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Happiness (Pursuit of)

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Happiness

a life satisfaction view of happiness. According to Barrow, happiness is a state of mind, which ranges in intensity from contentment to ecstasy, and implies that one experiences and is satisfied with one's life circumstances. Barrow describes happiness in terms of being at one with the world, for the happy person feels no disunity between the way the world is and the way she would like it to be. Barrow denies that there are any particular material conditions or psychological characteristics necessary for happiness, for "a person may conversely be happy (or unhappy), whether sick, rich, poor, wily, kind, physically ill, the victim of rape or winner of the pools" (Barrow, p. 69). The only thing incompatible with happiness are states of mind that suggest one is at odds with one's world, such as feelings of dissatisfaction with one's life.

Barrow's life satisfaction view is subjective, for it places no restriction on the source of one's satisfaction, and it implies one can be happy even if one is radically deceived, highly immoral or has a life that lacks well-being. Some contemporary theorists who wish to preserve the connection between happiness and the good life charge the life satisfaction view with being too subjective. Although few contemporary theorists go so far as to identify happiness with virtue, they do incorporate various objective constraints on how one can achieve satisfaction in order to preserve the connection with goodness.

For example, Julia Annas (1993) rejects the identification of happiness with satisfaction, because she believes happiness is intrinsically connected with achievement of one's important goals. According to Annas' hybrid view, we have the ability to adopt a global perspective on our lives, which helps to unify and organize our goals into a hierarchical structure that reflects our particular vision of the good life. She believes happiness comes from accomplishing our ideals, and this requires us to actually live a particular kind of life, and not merely be in the right mental state.

Richard Kraut (1979) and John Kekes (1982) agree with Annas about the connection between happiness and achieving one's ideals, and both present hybrid views that deny the happiness of anyone who is radically deceived about whether she is attaining whatever it is that she values. To rule out such cases of misapprehension, Kraut and Kekes require that a person's satisfaction with her life be rationally justified in order for her to be happy. For example, if a woman is satisfied with her life, because she believes she has a successful marriage, but unbeknownst to her, her husband is actually having an affair, Kekes and Kraut would deny her happiness, because she fails to meet her own standard for happiness.

Contemporary hybrid views of happiness, such as those of Annas, Kekes, Kolos, and Kraut, present an interesting bridge between subjective and objective theories. They recognize the importance of the subject's satisfaction with her life, but they deny that it is sufficient on the grounds that it is possible to be satisfied with a life that is not good in any sense. By including some kind of objective condition that must be met if one is to be deemed happy, they seek to preserve the Aristotelian insight that happiness is intimately connected with living the good life.

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Further Reading
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Christine Vitrumo
Brooklyn College

See also BENTHAM, JEREMY; EPICU- REANISM; EUDAIMONISM; HAPPINESS (PURSU IT OF); Hedonism; MILL, JOHN STUART; OBJECTIVE AND SUBJEC TIVE UTILITARIANISM; PAIN; PLEASURE; VIRTUE (VITAL UTILITARIANISM).
Locke, who used the phrase or something resembling it before 1776, including Rolingbrooke, Wollepston, Pope, Vattel, Huxchonson, Hume, Blackstone, Berlamiqun, Smith, Kant, Jean, Johnson, Goldsmith, Priseley, and Price. Trot (1957) argues that Leibnitz was the most important influence on the American founding fathers. However, though Leibnitz suggested a connection between happiness and justice in the introduction to Codex Juris Gentium in 1663 (Leibnitz, p. 171), Trot's evidence for Leibnitz's influence is circumstantial and turns around the conveyance of Leibnitz's ideas through the mediation of Vattel's The Law of Nations (1758; Eng. trans. 1760). Vattel's work was well known in America. His ideas figured in the debates in Congress over the drafting of the constitution and, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, he was treated as an authority on the question of whether states may renounce their international treaties. But no evidence has come to light that looks either Leibnitz or Vattel to Jefferson prior to the drafting of the Declaration.

One might entertain the idea that Leibnitz and Locke provided the intellectual framework for the Declaration. The Declaration's commitment to a natural right and the argument that the purpose of government is to promote the well-being of its fellow citizens is essential to the "pursuit of our own happiness" (Locke, 1689, p. 233-4), a view that dominated the political thought of the time. The idea that was to resonate within both the Scotch moral sense school and the tradition of religious utilitarianism that stretched from John Gay into the eighteenth century. What Garner fails to recognize is that—with the possible exception of Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui, who states in his Principes de droit naturel (1747), that the "sobei proprietate" of "true and solid happiness" is a God-given right (Burlamqui, p. 31)—none of his "forgotten men" described the pursuit of happiness as a natural right. Rather, the object to pursue happiness, either because it is consistent with our basic desires or because it is our duty to benefit our fellowmen, was frequently considered with other moral principles. The Scots, for example—Hutcheson, Home, Smith, Ferguson, Kames, and others—acknowledged the empirical aspiration of individuals to enhance their own happiness, sometimes replacing happiness with "utility" or "interest," but sought to integrate this with the idea of a "moral sense," situating the pursuit of the happiness of others ahead of the interest of the individual and grounding personal happiness in benevolence. Wills (1957) notes that at the forefront of those scholars who play down洛克's importance and argue for the prominent influence of Huxchonson and his fellow Scots.

As is well known, in An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, (1752) Huxchonson was the first in modern times to make the "pursuit of happiness" the objective of moral action, and to support a mathematical approach to computations of happiness (Huxchonson, pp. 155, 128-31). In support of his claim, Wills cites several passages from Huxchonson's A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy (1747)—a book possessed by Jefferson—that resemble passages in the preamble to the Declaration. (Wills, pp. 238-9). Comparing the relevant statements, he interprets Jefferson's meaning of the pursuit of happiness entirely in Huxchonson's terms, while other authorities view it as "nothing vague or private," but rather "a public happiness which is measurable, which is, indeed, the test and justification of virtue" (Wills makes use of other statements by Huxchonson to underscore the point, notably Huxchonson's arguments about the distinction between the general happiness and the collective happiness of a society, his own "pursuit of happiness" who will command him "to destroy the greatest happiness of the greatest number," and that the maximization of collective or public happiness provides the foundation for the social and political organization—"the general happiness is the supreme end of all political union." (quoted Wills, p. 238)) It is not unusual, then, for Jefferson, as for Huxchonson, "it is the pursuit of happiness that is the only motive force for spending happiness to others, and on this fact of human nature governments must be established, judged, altered, or abolished" (p. 253). Wills' claim for the significance of Huxchonson have influenced other scholars seeking to map the sources that shaped the Declaration of Independence. However, that Locke was antipathetic to Jefferson is dis- puted. Huxchonson shows that, contrary to the account offered by Wills, Jefferson was fully versed in Locke's political writings (Huxchonson, pp. 511-514). He compares the quotations from Huxchonson supplied by Wills with the comparable passages in the preamble to the Declaration and shows that: Locke's Second Treatise offers wording closer to Jefferson's than does Huxchonson (Huxchonson, pp. 508-508, Wills, pp. 238-9). Moreover, Huxchonson points out that in assessing Huxchonson's influence it should be noted that Huxchonson "borrowed heavily" from Locke in setting down his political views, something left unexplored by Wills, "including the description of men operating under a system of natural liberty and his conceptions of the scope and content of natural rights which includes property but not the pursuit of happiness," the impetus for the establishment of civil society, and the right of resistance." So, if certain parts of Locke's ideas received reinforcement in Huxchonson, and Jefferson read both, it is a stretch to attribute the one and dismiss the other. Further, none of the other Scots who Wills claims as important influences went near as far as Huxchonson in considering a right to resistance, and in general their political ideas were far less radical than Huxchonson's, and decidedly opposed to the Lockean notion of the contractual foundations of government, which Huxchonson supported (Huxchonson, pp. 508-509, 517). Huxchonson's most startling observation is that "Huxchonson ... is not once named, cited, referred to, or recommended, in any connection, in any of Jefferson's writings" (p. 514). It is correct in saying this, as a review of Jefferson's writings and correspondence will attest. But, it is not his conviction that Huxchonson and other Scots were of no account in the formation of Jefferson's political thought. Rather, the evidence points to Locke and not Huxchonson to whom Jefferson owed the greater debt in composing the Declaration (p. 511).

What has received little consideration in the debate on this issue is what: "the pursuit of happiness" entails in practice (Warren, 2003), is an exception. Several of Gardiner's suggested sources, for instance, declared the promotion of happiness to be the end of the government and its laws, society (Wollas- ton, Hume, Smith, Barbaque, Vattel, and Priseley. And, more importantly, George Mason (1721-92), who employed a variation on "the pursuit of happiness" in his draft of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, adopted a much before the Declaration of Independence was finalized, also points us in this direction. The Virginia Declaration states not only the rights to life, liberty and "the means of acquiring and possessing property," but also the right of "pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety" (sec. 1). Further, it acknowledges that government "a, or ought to be, instituted for the common Benefit, Protection, and Security of the People, Nation, or Community," and that the best form of government is the one which is capable of producing the greatest Degree of Happiness and Safety, and is most effectually secured against the Danger of Misadministration (sec. 3). In Mason's preamble, we see echo of the general ambivalence at the time regarding the purpose of government in relation to inherent and universal rights. For both Jefferson and Mason, virtue meant the willingness to subordinate private desires for the good of the community. As Mason wrote in his remarks on the Virginia Charters (1773), the pursuit of self-interest is opposition to the public good is "not only mean & avaricious, but extremely short-sighted and foolish," But, Jefferson and Mason appear to differ in their understanding of
what the pursuit of happiness entails, with the first adopting the Lockeian position that once rights are secured the people must be left free to choose their own path to happiness, while Masen recognizes that liberty alone will not be sufficient. In the same way as Locke (Br 2: Ch 6:2, sec. 51), Mason often linked happiness to liberty, suggesting that liberty is a precondition for happiness, and invoked natural law in support of the duty to contribute to the good of the whole (Mason, 1970, vol. 3, pp. 1051, 1067, 1068). Bot, like Franklin, for whom the priority for government is the happiness and welfare of the public, Mason frequently gave priority to the good of the community and prevention of happiness, including the happiness of future generations (vol. 1, p. 108; vol. 3, p. 893), rather than the rights of individuals (vol. 3, p. 904), even if in public he always spoke firmly in favour of the rights of the people as the base from which all else followed.

This latent tension over the objectives of government—between the essentially negative role for government as the protection of rights and the more libertarian disposition to assist people in obtaining happiness—received little attention at the time and hardly seems to have figured in the literature since. The issue comes to the fore in constant constraints of equal protection accepted, is it the purpose of government to protect natural rights and no more, as Locke implied, or ought its role to extend to assisting in the enjoyment of those rights, including the provision of means to enable people to obtain the fullest extent of happiness possible, as Mason’s wording, but not Jefferson’s, seems to suggest? In other words, in recognizing a right to pursue happiness, is government required to aid people in fulfilling their desires for happiness? And, if this is so, is government expected to do whatever it can to maximize the aggregate of happiness among the people in its role to raise the happiness levels of each person, even though this may mean that some will receive more assistance than others? These are questions that continue to occupy a central place in American politics.

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Further Reading


James L. Crippin. Huron University College The University of Western Ontario

See also HAPPINESS; HEDONISM; HUTCHISON, FRANCES; LOCKE, JOHN.

Hare, Richard Mervyn (1919–2002)

B. M. Hare was born on 23 March 1919 near Bristol. He attended Rugby School and then won a scholarship to study "Greens" (a mix of Classical literature, history, and philosophy) at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1937. After 2 years as an undergraduate, he volunteered to fight in World War II. In 1942, he was captured by the Japanese after the fall of Singapore and sent to work as a cook on the Burma railway for 8 months. He lived in a Japanese prisoner of war camp for a further 2 years. While a prisoner of war, he wrote "An Essay on Morism," which was never published but which has echoes in his later work. After liberation, he resumed his undergraduate education at Balliol College. Upon completion of his degree, he became a Lecturer and then Fellow of the College, where he remained until 1966, when he was elevated to Oxford University's White's Chair of Moral Philosophy at Corpus Christi College. He retired from Oxford in 1983 to a part-time position at the University of Florida. He died on 29 January 2002 in Ewell, Oxordshire.

Hare published prolifically, primarily on moral concepts, moral theory, and applied ethics (on the latter see Hare, 1972b, 1978b, 1993b). He made two main contributions to utilitarianism. The first was his argument that careful analysis of the central moral concept "ought" yields the conclusions that the "critical level" of moral thought arrives at a preference-satisfaction version of act utilitarianism. The second was his development of the idea that many apparently nonutilitarian intuitions can be accommodated within utilitarianism because people's having such intuitions actually promotes utility.

Hare developed one of the twentieth century's most discussed theories of the nature of moral judgments (Hare, 1955; 1963; 1972a; 1984; 1999). Many of his immediate predecessors held that moral judgments necessarily express emotion. This idea is suspect, since moral judgments are sometimes made in "a cool hour" and without any apparent emotion. Hare proposed that a better