympathies were all with the benevolent use of the increased income" (Hayek 1978, 268). So while Smith famously argues that it is not out of benevolence that the "butcher and baker" provide the products they make available for sale (Smith 1981, 26-27), there is nothing in Smith's understanding that prevents the butcher or baker from using a part of their profits for benevolent or philanthropic purposes. Indeed, the thrust of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is that man's natural sympathy toward his fellow creatures will incline him to do just that.

I will leave this issue by noting that Garnett points to certain apparent tensions or contradictions within Hayek which may be resolvable if Hayek's critique of philanthropy is aimed only at efforts to direct economic production on the basis of a moral vision instead of on the free interplay of natural

economic forces. The argument I have articulated does not resolve the impasse Garnett investigates, however, if Hayek goes beyond Smith and argues that the benevolent use of one's own resources is detrimental to the open society. And, I should add, neither does my argument address the possibility that large philanthropic foundations might have the purchasing power to "distort" market signals by intense and focused activity such as the purchase and distribution of particular drugs or medical equipment.

### ***Aristotle's Distinction Among Sciences***

Garnett is correct to link positive psychology with Aristotle, for to some extent this field follows the model of science as exemplified in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. Positive psychology is Aristotelian in beginning with a model of man at his best (human excellence), placing man within his social context, and emphasizing the importance of character and the development of virtue. Perhaps, however, positive psychology is not Aristotelian enough, in that it fails to note Aristotle's important distinction between theoretical and practical science, and seeks to be both simultaneously.

Theoretical science, according to Aristotle, deals with "necessary things," and the goal of theoretical science is knowledge. Physics, which identifies the elements found in nature and their relationships to each other, and which discovers laws governing these relationships, is the prime example of theoretical science. Practical science, on the other hand, focuses on "contingent things," and its goal is to guide action. Ethics and politics are the preeminent examples of Aristotle's practical science (Aristotle 1962, 4-6, 295-302). In his discussion of science, Aristotle cautions against seeking more precision than a subject allows. For Aristotle, we may expect great precision in mathematics and physics, but it would be a mistake to expect the same level of precision in an investigation of the political world. Prudence, a key characteristic of practical science, involves insight into the dynamics of a situation and the ability to weigh a number of incommensurable elements (likelihood of success of various strategies, rank ordering of priorities, likely reactions to one's action, an assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses in the context of decision) and arrive at a plan of action. In contrast to theoretical science, which can enunciate laws which have both descriptive and predictive force, practical science operates on the basis of insight and rules of thumb which do not necessarily apply universally.

The effort “to create a positive alternative to the DSM, the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders” (Strong 2008, 38) illustrates the theoretical drive of positive psychology. The vision at the foundation of positive psychology, if not the current reality, is of a psychological science able both to identify areas of weakness in individuals, families, and communities and to remake them scientifically. Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, founders of the movement, “believe that a psychology of positive functioning will arise that achieves a scientific understanding and effective interventions to build thriving in individuals, families, and communities” (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000, 13).

Both Michael Strong and Hans Eicholz acknowledge that positive psychology provides a more complete account of human fulfillment and health than traditional psychology when its focus is on the individual happy person, but both express grave reservations when positive psychology makes a leap from personal happiness to social happiness. Strong argues that positive psychology’s emphasis on “positive institutions” necessary for establishing and nurturing character development and the inculcation of virtue should lead it to endorse private or charter schools. “Virtue communities” which undergird and reinforce moral development are difficult to create in the environment of public schools, Strong argues, but are more easily achieved within private schools. This difference is related to the greater unity of expectation and commitment to a common curriculum and educational philosophy on the part of administration, teachers, and parents, in private settings. Strong argues that the reason for this failure to endorse private schooling is that positive psychology shares “the bias of social science against classical liberalism” (Strong 2008, 43). Perhaps this is true, but Strong’s analysis suggests that the conditions necessary to form these “virtue communities” run counter to a powerful force in contemporary American society. Increasingly we seem to be a society committed to the importance of diversity, yet character formation and personal happiness appear to be related to a homogeneous religious environment (38).

If Strong is correct in arguing that positive psychology has a bias against classical liberalism, perhaps it is grounded in something deeper than the norms of contemporary social science. I earlier suggested that positive psychology wasn’t Aristotelian enough, and now I will suggest that if positive

psychology has an animus against private schooling it is because it is too Aristotelian. For Aristotle, politics is the “master science” which guides the city to the good life, and one primary goal of the city was the inculcation of virtue in its citizens (Aristotle 1962, 4-5; 1997, 93). In spite of the vast differences between the Greek polis and contemporary American society, the Aristotelian view that political institutions should be the preeminent institutions of public and social life, especially in the field of education, is axiomatic for many today (see Ealy 2004).

This view of the preeminence of political institutions appears to be foundational for positive psychology, or at least for some positive psychologists. In their introduction to an issue of *American Psychologist* devoted to positive psychology, Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi offer an overview of the field. After a description of the “subjective level” and the “individual level,” they turn to positive psychology’s social dimension: “At the group level, it is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic” (2000, 5). Their understanding of institutional and social life appears to be circumscribed by the political, and they ignore the important distinction between society and government (Eicholz 2008, 17, 22-23).

### ***Political Implications of Positive Psychology***

Hans Eicholz deals explicitly with the political implications of positive psychology in his detailed comparison of this school of thought with the older, faculty psychology which was embraced by philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment and influenced many Americans of the founding generation. The heart of Eicholz’s critique of positive psychology is that “It seems to lack a clear idea of the limitations of human nature” (Eicholz 2008, 18).

At one level, the level of the individual, this charge perhaps is not correct. As an example, consider Martin Seligman’s discussion of self esteem in children (1995, 57-63). While Seligman’s explicit discussion deals with children, it strikes me that his argument has application for all human beings, regardless of age. According to Seligman, “Self-esteem is governed by who you blame” when bad things happen (57). Children have two primary options in identifying the source of bad things, that is, they can either “internalize” (blame themselves) or “externalize” (blame others or the circumstances).

Children who blame others (regardless of the reality of the situation) tend to have higher levels of self esteem. Seligman realizes that our inclination is to shift blame and avoid responsibility, and he even admits that “if my only concern were self esteem, I would advocate [teaching children to externalize].” Seligman is concerned with the whole person, however, and understands that this approach would ultimately lead to the child’s inability to accept responsibility. His position is straightforward and firm: “Children must hold themselves accountable when they are to blame for their problems, and then go on to try to rectify the situation” (58). Likewise, Seligman recognizes that myriad problems would be generated if happiness, understood as a shot of positive emotion, were pursued as a goal to the exclusion of a concern with the development of virtue and strong character. He writes, “Positive emotion alienated from the exercise of character leads to emptiness, to inauthenticity, to depression, and, as we age, to the gnawing realization that we are fidgeting until we die” (2002, 8).

However realistic positive psychology may be at the individual level, it doesn’t appear to have a robust view of the problem of political power. Perhaps this is because at times it sounds as if these authors do not even realize that they have moved into the realm of the political—the vision of a psychological science that provides “effective interventions” to “communities” seems to be a technological vision devoid of any political dimension. Whatever the reason for this curious lacuna, it is clear that positive psychology does have a political dimension. Any science that offers to intervene to build better communities is inherently and unavoidably political. It is also clear that Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi understand this, even if they don’t always articulate it clearly. After all, the third level of interest they identify, as noted earlier, involves “civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship.”

It is at the level of politics that Eicholz’s concerns are right on target. Positive psychology’s failure to distinguish between government and society is a particularly troubling feature of this young science. A crucial question, one which I can raise but not answer, is whether this limitation is inherent to the discipline or whether positive psychology can deal in a more sophisticated way with the corrosive nature of political power as articulated both by faculty psychology and classical liberalism. The dual concerns of the distinction between government and society and the corrosive nature of political power are perhaps most succinctly addressed in a passage from Thomas Paine that Eicholz quotes, which

is so important that it bears repeating: “Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections, the latter negatively by restraining our vices.”

One of the distinguishing features of classical liberal thought, one that clearly distinguishes it from the Aristotelian perspective, is its emphasis on the corrosive nature of political power. The best-known statement of this view is Lord Acton’s aphorism, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” (Dalberg-Acton 1986, 383). Although this view is axiomatic for some, it doesn’t explain the nature of this corruption. For that reason I prefer the formulation found in *Cato’s Letters*: “What is government, but a trust committed by all, or the most, to one, or a few, who are to attend upon the affairs of all, that every one may, with the more security, attend upon his own? A great and honourable trust; but too seldom honourably executed; those who possess it having it often more at heart to increase their power, than to make it useful; and to be terrible, rather than beneficent. It is therefore a trust, which ought to be bounded with many and strong restraints, because power renders men *wanton*, insolent to others, and fond of themselves” (Trenchard and Gordon 1995, 38).

### ***The Role of Associations***

Eicholz offers a sharp critique of John McKnight’s “twenty-first century map for healthy communities and families” (McKnight 1996). Although McKnight is not a positive psychologist (he is a professor of education and social policy and specializes in community development), his view of healthy communities and families is a concern shared with positive psychology. His article is worth looking at briefly because it illustrates so well the failure to distinguish between society and government that we have been discussing. McKnight distinguishes between systems and associations. Systems are hierarchical bureaucracies designed to provide mass distribution of services or products, whereas associations are “small self-appointed groups [which] solve problems, create new approaches to production and celebrate the local society” (4-5). McKnight correctly points to Alexis de Tocqueville’s discussion in *Democracy in America* as foundational in understanding the nature and importance of associations. At first glance it appears that associations and systems have nothing in common, yet for McKnight they share a crucial common characteristic: the association “is also a tool, like systems, designed to perform vital functions” (6).

McKnight's discussion of associations raises two questions that must be addressed. First, if associations are tools, who holds them, and to whom do they belong? Second, does McKnight believe that these associations have any value beyond their functional utility? McKnight never directly answers the first question, but the context in which he places this discussion suggests that the hand which grasps the tool is government. His concerns are directed toward "policies and programs," "current policy making," "current social policymakers," and "a legislative and planning focus" (McKnight 1996, 1, 22). There is a tension in McKnight's discussion, however, that allows us to question the legitimacy of the view that associations are tools of government. Note in the passage quoted above that associations are "self-appointed groups" that come together to solve problems—they are not the creatures of government either in their founding or in their direction of action. It is fair to say, however, that governments have been unsuccessfully attempting to co-opt them since their first spontaneous appearance on the American scene.

The answer to my second question proves to be a bit surprising, given that McKnight begins his discussion of associations by reflecting on Tocqueville, who found in America's vast associational energy the vital heart of our public life and a primary defense against the reduction of all social power to political power. An early remark of McKnight's even sounds Tocquevillean in nature—the "community of associations" we find in America "is an informal network of groups of citizens creating and maintaining the center of society" (1996, 6). His conclusion, however, is anything but Tocquevillean, for he writes, "The associational community, like systems, is a means—a tool. It has no inherent values" (24). McKnight's final claim is ambiguous—does he mean that associations have only instrumental, but no intrinsic, value, or does he mean that there are no inherent values that associations by their very nature must seek to achieve? I think that he means both of these things. Tocqueville and the twentieth century political philosopher Michael Oakeshott would agree with the second claim and disagree with the first. Tocqueville briefly documents the tremendous diversity of interests towards which associations direct their energy (Tocqueville 2000, 489-492), while Oakeshott understands that "enterprise associations" will pursue varied objectives (Oakeshott 1975, 114-18, 315-16).

After McKnight argues that associational community "has no inherent values" he draws a startling conclusion: "Therefore, as we have seen the Nazis turn systems to their evil purposes, we have seen in Bosnia and Burundi that

local communities and their associations can be turned to evil purposes. The critical issue is the continuing struggle for a culture of civility” (1996, 24). McKnight never asks the question of who or what turned systems and associations to evil purposes, but the answer is that this was done by governments, quasi-governments, or by political parties or factions seeking to gain control of governments. An equally legitimate conclusion to be drawn from McKnight’s reference to the Nazis, Bosnia, and Burundi would be to agree with Lord Acton that “power tends to corrupt” and that we should be wary of placing too much power into the hands of any man, group, or institution.

How can McKnight maintain that “the associational community ... is *merely* [my addition] a tool” and simultaneously that this community is actively “creating and maintaining the center of society”? My brief answer is that McKnight is stuck within the model of Aristotle’s polis that I have discussed above. Even though he writes that associations are “self-appointed,” he doesn’t really believe such a thing possible. In his view, all human action must spring from some legitimate source (read “political authority”), and “self-appointed groups” therefore have no status other than being a tool for policymakers. Here let me suggest that Aristotle himself understood that there were forms of political organization other than the polis, and that we need to consider what Aristotle calls “alliances” as the appropriate model for contemporary social and political arrangements. While the polis is interested in homogeneity and in promoting virtue, alliances are concerned with exchange, mutual utility, and the protection of rights. In an alliance “the law becomes a treaty and a guarantor . . . of each other’s rights” (Aristotle 1997, 93). McKnight says that he is offering a “different map, a paradigm shift” (McKnight 1996, 20) in our understanding of healthy communities, but there is no real paradigm shift in his suggestions. All of the models in McKnight’s world are variations of top-down planning in which there is no independent sector and all social institutions are tools for the policymaker.

### ***The Nature of Happiness***

The relationship between individual happiness and the happiness of the community has been a matter of discussion since before the time of Plato, but I will illustrate the problem with a passage from *The Republic*. Socrates has just been describing the arrangements he believes will be appropriate for the city’s guardians, and he is interrupted by Adeimantus. Adeimantus challenges,

“What would your apology be, Socrates, if someone were to say that you’re hardly making these men happy. . . .” Socrates replies, “In founding the city we are not looking to the exceptional happiness of any one group among us but, as far as possible, that of the city as a whole” (Plato 1968, 97, 98). Socrates argues that happiness in the city will be the result of the proper ordering of its component classes, just as individual happiness is dependent on the proper ordering of the soul. According to Socrates, the city and the individual parallel each other. The individual is happy when reason rules appetite, with the assistance of passion, while the city will be happy when the masses, driven by desire, are ruled by wisdom in the form of the philosopher king, aided by guardians who are spirited and warlike men. Interestingly, classical liberalism seems to agree with Socrates that the happiness of the community is found in its formal structure, while it disagrees that there is one model of individual excellence and happiness.

*Cato’s Letters* capture the liberal view that public happiness is the result of limited government which allows for maximum personal freedom. As stated in letter 62, “all civil happiness and prosperity is inseparable from liberty; and . . . tyranny cannot make men, or societies of men, *happy*, without departing from its nature, and giving them privileges inconsistent with tyranny. And here is an unanswerable argument, amongst a thousand others, against absolute power in a single man. Nor is there one way in the world to give happiness to communities, but by sheltering them under certain and express laws, irrevocable at any man’s pleasure” (Trenchard and Gordon 1995, 433).

Richard Gunderman’s meditation on happiness and human flourishing does not provide a critique of positive psychology or stake out a position in contemporary academic arguments. Instead, Gunderman extends an invitation to engage in self-reflection on the place of happiness in the life one lives on a daily basis. This invitation, make no mistake, is a personal invitation—no one can engage in self-reflection for another. (I am reminded of Woody Allen’s joke that he was expelled from metaphysics class when caught staring into the soul of another student.) Rather than burden the reader with my own self-reflections, however, I will simply note some of the lines of thought and add a few footnotes generated by Gunderman’s provocations.

I begin with two very different thinkers, the economist Frank Knight and the theologian Paul Tillich. Knight’s characterization of man as the “discontented animal” (Knight 1982, 361) is as succinct and accurate a

definition of man as I have ever run across. For Knight this discontentment is grounded in envy or the belief that someone is putting something over on one. In “We Live in Two Orders,” Tillich offers a different perspective on the same human phenomenon. Tillich reflects on the paradoxical existence of man—man lives both in the historical order and in the eternal order—which leads to dissatisfaction (1949, 22-23). On the one hand, man is finite in that he has limited ability, limited time in which to achieve, and limited vision; on the other, man is infinite at least to the extent that he can imagine a perfection far beyond his ability to achieve it, and that he can imagine an eternal city that will outlast his few years and which, unlike the cities constructed by his own hands, will not eventually crumble into dust. It seems to me that the tensions of such an existence—the ability to imagine perfection but not to achieve it—lead first toward the discontentment so important to Knight’s understanding of human behavior and then beyond toward idolatry, which is the substitution of some material object for the transcendent.

Gunderman is right in arguing that “Madison Avenue misleads us” and that “Happiness is not a commodity that we can buy off the shelf” (Gunderman 2008, 50). The root problem, of course, is not the deception of Madison Avenue but the self-deception that we practice daily and have practiced as a species since Aaron oversaw the molding of the Golden Calf (and beyond that to even earlier periods of human existence). The psychologist Erich Fromm analyzes this self-deception in many areas of life in *To Be or To Have?* Most of Fromm’s examples involve substituting something material for something intangible. We might wish to be educated, but many will settle for having a diploma or certificate. We may wish to be parents, but many settle for merely having children. We may wish to be honorable or just, but we may settle for a reputation.

This brings me to another important point in Gunderman’s meditation: “In the moral sphere . . . there are no free riders. Here we cannot reap the benefits of apparent goodness without actually striving to be good ourselves” (2008, 53). While we may settle for the reputation for being just while acting unjustly, this may be a precarious balance that cannot be maintained for long. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* Adam Smith argues, “Man naturally desires, not only to be loved, but to be lovely; or to be that thing which is the natural and proper object of love” (1982, 113). This is the opening sentence in a chapter entitled “Of the love of Praise, and of that of Praise-worthiness; and of the dread of Blame, and of that of Blame-Worthiness.” Smith’s argument is that we

can distinguish between having a reputation for being virtuous and actually being virtuous, and that the dynamic of our inner life will not allow us to be satisfied with merely having the reputation. Having somehow achieved an undeserved positive reputation can either make us or break us—it can be the goad that forces us to strive to be the person people already think that we are, or it can lead us to further deception and dissimulation.

### *Happiness as a “Collateral Benefit”*

Gunderman asks, “Is happiness directly attainable?” (Gunderman 2008, 50). It strikes me that the single-minded “pursuit of happiness” will almost guarantee an unhappy life, in part because such a pursuit suggests a confusion of the material and the non-material (having/being), and in part because Frank Knight is right in saying men are naturally dissatisfied with their condition, whatever that condition might be. Unfortunately, in this age we are all acquainted with the notion of “collateral damage”—people who are not targeted but are injured because of their proximity to some police or military action. Perhaps we need a positive parallel of “collateral benefit”—good unintended consequences generated by the pursuit of other objects. The answer to Gunderman’s question seems to be that individual happiness is a “collateral benefit” that comes when one is pursuing something else—the life of excellence or of justice, for example.

This is perhaps a moral that can be drawn from the encounter between Croesus and Solon as related by Herodotus. The wealthy and powerful Croesus wants the wise Solon to tell him who the happiest man in the world is, believing that Solon will tell him that it is Croesus himself. Perhaps Croesus thinks he is the happiest man in the world, yet for his complete happiness he seems to need Solon’s confirmation. He is disappointed when Solon names three others, all of whom are dead. When pressed by Croesus, Solon answers, “Now, I can see that you are extremely rich and that you rule over large numbers of people, but I won’t be in a position to say what you’re asking me to say about you until I find out that you died well” (Herodotus 1998, 15). As is often the case, however, old tales tend to be ambiguous. Solon reflects on the role of the gods in human life and tells Croesus that in judging a man’s life, “until he is dead, you had better refrain from calling him happy, and just call him fortunate” (16).

In conclusion I will briefly return to the field of positive psychology. Throughout this review I have noted a number of its strengths and

weaknesses. Primary among its strengths is its effort at enlarging the discipline of psychology beyond the study of dysfunction and disease. As put by Shelly Gable and Jonathan Haidt, “the aim of positive psychology is to study the other side of the coin—the ways that people feel joy, show altruism, and create healthy families and institutions—thereby addressing the full spectrum of human experience” (2005, 105). An additional strength is positive psychology’s attention to positive traits and the importance of character and virtue.

The field of positive psychology is relatively new, and some of its deficiencies may be corrected over time as it develops. One issue of importance, which I haven’t touched on, is the need to clearly distinguish factual or descriptive statements from normative or moral judgments—the traditional problem of distinguishing the “is” from the “ought.” That one may achieve a state of bliss either through meditation or consumption of drugs may be a factual statement, but that fact in itself does not argue for the moral equivalence of these two alternatives (see Jonathan Haidt quotation at Eichholz 2008, 18). The major deficiency that has been addressed by a number of contributors to this symposium is positive psychology’s inadequate understanding of the political and social spheres of life, and its apparent reduction of all communal and social experience to the political. One hopes that, as the field develops, it will begin to work out as complete a view of social life as it has already started to do at the level of the individual.

Finally, I must express my surprise that positive psychologists seem to have totally ignored the work of Robert Coles (Coles 2003). I will not speculate on the reasons for this, but I will suggest that anyone interested in understanding how healthy, productive, and well-adjusted humans develop, and anyone interested in human resilience, must come to grips with his work. Positive psychology is interested in positive community as the foundation for positive individuals, but Coles has documented the amazing ability of children to survive in the worst of social circumstances and become healthy and creative adults. Resilience may turn out to be at least as important a focus of psychological understanding as happiness.

Happiness has been a part of the human conversation from time immemorial. I think it is fair to say about happiness, in the words of the spiritual, “everybody talkin’ ’bout heaven ain’t goin’ there.” That, however, won’t keep us from talking, dreaming, and striving to achieve happiness.

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