

THREE IMAGES OF PERSONS:

Scientific, Humanistic, and Spiritual

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Santander, Espana

Two Parts

PART 1. Explore Three Images of Persons and possibilities of peace among them.

PART 2. Advance a particular way of conceiving human flourishing that appeals to members of my tribe – NATURALISTS.

The Philosopher's Vocation

“The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term.”

(Wilfrid Sellars, 1960)

Today

- Focus on Three Images & How/Whether They Can Hang Together.
- HUMANISTIC
- SPIRITUAL/RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC

A PARABLE: Eddington's Two Tables

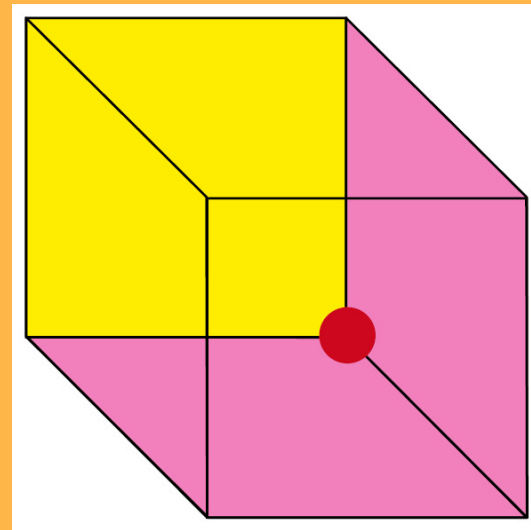
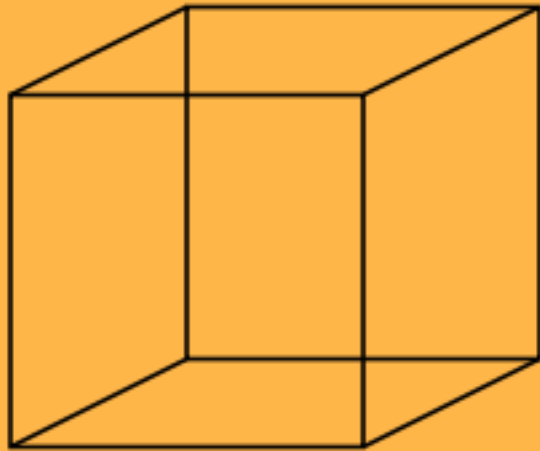
I have settled down to the task of writing these lectures and have drawn up my chairs to my two tables. Two tables! Yes; there are duplicates of every object about me — two tables, two chairs, two pens.

One of them has been familiar to me from earliest years. It is a commonplace object of that environment which I call the world. How shall I describe it? It has extension; it is comparatively permanent; it is coloured; above all it is *substantial*. After all if you are a plain commonsense man, not too much worried with scientific scruples, you will be confident that you understand the nature of an ordinary table. I have even heard of plain men who had the idea that they could better understand the mystery of their own nature if scientists would discover a way of explaining it in terms of the easily comprehensible nature of a table.

Table No. 2 is my scientific table. It is a more recent acquaintance and I do not feel so familiar with it. It does not belong to the world previously mentioned — that world which spontaneously appears around me when I open my eyes, ...My scientific table is mostly emptiness. Sparsely scattered in that emptiness are numerous electric charges rushing about with great speed; but their combined bulk amounts to less than a billionth of the bulk of the table itself. ...There is nothing *substantial* about my second table. It is nearly all empty space...

[*The nature of the physical world* (1929): New York, The Macmillan Company; Cambridge, Eng., The University Press, pages ix–x]

The Necker Cube

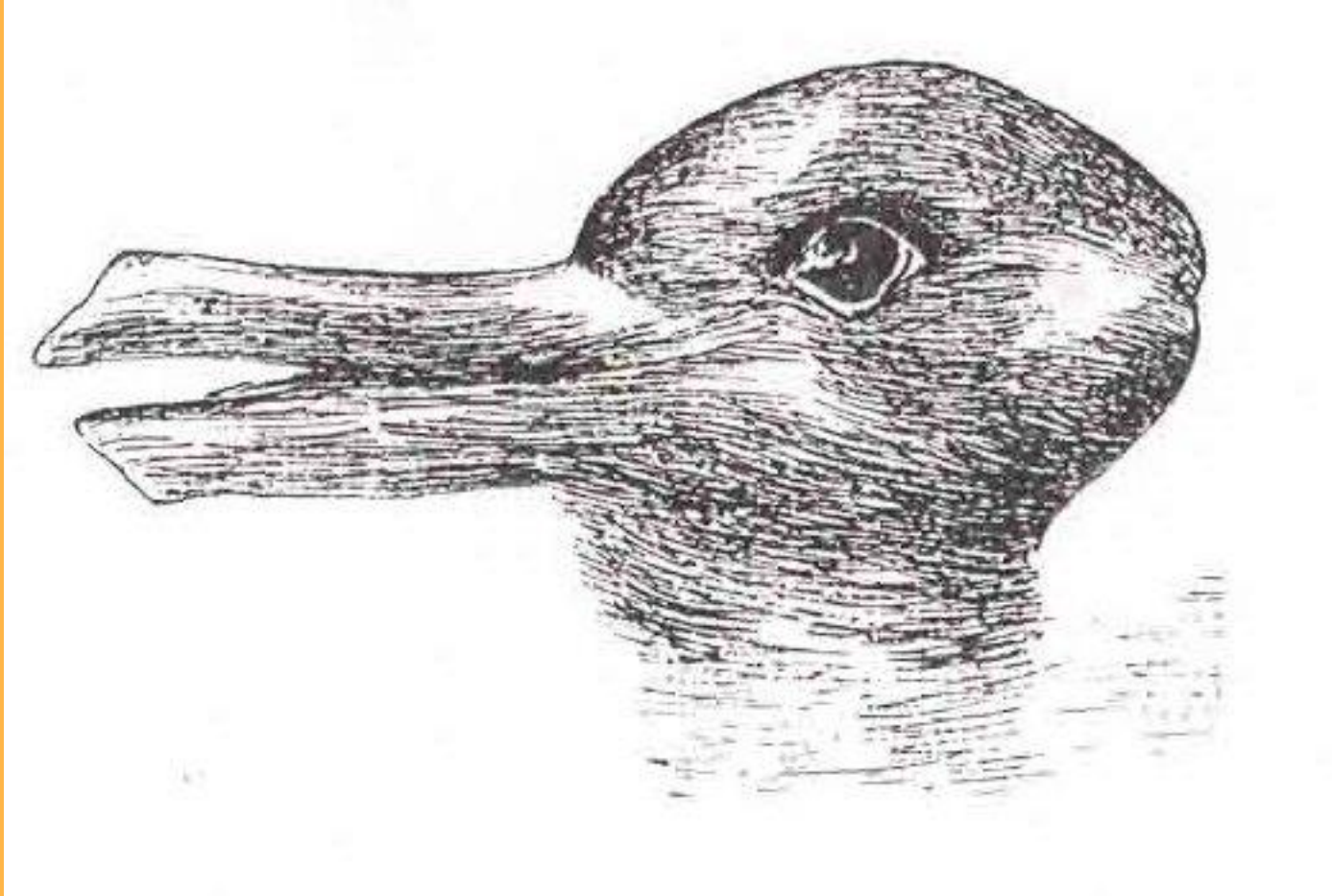


Basic version first published by Louis Albert Necker

Face-Vase



The Duck Rabbit



Jastrow, Joseph. (1899) The mind's eye. *Popular Science*

(One Secular) Humanistic Image

“Enlightenment Project” (Alasdair MacIntyre)

1. Deflated theism (deism, quietism, atheism)

2. Summum Bonum – Flourishing (**eudaimonia**) in this Life

3. Secular Foundations for Morality – Kant & Mill (recently Aristotle revival)

Religious/Spiritual Image

- **Non-naturalism** (God, god, spirits, divinities)
- **Karmic Eschatology/Soteriology:**
 - Summum bonum has to do with the “**Afterwards**”
 - One’s fate in the **afterwards** depends necessarily on some combination of the moral quality of one’s earthly life (lives) and (sometimes) one’s creedal beliefs.

Ways of Hanging Together

- MAKE **CONSISTENT** (Adjust/Assimilate/Accommodate/restrict Scope) – Both TRUE or Both LEGITIMATE PERSPECTIVES.
- SHOW **NON-OVERLAP** (Conflict Apparent, not Real)
- DEVELOP **TRUMP** RULES
- ACCEPT **INCONSISTENCY** --“CONTAIN MULTITUDES”
- **DEFLATE** AN IMAGE –“MERELY PROVISIONAL”
- Await **EXTINCTION** of some image(s)

S. J. GOULD

- Non-Overlapping Magisteria (**NOMA**)
1997/1999 (“read” Pius XII Humani Generis
1950)

THEOLOGY – VALUES

**SCIENCE – FACTS &
EXPLANATION OF FACTS**

***Maybe NOMA for Ethics and Science/Harder for Theology
and Science**

DEFLATIONS OF RELIGIOUS IMAGE

- **Not Knowledge = JTB** (Vienna Positivism)
 - **Assertive Theism**
 - **Expressive Theism**
- **Illusion** (Freud)
- **Delusion** (Harris/Dennett/Dawkins)

Two Kinds of Naturalism

- **Epistemic/Methodological Naturalism:** For all we know, what there is and all there is, is natural; it obeys natural law.
- **Ontological/Metaphysical Naturalism:** What there is and all there is, is “natural stuff.”

A Common Hybrid Humanistic-Religious Image

- * Free Will
- * Not Animals
- * Soul
- * Afterlife
- * God's Image
- * Morality is Transcendental
- * Meaning is Transcendental

A Common Enough, **Scientific** **Image (1859)**

- *No* Metaphysical/Libertarian Free Will
- Animal= Smart Mammal
- *No* Soul
- *No* Afterlife
- *Not* God' s Image
- Morality is *Not* Transcendental
- Meaning is *Not* Transcendental

Metaphysical Free Will

“But the will is so free , that it can never be constrained...And the whole action of the soul consists in this, that solely because it desires something, it causes a little gland to which it is closely united to move in a way requisite to produce the effect which relates to this desire”
(Rene Descartes)

20th century version

“If we are responsible ...then we have a prerogative which some would attribute only to God: each of us when we act , is a prime mover unmoved. In doing what we do, we cause certain things to happen, and nothing -- or no one -- causes us to cause those events to happen.” (Roderick Chisholm 1960)

William James 1892

- *EPILOGUE*
- “Let psychology frankly admit that for her scientific purposes determinism may be claimed, and no one can find fault. If, then, it turn out later that the claim has only a relative purpose, and may be crossed by counter-claims, the readjustment can be made. Now ethics makes a counter-claim; and the present writer, for one, has no hesitation in regarding her claim as the stronger, and in assuming that our wills are 'free.* For him, then, the deterministic assumption of psychology is merely provisional and methodological. This is no place to argue the ethical point; and I only mention the conflict to show that all these special sciences, marked off for convenience from the remaining body of truth (cf. p. 1), must hold their assumptions and results subject to revision in the light of each others needs. The forum where they hold discussion is called metaphysics. Metaphysics means only an unusually obstinate attempt to think clearly and consistently.”

NIETZSCHE

“Might it not be the case that that extremely foolhardy and fateful philosophical invention, first devised for Europe, of the ‘free will’ of man’s absolute freedom (*Spontaneität*) to do good or evil, was chiefly thought up to justify the idea that the interest of the gods, in man, in man’s virtue, *could never be exhausted*” (Nietzsche *Genealogy*, 1887, 2nd essay, 7).

“The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far: it is a sort of rape and perversion of logic. But the extravagant pride of man has managed to entangle itself profoundly and frightfully with just this nonsense. The desire for “freedom of the will” in the superlative metaphysical sense, which still holds sway, unfortunately, in the minds of the half-educated; the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one’s actions oneself, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society involves nothing less than to be precisely this *causa sui* and, with more than Baron Münchhausen’s audacity, to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness ... (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil*,, 1886, § 21)

The Persistent Questions:
From *The Atheist's Guide to Reality*
Alex Rosenberg

Is there a God? No.

What is the nature of reality? What physics says it is.

What is the purpose of the universe? There is none.

What is the meaning of life? Ditto.

Why am I here? Just dumb luck.

Does prayer work? Of course not.

Is there a soul? Is it immortal? Are you kidding?

Is there free will? Not a chance!

What happens when we die? Everything pretty much goes on as before, except us.

What is the difference between right and wrong, good and bad? There is no moral difference between them.

Why should I be moral? Because it makes you feel better than being immoral.

Is abortion, euthanasia, suicide, paying taxes, foreign aid, or anything else you don't like forbidden, permissible, or sometimes obligatory? Anything goes.

What is love, and how can I find it? Love is the solution to a strategic interaction problem. Don't look for it; it will find you when you need it.

Does history have any meaning or purpose? It's full of sound and fury, but signifies nothing.

Does the human past have any lessons for our future? Fewer and fewer, if it ever had

Worries for “Scientistic” Conception

- Scientifically **EXTREME** (e.g., reductive not naturalistic).
- Any Reason/Motive to be moral?
(*Foundation Question* -- can scientistic-ists be trusted? Scientism => immorality?)
- Can scientistic-ists find/create meaning in life? *Meaning of Life Question* - Scientism => Nihilism?)

Recommended Tactic

Shift the focus from the most visible arena of conflict in America, namely, *SCIENCE & RELIGION to that between the weighty but possibly less divisive question of MEANING OF LIFE (LIVES) – of **THE REALLY HARD PROBLEM***

The Really Hard Problem

- **How** -- given that (assuming that) we are natural beings living in a material world and given that consciousness is a natural phenomenon -- **does human life mean anything?**
- **What significance, if any, does living our kind of conscious life have?**
- **Is there room for spirituality for naturalists?**

PART 2 WEDNESDAY

- Thank You For Your Attention Today

So, *The Really Hard Problem* is

Is there anything upbeat we can say in this post Darwinian age about the meaning of life or about the meaning(s) of lives given that

**We are short-lived animals.*

**When we are gone we are gone for good, i.e., forever.*

** Even our species is likely to be short-lived, certainly not eternal.*

Platonic Unity/Optimality

- A good human life is one lived at the intersection of what is **true, good, and beautiful.**
- A good human life, a meaningful human life, a fulfilling human life is one in which one reaps the rewards of living at the intersection of what is **true, good, and beautiful.**
- In the best of all possible worlds, the **true**, the **good**, and the **beautiful** are co-compatible
- **Good – morality, friendship**
- **True – knowledge, wisdom**
- **Beautiful – natural & social**

Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*

- The Highest Good: ***Eudaimonia***
- ***Eudaimon* = ONE WHO LIVES A GOOD HUMAN LIFE, ONE WHO FLOURISHES.**
 - » 'eu' = good
 - » 'daimon' = spirit
- **1975 Eudaimonia = Happiness**
- **Post 1975 Eudaimonia =/ Happiness**

EUDAIMONICS – Empirical-Normative theory of the causes, conditions, and constituents (and effects) of human flourishing, human fulfillment, human well-being.

- Good diet might be a typical cause of eudaimonia
- Good mood might be a typical constituent of eudaimonia
- Kindness to others might be a typical cause or a typical effect of eudaimonia or both.
- Virtue might be a necessary feature (cause, constituent, effect) of eudaimonia.
- And so on for KNOWLEDGE or, what is different, WISDOM etc.

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS of EUDAIMONICS

- Is *Eudaimonia* subjective, purely a matter of conscious states of mind, for example, happiness?
- Is *Eudaimonia* objective, purely a matter of objective states of affairs?
- Is *Eudaimonia* objective & subjective?
- Is *Eudaimonia* relative or are there any universal causes, constituents, effects?
- If there are normal causes, constituents, and effects (local or universal) that are *eudaimonistic*, **what are they & how are they best produced and maintained?**

Key Concepts of *Eudaimonics*

- Happiness
- Well-Being
- Capabilities
- *Eudaimonia*
- A Good Human Life
- Flourishing
- Fulfillment
- Purpose
- Meaning

ONE MAJOR PROJECT: Figure out relations among these concepts

Eudaimonics

- **Eudaimonics**: empirical-normative inquiry into the conditions of human flourishing
- Eudaimonics =/ Ethics
- Eudaimonics =/ Positive Psychology

What are *Eudaimonics*'s Data?

- History, Comparative Philosophy,
Comparative Religion

&

- All Human Sciences: Anthropology,
Psychology, etc.

Comparative Flourishing

- Eudaimonia^{Aristotle}
- Eudaimonia^{Confucius}
- Eudaimonia^{Hindu}
- Eudaimonia^{Muslim}
- Eudaimonia^{Buddhist}
- Eudaimonia^{21c. Fundamentalist Christian}
- Eudaimonia^{21st c. Atheist}

Q: Why Favor *Eudaimonia* Research (Eudaimonics to *Happiness* (“Positive Psychology”) Research?

A: **SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS** doesn't seem like the most important/worthy end

CONSIDER:

-- Was Confucius happy? Was Jesus happy? Mary? Was

Socrates happy? Buddha? Mahatma Gandhi? Eleanor

Roosevelt? Mother Teresa? Martin Luther King Jr.?

Some Eudaimonistic Measures Psychological, Biological, “Objective.”

* Positive Mood Set Point in Brain (fMRI)

• Measure Plasticity of Mood (fMRI or Behavioral Tests)

• Cortisol Levels (“Natural Killer” NK)

• Affective-Hedonic Well-Being

1. How are you feeling mood-wise?
2. Ratio of pos. emotions to negative emotions via subtraction.

• Evaluative Well-Being -

How **satisfied** are you with your life overall (**or** – in the domains of income, work, family, health, etc.)

• Objective Well-Being –

How does individual P fare on measures of x,y,z that are known independently to contribute +/- to well-being (AWB or EWB) e.g. good water, education. (“Capabilities Approach” – Nussbaum & Sen)

Subjective Well-Being. Researchers who favor

measuring subjective well-being, SWB, over objective

hedonic satisfaction think of SWB as a (some sort of)

function of {life satisfaction, pleasant emotions,

satisfaction with domains such as work and health,

feelings of fulfillment and meaning, and low levels of

***negative emotions}*.**

Life Satisfaction of Selected Groups

- Forbes' Richest Americans 5.8
- Maasai (East African tribal people) 5.4
- Pennsylvania Amish 5.1
- Inughuit (Northern Greenland) 5.1
- American College Students 4.9
- Cloistered Nuns (USA) 4.8
- Illinois Nurses 4.8

Neutral Point of Scale = 4.0

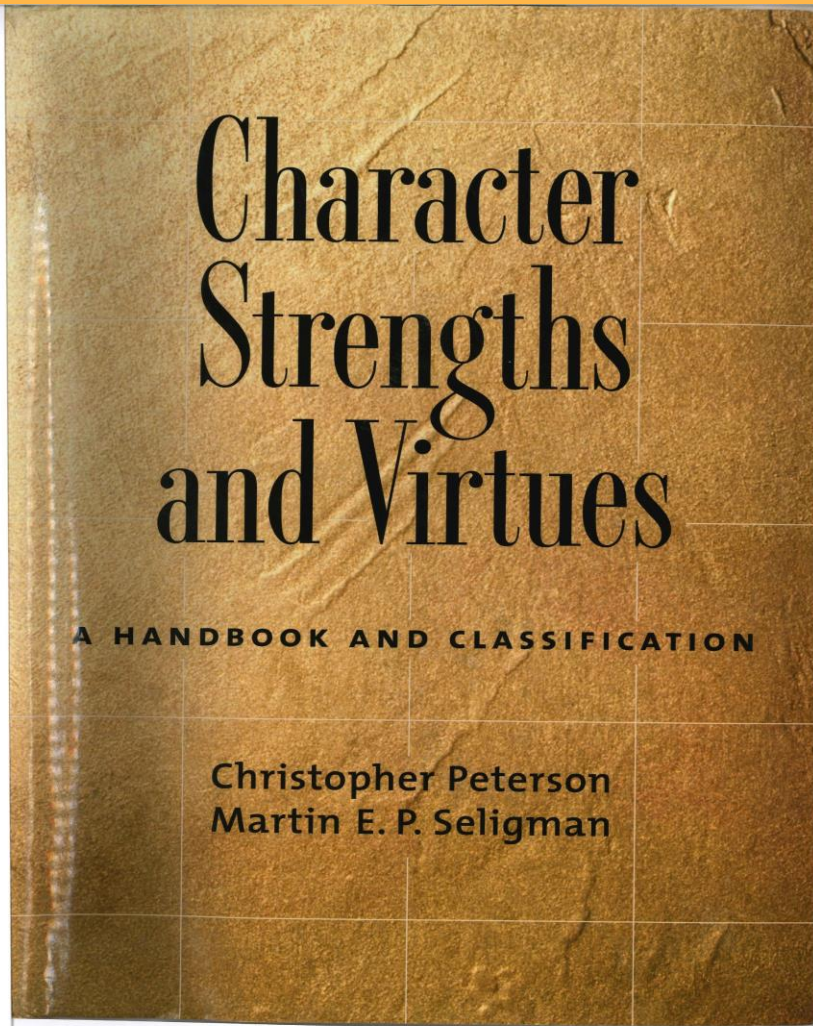
Negative Groups (below neutral)

Calcutta Sex Workers	3.6
Calcutta Homeless	3.2
Mental outpatients entering therapy	2.9
California Homeless	2.8
Mental inpatients (hospitalized)	2.4
Prisoners, newly jailed men in county jail	2.4
Detroit Sex Workers	2.1

Eudaimonistic/Objective Well-Being

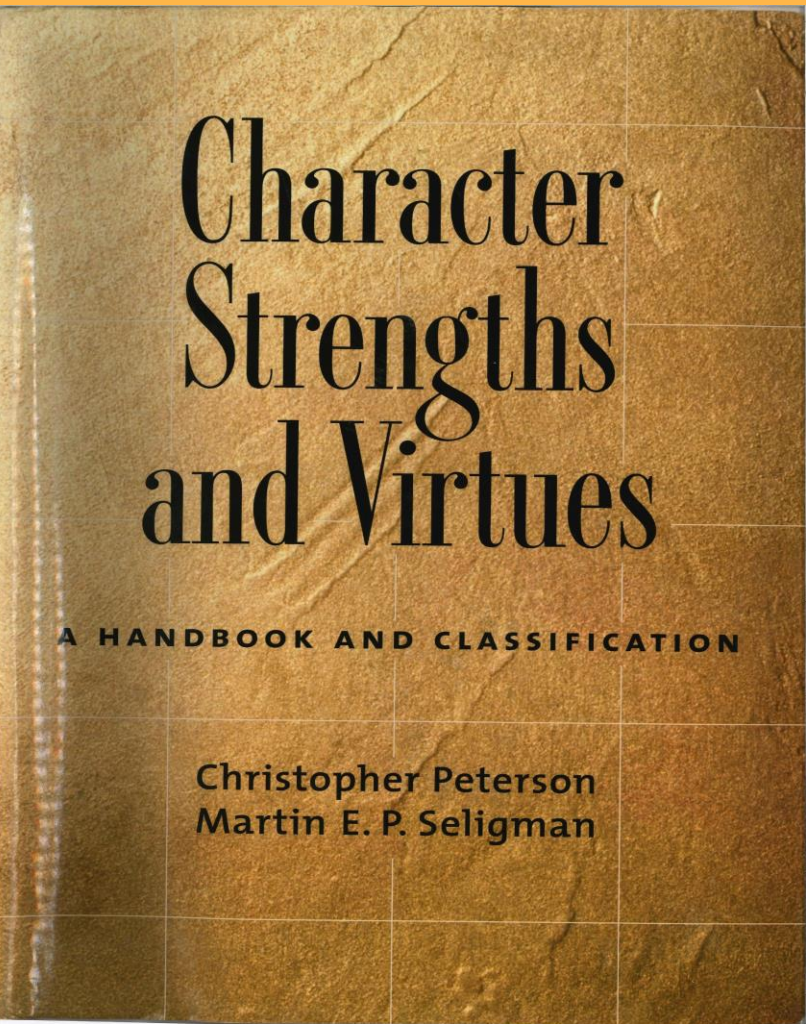
1. One starts with a certain normative conception of what contributes to a truly good life -- Rawls, Nussbaum, Sen.
2. Evaluates how individuals fare in relation to it or to each component of it.
3. Individual subjects don't choose the domains or the weights assigned to them (religious identity is weighed but not trump)
4. EWB measures could be wildly divergent from SWB scores, as well as from measures of average instant hedonic utility.

WHAT ABOUT VIRTUE?



**Any Universal Virtues
that reliably constitute or
cause or contribute to
Eudaimonia?**

The Comparative Consensus



Character Strengths and Virtues

A HANDBOOK AND CLASSIFICATION

Christopher Peterson
Martin E. P. Seligman

- » Justice
- » Humaneness
- » Temperance
- » Wisdom
- » Courage
- » Transcendence

GREEK

Courage

Justice

Temperance

Wisdom +

Generosity

Wit

Friendliness

Magnificence

Greatness of Soul

CONFUCIAN

Ren –
Benevolence

Li - Following
the Rites/Rituals

Yi – Rightness,
Rectitude

Zhong & Xiao
– Loyalty and
Filial Piety

Zhi –
Knowledge/Wis
dom

BUDDHIST

CONVENTIONAL VIRTUES
(honesty, sexual propriety,
no gossip, *ahimsa*
(non-violence))

PLUS

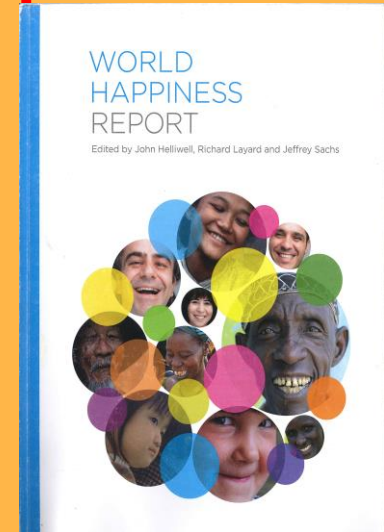
Compassion (*karuna*)

Loving-kindness (*metta*)

Sympathetic Joy (*mudita*)

Equanimity (*upeksa*)

Some More Eudaimonics Findings?



- **Money doesn't bring happiness (after a certain point).**
 - Once income is above approx. 75K US for family (anywhere-in-world) there is a relatively flat line in increases in well-being.
 - **American College students who care about money need 2x as much as their peers to be “happy” later on.**
 - So maybe better to say that money does bring happiness to a certain point but wanting money does not.

More Findings



- High unemployment makes employed people less “happy.”
- Wealth inequality makes people less “happy” including those with the most wealth.
- Marriage makes men ‘happier’; women too, but less so.
- Having children, esp. between age 3-18 make parents less “happy” – NOTE: this is compatible with children making life more meaningful or more secure.
- **“Social capital”/ “trust” / “friendship, specifically, having others “to count on” is by far the most important determinant of eudaimonia.**
- Europe = 7.6 average life satisfaction; Sub-Sahara Africa 3.2. (INDIA 5.2) Most of the variance explained by low “trust” (trust 4x effect of employment)
- On all measures of well-being there is gradual downward trend from 16 until age 40, then flat, then up from 50 til death.
- * Religious affiliation (not necessarily belief) is correlated with well-being

Eudaimonics 101

**First Lesson:
Well-Being, Flourishing,
Fulfillment involve**

**VALUES
VIRTUES
RELATIONSHIPS &
GOODS**

that are “not (entirely) in the head” or revealed in **brain scans** are reliably connected to *eudaimonia*

&

Subjective Feeling States are not the most important component

Necessary Conditions of Eudaimonia?

- Income Above A Certain Level – Basket of Basic Goods
- Various Externalities: Education, Social Trust, Sustainable Environment
- **Friendship – “Aristotle’s Constant”**
- Happiness? (+Mood, +Positive Judgment, +Accurate Assessment)
- Meaning/Purpose
- Virtue

Final Concern:

EWB as platonic unification

Platonic Unification: All else equal, excellent lives are lived at the intersection of what is

BEAUTIFUL

GOOD

TRUE

POSITIVE ILLUSIONS

- **Epistemology 101:**

“One ought not have false beliefs”

- **Psychology 101:**

– “If you want to be happy for the rest of your life -- have false beliefs!”

- **Three claims:**
- First, people characteristically hold beliefs that are exaggerated and unrealistic;
- Second, these *exaggerated* and *unrealistic* beliefs are normal;
- Third, these exaggerated and unrealistic beliefs produce **good** personal and moral effects

Unrealistic optimism

When asked their chances of experiencing a wide variety of negative events – for example, auto accidents, divorce, job trouble, illness, depression, or being the victim of a crime – most people believe they are less likely than their peers to experience such negative events.

...Much Less Likely

Positive Spiritual Illusions?

- Soteriological & Eschatological Beliefs
 - Just World
 - Everything Happens for a Reason
 - Karma
 - Heaven
 - Positive Rebirths for the Good, etc.

Possibility – “Contain Multitudes”

- Human beings are too complex motivationally to think we can easily coordinate/meet the demands of *platonic unification* **True**, the **Good**, the **Beautiful**.
- **Narrative-historical beings. Tradition bound – Identities constituted via traditions.**
- *Truth* may compete with *meaning-making* & in some respects *truth* may be overrated.

Thank You