

# **‘Hedonic’ and ‘Eudaimonic’ Happiness:**

## **Which qualifies best as a moral guide?<sup>1, 3</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Utilitarian moral philosophy holds that the best thing to do is what contributes to the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people and sees ‘happiness’ as the subjective enjoyment of one’s life as a whole; the ‘sum of pleasures and pains’. Implementing this 18<sup>th</sup> century moral principle has become practical since the rise of empirical happiness research in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and estimates of effects of practices on happiness figure more prominently in major choices today, public choice in particular.*

*This moral primacy of happiness is contested from several sides, one of which is positive psychology. Positive psychology is the science of positive mental health where ‘positive mental health’ is seen as a spectrum of mental traits deemed beneficial to the individual, such as autonomy, self-esteem and a sense of meaning. Today many positive psychologists refer to positive mental health as ‘eudaimonic happiness’ and contrast it with ‘hedonic happiness’, that is, the utilitarian notion of happiness as the subjective enjoyment of one’s life.*

*A common view held by positive psychologists is that we would do better to aim at ‘eudaimonic happiness’ rather than at utilitarian ‘hedonic happiness’. This idea is communicated in the catchphrase ‘Beyond happiness’, which is analogous to the slogan ‘Beyond GDP’ which is used to suggest that policy makers should aim at other things than just economic growth.*

*In this chapter, I consider the strengths and weaknesses of both conceptions of individual wellbeing as a moral guide. I conclude that hedonic happiness (life-satisfaction) is the most clear and practicable criterion and the most universally applicable.*

**Keywords:** greatest happiness principle, life-satisfaction, happiness, positive mental health, utilitarianism

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this text are taken from my earlier publications, in particular Veenhoven 2006 and 2010b

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Search for moral leads

Like other animal, we humans make choices. While most animals choose on the basis of instinct, the choices humans make are largely based on conscious deliberation. This requires that we can orient on notions of what good choices are, 'leads' for what we should aim at in our personal lives (private choice) and in how we organize the society in which we live (public choice). Such moral leads figure in all human cultures but are seldom uncontested. Throughout human history there has been a discussion about how we should lead our lives and in our contemporary modern society this discussion has become institutionalized in academic moral philosophy and here a helpful distinction is made in moral philosophy is between 'principal' and "consequential' ethics.

*Principal ethics* are based on rules, such as 'Thou shalt not steal' given in the biblical 'Ten Commandments'. Such rules are accepted as axioms and attributed to laws of nature or Devine revelation. The problems with this approach are that too many of these many rules are contradictory and that radical application of such rules may lead to untenable consequences, such as adherence to the rule 'Thou shalt not kill' in case of war.

*Consequential ethics* focus on the effects of choice and deem morally good what works out well. In this approach, a major criterion is how choices work out on the 'happiness' of most people.

## 1.2 The 'greatest happiness principle

The idea that we should choose what will add to the happiness of most people has always been around but gained prominence in Western thinking in the 18th century European Enlightenment. Jeremy Bentham was an outstanding proponent of this view. In his 'Introduction to Morals and Legislation' (1789). Bentham argues that the moral quality of an action should be judged by its consequences on human happiness and in line with this, he claims that we should aim at the 'greatest happiness for the greatest number'. Bentham defined happiness in terms of subjective experience, as 'the sum of pleasures and pains', which fits the contemporary concept of 'life-satisfaction'. His philosophy is known as 'utilitarianism', because of its emphasis on the utility of behavioral consequences. 'Happyism' would have been a better name, since utility is seen in the contribution to human happiness.

When the greatest happiness principle is applied at the level of individual choice, it can run into some difficulties. One problem with this 'actor utilitarianism' is that often one cannot foresee what the balance of effects on happiness will be, effects on other people's happiness in particular. Another problem is that the principle deems well-intended behavior to be a-moral if the end-result is adverse.

Imagine the case of a loving mother who saves the life of her sick child, a child that grows up to be a criminal; mothers cannot foresee their children's future and should not be reproached for their unconditional mothers love.

The greatest happiness principle is better suited for judging general rules, such as the rule that mothers should care for their sick children. It is fairly evident that adherence to this rule will add to the happiness of a great number. Following such rules is then morally correct, even if the consequences might be negative in a particular case. This variant is known as 'Rule-Utilitarianism'.

Bentham used the greatest happiness principle in this latter way as a moral guide for legislation and discussed the implications of this principle for property laws and the death penalty. The principle can also be applied to wider issues in public policy; such as the question of what degree of income-inequality we should accept or what capabilities should be developed and prioritized in school education. Interest in such applications has begun to rise since the turn of the millennium (e.g. Layard 2005).

### **1.3 Objections against the greatest happiness principle**

This consequentialist moral principle has been criticized from several sides on several grounds (Smart & Williams 1993). Not surprisingly, the church was vociferous in its opposition, preaching a principalist morality and often stating that human happiness is not in God's plan, since man has been expelled from Paradise. The greatest happiness principle received little support among lay moral philosophers either, possibly because most of them made their living balancing different moral principles against each other and lack the knowledge to predict long-term effects on happiness. Philosophers typically prefer wisdom over happiness or define (true) happiness as wisdom.

Professional interests and identities also seem to have fueled opposition against the greater happiness principle in other vocations, in the past knights valued bravery over happiness and clerics holiness over happiness. Likewise, in the emerging merchant class wealth was often valued over happiness. The logic in these views is that one's trade is presented as the most desirable thing to do. From this perspective, the present opposition against the greater happiness principle from positive psychology can also be seen to be driven by professional self-promotion. As will be explained in more detail below, the alternative concept of 'eudaimonic happiness' describes what positive psychologist typically sell.

### **1.4 'Eudaimonic' happiness as an alternative to 'hedonic' happiness**

The greatest happiness principle is gaining ground these days, among other things because scientific research on life-satisfaction has made it better possible to predict the long-term effects on citizen's happiness of public choices and policies (Veenhoven 2017a). In reaction to this new 'happyism', another moral guide has recently been presented as an alternative to this 'hedonic' approach, named 'eudaimonic' happiness, which is contrasted with 'hedonic' happiness. A key

publication is the 1989 paper by Carol Ryff entitled 'Happiness Is Everything, or Is It? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-Being' (Ryff 1989). This paper marks the start of the 'Beyond Happiness' movement in Positive Psychology.

The 'Beyond (hedonic) Happiness' movement also pleads for the promotion of psychological well-being in the population, but emphasizes different mental states, such as autonomy and a sense of meaning. The movement began to gain power in the early 2000s, when Positive Psychology was institutionalized and this message gained a forum in specialized conferences and journals. Exemplary publications are: Waterman 2008, Ryan & Huta 2009 and Seldon 2016.

In this book we take stock of the state of discussion on hedonic versus eudaimonic happiness in the year 2020 and this chapter considers the usefulness of these concepts as a moral lead.

## 1.5 Intellectual roots

The notions of 'hedonic' and 'eudaimonic' happiness root in related but slightly different intellectual traditions and practices.

### *Hedonic happiness*

The idea that a good life is a satisfying life had already been articulated in ancient Greek philosophy, e.g. by Democritus and was revived in the 18th century European Enlightenment (cf. section 1.2). Today the idea is put to practice in empirical happiness research, happiness economics in particular, with the aim of informing individuals and organizations about ways to create greater happiness of more people. (Veenhoven 2014). A recent application of this Benthamian approach is found in 'The origins of happiness' by Clark et al. (2018).

### *Eudaimonic happiness*

The idea that one's quality of life is based on the cultivation of particular mental traits draws on ancient 'virtue ethics', the western founding fathers of which are Plato and Aristotle. A more recent source of inspiration is the notion of 'positive mental health' described by Marie Jahoda in 1965 as consisting of the following mental traits.

- Positive attitudes toward the self.
- Growth, development, and self-actualization, including utilization of abilities, future orientation, concern with work, and so on
- Integration, as in a balance of psychic forces, the unifying of one's outlook, and resistance to stress and frustration.
- Autonomy, as in self-determination, independent behavior, and, when appropriate, non-conformity.
- A true perception of reality.
- Environmental mastery, meaning adequacy in love, work and play, adaptation and adjustment, and the capacity to solve problems.

Today these 'strengths' are cultivated by teachers, trainers and therapists, many of whom identify themselves as 'positive psychologists'.

## 1.6 Plan of this chapter

Which of these two notions of happiness qualifies best as a moral guide? The following practical requirements come to my mind.

- *Conceptual clarity.* If we aim at greater happiness, we must know what that is. Vague concepts may serve rhetorical purposes, but do not provide a basis for choice.
- *Measurability.* We must be able to assess empirically how happy people are and check to what extent choices have changed their happiness.
- *Indication for wider good.* The more happiness goes with other things we value, the more it qualifies as a guide.
- *Universality.* If we aim at the happiness of 'the greatest number', the concept must cover all humans and not be restricted to a particular culture.
- *Public support.* Application of a moral principle in public choice requires that such a principle is accepted by a large part of the population

In the next sections I will discuss how both notions of happiness, 'hedonic' and 'eudaimonic', perform on these criteria.

## 2 CONCEPTUAL CLARITY of 'hedonic' and 'eudaimonic' happiness

The term 'happiness' is used to denote different meanings, most of which have to do with the 'quality of life'. Sometimes the word 'happiness' is used as a generic for the *overall quality* of life and is synonymous with 'well-being'. The word 'happiness' is also used for *specific qualities* of life and making a distinction between these will help us to delineate the notions of 'hedonic' and 'eudaimonic' happiness. A distinction between four qualities of life is presented in Figure 1.

### 2.1 Four qualities of life

This classification of meanings given in Figure 1 depends on two distinctions:

Vertically there is a difference between *chances* for a good life and *actual outcomes* of life. Chances and outcomes are related but are certainly not the same. Chances can fail to be realized, due to mistakes or bad luck. Conversely, people sometimes make much of their life in spite of poor opportunities. This distinction is quite common in the field of public-health research. Pre-conditions for good health, such as adequate nutrition and professional care are seldom confused up with health itself. Yet the means and ends are less well distinguished in the discussion on happiness.

Horizontally in Figure 1 there is a distinction between *external* and *internal* qualities. In the first case the quality is in the environment, in the latter it is in the individual. Lane (1996) made this distinction clear by emphasizing 'quality of persons'. This distinction is also quite commonly made in public health. External pathogens are distinguished from inner afflictions, and researchers try to identify the mechanisms by which the former produce the latter and the conditions in which this is more or less likely. Yet again this basic insight is lacking in many discussions about happiness.

Together, these two dichotomies mark four qualities of life, all of which have been denoted by the word 'happiness' in the literature.

Figure 1  
**Four qualities of life**

	<i>Outer qualities</i>	<i>Inner qualities</i>
<i>Life-chances</i>	<b>Livability of environment</b>	<b>Life-ability of the person</b>
<i>Life-results</i>	<b>Usefulness of life</b>	<b>Satisfaction with life</b>

Source: Veenhoven 2000, 2017b

*Livability of the environment*

The left top quadrant of Figure 1 denotes the meaning of good living conditions. Often the terms 'quality-of-life' and 'wellbeing' are used in this particular meaning, especially in the writings of ecologists and sociologists. Economists sometimes use the term 'welfare' for this meaning. 'Livability' is a better word, because it refers explicitly to a characteristic of the environment and does not carry the connotation of paradise. Politicians and social reformers typically stress this quality of life.

*Life-ability of the person*

The right top quadrant of Figure 1 denotes inner life-chances. That is: how well we are equipped to cope with the problems of life. This aspect of the good life is also known by different names. Doctors and psychologists tend to use the terms 'quality of life' and 'wellbeing' to denote this specific meaning. There are more names for 'life-ability' however. In biology the phenomenon is referred to as 'adaptive potential'. On other occasions it is denoted using the medical term 'health', in the medium variant of the word. Sen (1992) calls this quality of life variant 'capability'. I prefer the simple term 'life-ability', which contrasts elegantly with 'livability'. This quality of life is central in the thinking of therapists and educators.

*Usefulness of life*

The left bottom quadrant of Figure1 represents the notion that a good life must be good for something more than itself. This presumes some higher value, such as ecological preservation or cultural development. In fact, there is a myriad values on which the utility of life can be judged. There is no current generic for these external turnouts of life. Gerson (1976: 795) referred to these kinds of life-results as

'transcendental' conceptions of quality of life. Another appellation that is used is 'meaning of life', which then denotes 'true' significance instead of mere subjective sense of meaning.

*Satisfaction with life*

Finally, the bottom right quadrant of Figure 1 represents the inner outcomes of life. That is the quality of life in the eye of the beholder. As we deal with conscious humans this quality boils down to subjective appreciation of life. This is commonly referred to using terms such as 'subjective wellbeing', 'life-satisfaction' and 'happiness' in a limited sense of the word. There is no professional interest group that stresses this meaning, and this seems to be one of the reasons for the reservations surrounding the greatest happiness principle.

***Place of 'hedonic' happiness in this scheme***

'Hedonic' happiness is about the subjective enjoyment of one's life and fits the right bottom quadrant of 'satisfaction with life' in Figure 1.

<b>Livability of environment</b>	<b>Life-ability of the person</b>
<b>Usefulness of life</b>	<b>Satisfaction with life</b>

***Place of 'eudaimonic' happiness in this scheme***

Notions of 'eudaimonic' happiness are more diverse and describe a spectrum of mental traits rather than one particular mental state. The focus is typically on life-abilities in the top-right quadrant of Figure1, but meanings that fall in the bottom quadrants of 'usefulness of life' and 'satisfaction with life' are often also included.

<b>Livability of environment</b>	<b>Life-ability of the person</b>
<b>Usefulness of life</b>	<b>Satisfaction with life</b>

**2.2 Four kinds of satisfaction**

'Hedonic' happiness is defined as 'satisfaction with life and this brings us to the question of what 'satisfaction' is precisely. This is also a word that can be interpreted in multiple ways, the particular meaning typically depending on the context in which the word is used. Again we can elucidate these meaning using a simple scheme. Scheme 2 is based on two distinctions; vertically between satisfaction with 'parts' of life versus

satisfaction with life 'as-a-whole', and horizontally between 'passing' satisfaction and 'enduring' satisfaction. These two bi-partitions again yield a four-fold taxonomy.

Figure 2:

***Four kinds of satisfaction***

	<i>Passing</i>	<i>Enduring</i>
<i>Part of life</i>	<b>Pleasure</b>	<b>Part-satisfaction</b>
<i>Life-as-a-whole</i>	<b>Top-experience</b>	<b>Life-satisfaction</b>

Source: Veenhoven 2017b

*Pleasures*

Passing satisfaction with a part of life is called 'pleasure'. Pleasures can be sensory, such as a glass of good wine, or mental, such as the reading of this text. The idea that we should maximize such satisfactions is called 'hedonism'.

*Part-satisfactions*

Enduring satisfaction with a part of life is referred to as 'part-satisfaction'. Such satisfactions can concern a domain of life, such as working-life, and aspects of life, such as its variety. Sometimes the word happiness is used for such part-satisfactions, in particular for satisfaction with one's career.

*Top-experience*

Passing satisfaction can be about life-as-a-whole, in particular when the experience is intense and 'oceanic'. This kind of satisfaction is usually referred to as a 'top-experience'. When poets write about happiness, they usually describe an experience of this kind. Likewise, use the word happiness in a religious context sometimes refer to mystical ecstasy. Another word for this type of satisfaction is 'Enlightenment'.

*Life-satisfaction*

Enduring satisfaction with one's life-as-a-whole is called 'life-satisfaction' and also commonly referred to as 'happiness'. This is the kind of satisfaction Bentham seems to have had in mind when he described happiness as the 'sum of pleasures and pains'. Elsewhere I have delineated this concept in more detail and defined it as 'the overall appreciation of one's life-as-a-whole' (Veenhoven 1984, 2000a).

***Place of 'hedonic' happiness in this scheme***

A common philosophical objection against the greatest happiness principle holds that 'happiness' is mere 'pleasure' and as such not of great moral value. This classic objection is echoed by contemporary positive psychologists such as Seligman's



(2002) statement on the Pleasant Life as “consisting in having as many pleasures as possible and having the skills to amplify the pleasures”. In this argumentation happiness placed in the left top-quadrant of figure 2, while evidently the greatest happiness principle is about enduring satisfaction with one’s life as a whole as depicted in the bottom-right quadrant of Figure 2.

<b>Pleasure</b>	<b>Part-satisfaction</b>
<b>Top-experience</b>	<b>Life-satisfaction</b>

***Place of ‘eudaimonic’ happiness in this scheme***

Although ‘eudaimonic’ happiness is about life-abilities in the first place (right-top quadrant in Figure 1), the notion is sometimes also used for particular satisfactions. One of these is ‘flow’, a passing pleasurable experience (left top-quadrant in Figure 2) which sometimes peaks in a top-experience (left-bottom quadrant in Figure 2). Satisfaction with parts of life is also found in notions of ‘eudaimonic happiness, in particular satisfaction with oneself and perceived meaningfulness of one’s life. Life-satisfaction is also included in some descriptions of ‘eudaimonic happiness’.

<b>Pleasure</b>	<b>Part-satisfaction</b>
<b>Top-experience</b>	<b>Life-satisfaction</b>

**2.3 Hedonic happiness the most distinct**

‘Hedonic happiness’ in the sense of life-satisfaction is clearly a more distinct concept than ‘eudaimonic happiness’. Hedonic happiness denotes one particular phenomenon; the subjective enjoyment of one’s life as-a-whole, whereas notions of ‘eudaimonic happiness’ cover syndromes of various related mental phenomena of both objective and subjective natures. Consequently, there is no academic consensus on a definition of ‘eudaimonic happiness’ and the attempt by the authors of this book to agree on a common definition has failed.

In terms of Blumer (1954: 7) ‘hedonic happiness’ is a *definitive concept*, which refers precisely to what is common to a class of objects, while ‘eudaimonic happiness’ is a *sensitizing concept*, which indicates a global direction of where to look. As such ‘hedonic happiness’ is more useful as a moral guide than ‘eudaimonic happiness’, ‘hedonic happiness’ denotes a goal, ‘eudaimonic happiness a direction’.

**3 MEASURABILITY  
of ‘hedonic’ and ‘eudaimonic’ happiness**

'Hedonic happiness' and 'eudaimonic happiness' are both assessed using self-reports. This method fits hedonic happiness better than eudaimonic happiness

### 3.1 Measures of hedonic happiness

As hedonic happiness is a thing we have on our mind, we can measure it using questions. That is, simply by asking people how much they enjoy their life-as-a-whole. Questions on happiness can be posed in various contexts; clinical interviews, life-review questionnaires and survey interviews. The questions can be posed in different ways; directly or indirectly, and using single or multiple questions. A commonly used single question reads: Taking all together, how satisfied are you with your life as-a-whole these days? Please rate on this 10-step scale where 1 stands for 'very dissatisfied' and 10 for 'very satisfied'. All measures that have passed a test on face-validity are listed in the collection 'Measures of Happiness' of the World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven 2019b) Though these measures are *valid* in the sense that they tap how much respondents like the life they live, they are not very *precise* (reliable), the same level of happiness may be rated 6 by one person and 7 by another. However, such inaccuracies balance in large samples and are therefore no great problem in assessing the happiness of the 'greatest number' of people. A recent review of these techniques can be found in Veenhoven (2017b).

### 3.2 Measures of eudaimonic happiness

Eudaimonic happiness is also measured using self-reports, always in response to multiple questions. Examples of such inventories are the 'Flourishing Scale' (Diener et al 2010) and the 'PERMA scale' (Bulter & Kern 2016).

There are three major problems with these measures, all of which are a consequence of the concept aimed at. One, the greatest problem, is in the technique of self-report, which can only be used to measure *subjective* states of mind, while the concept of positive mental health is basically about thriving in an *objective* sense, such as the 'true perception of reality' in the above-mentioned list of Jahoda.

Two, even if the concept of eudaimonic happiness is narrowed to how well people *think* they thrive, there is still the problem of selecting among the many strengths ever mentioned as being part of 'eudaimonic happiness' and the weighing of these strengths.

Three, weighing is particularly problematic because the functionality of strengths is contingent on the individual and their situations, for instance, a future orientation is more useful in young adulthood than on one's deathbed.

### 3.3 Hedonic happiness the best measurable

Although there are limitations to the measurement of hedonic happiness, hedonic happiness is better measurable than eudaimonic happiness. Consequently, a body of statistical knowledge on hedonic happiness has developed, most of which is gathered in the World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven 2019). This wealth of

quantitative information is available for finding ways to greater hedonic happiness. No such evidence base is available for eudaimonic happiness and is unlikely to become available given the above-mentioned problems of conceptualization and measurement.

### 3 INDICATIVITY FOR WIDER GOOD of 'hedonic' and 'eudaimonic' happiness

Hedonic happiness typically signals wider 'thriving'. Does this also apply for eudaimonic happiness?

#### **Functions of hedonic happiness**

In assessing how satisfied we are with our life, we draw on two sources of information, 1) how well we feel most of the time and 2) to what degree we perceive that life brings us what we want from it. I refer to these sub-assessments as 'components' of (hedonic) happiness and called them respectively *hedonic level of affect* (affective component) and *contentment* (cognitive component). I assume that each of these components serves an orientation function, hedonic level of affect indicating to what extent our *needs* are being met and contentment the realization of *wants*. I further assume that the affective component dominates in the overall evaluation of life, and thus that life-satisfaction depends more on the gratification of needs than the realization of wants. This theory is depicted in figure 3. Recent evidence for this theory is provided in Kainulainen et al. (2018).

#### *Functions of affective experience*

Biological functions are evidently designed to signal that things are good or bad for us. Specific affects are linked to specific needs, e.g. anxiety to the need for safety. Mood functions as a meta-signal and indicates how well we are doing on the whole. Feeling good means that all lights are on green and that we can go ahead, while feeling bad means that there is something wrong and that we should check what that is. This affective signal mechanism seems to exist in all higher animals and its neural basis is found in the evolutionary eldest parts of the human brain.

#### *Function of cognitive evaluation*

Automatic signal systems have their limitations, which are partly compensated by human reason. We can estimate how well we feel over longer periods and we can to some extent detect affective signal failure, e.g. when we feel depressed, but know that nothing is wrong. Moreover, we can also evaluate life cognitively, comparing life-as-it-is with a standard of how-life-should be.

Taken together this means that *subjective happiness* typically signals *objective thriving*. There is good evidence for this theory, one piece of evidence is that happy people function better; they tend to be more productive and have better relations. Another piece of evidence is that they live longer. Elsewhere I have reviewed the

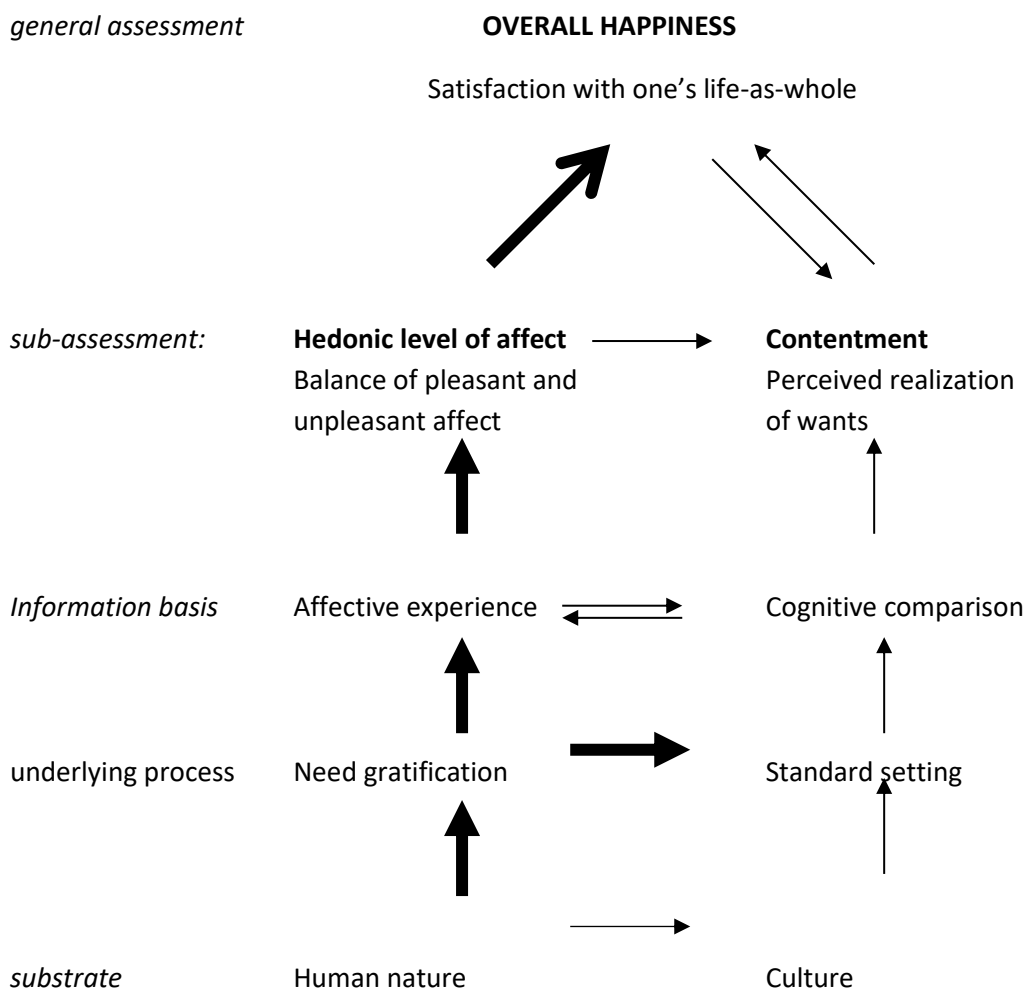
evidence in more detail (Veenhoven 1988, 2008).

In this perspective hedonic happiness is not only desirable for its own sake, but also for what it denotes. Policies that aim at greater happiness of this kind, produce not just more life-satisfaction, but importantly, also foster wider human thriving.

### Difference with eudaimonic happiness

The mental traits denoted as 'eudaimonic happiness' do not 'indicate' *wider thriving* but 'signify' *particular kinds of thriving*. They do not *infer* thriving from mental experience, but axiomatically *define* some mental traits as well-functioning. As the focus is on mental functioning, physical functioning is not included. As such, hedonic happiness indicates a wider range of human flourishing, be it at the cost of less precision.

**Figure 3**  
Theory of how we assess how happy we are



#### 4 UNIVERSALITY of 'hedonic' and 'eudaimonic' happiness

'Hedonic' and 'eudaimonic' happiness are universal phenomena, in the sense that they apply to all conscious human beings. All humans typically form an opinion on how much they like the life they live (hedonic happiness). Likewise, all humans can be more or less autonomous and typically develop ideas on who they are and what they live for (eudaimonic happiness).

##### **Difference in applicability to non-thinking beings**

A difference exists in the case of human beings in which their cognitive consciousness is underdeveloped, such as in the case of babies, or those with severely damaged, such as in the case of dementia. These humans can feel good or bad, and hence their general level of affect can be assessed, even if they are not aware of that average level themselves. So, the affective component of hedonic happiness applies in these cases, but not the cognitive component, which is the least important element in hedonic happiness when looking at Figure 3. Notions of 'eudaimonic happiness' apply less well in these cases, in particular not when thought of as self-*perceived* competences, rather than *actual* competences, as is typically the case in the contemporary literature on eudaimonic happiness.

This difference is not trivial, if we aim at the greatest happiness for the greatest number, we cannot exclude the many humans with limited thinking capabilities. The core of the ethic is that we should not focus on our own happiness but on the happiness of everybody, Suggestions of

Likewise, most notions of eudaimonic happiness will not apply to animals, which cannot make cognitive appraisals such as a sense of meaning or identity. However, hedonic happiness does apply to animals, at least to 'higher' animals. Like in the case of human babies, animals can feel good or bad and their balance of 'pleasures' and pains' is measurable to some extent and is indicative of the animal's flourishing (Webb et al 2018).

##### **Difference in universality of determinants**

A related question is to what extent conditions for happiness are universal and whether there is a difference in cultural specificity between 'hedonic' and 'eudaimonic' happiness.

My theory depicted in Figure 3 suggests that the conditions for hedonic happiness are largely universal, the main path being gratification of universal human needs (thick vertical arrows in the left hand causal path on Figure 3), while the more cultural dependent perceived meeting of standards is of less importance (thin vertical arrows at the right side causal path in Figure 3) and draw cultural standards of a good life heavily on innate needs (thick horizontal arrow, from needs to standards in Figure 3). I have discussed this matter in more detail in Veenhoven (2010a).

Variants of 'eudaimonic' happiness have also been linked to human needs, such as in Ryan & Deci's (2017) Self Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that psychological wellbeing consists of the gratification of three needs: for autonomy, competence and relatedness. Likewise, Steger (2018) sees wellbeing to be a result of meeting an innate need for meaning. Though, there is no doubt that there are universal human needs, it is difficult to say what these needs precisely are, in particular when it comes to psychological needs. In the case of 'meaning' I doubt that this is a real 'need', since we can apparently live well without a definite answer to the question of what our existence is good for. Following Wentholt (1975), I rather see the quest for meaning as a 'universal striving', that is, a by-product of human consciousness without much survival value in itself and which, for this reason, was not linked to the affective orientation system during human evolution.

Whatever human needs may be, 'hedonic happiness' is seen to draw on the gratification of *all human needs*, including physiological needs and the need for sex, while 'eudaimonic' happiness is equated with the gratification of *particular psychological needs*. So, the scope of hedonic happiness is again broader, but less precise.

### **Difference in universality of consequences**

If hedonic happiness *signals* that we are doing well, its affective component in particular, we can expect that happy people actually *do* better in life. This expectation is confirmed in a growing research literature, see the section 'Consequences of happiness' of the Bibliography of Happiness (Veenhoven 2019a). Well documented effects of hedonic happiness are, greater activity, creativity, sociability and better health, the latter effect resulting in a substantially longer life. Although most of the research presently available has been done in developed nations, these effects are likely to occur all over the world.

Similar effects are noted in the smaller literature on the effects of 'eudaimonic' happiness, e.g. greater longevity among people who see meaning in their life (Steger 2018). These effects may be mediated by 'hedonic' happiness, which is typically boosted by 'eudaimonic' happiness and it has not yet been established whether an independent effect of meaning on longevity exists. Even if this is the case, the fact remains that the notion of 'eudaimonic happiness' describes a set of competences that are particularly functional in modern western individualistic multiple-choice society. Positive self-attitudes and autonomic behavior fit less well to traditional collectivistic societies.

## **5 PUBLIC SUPPORT for 'hedonic' and 'eudaimonic' happiness**

The concept of 'hedonic happiness' is well-known, as noted above, all conscious

humans form an opinion on how much they like the life they live. This appears in the low rate of 'don't know' responses to questions about life-satisfaction in survey studies among the general public, typically less than 1 percent. Hedonic happiness is also highly valued; living a satisfying life is what most people want for themselves and their children. This appears in studies on what people think makes for a good life, in which life-satisfaction typically ranks top, e.g. Balestra et al. (2018).

The concept of 'eudaimonic' happiness has less public appeal; it is a professional idol, largely unknown to the public. Matters of 'character' are hardly mentioned in qualitative studies of what 'happiness' means. (e.g. BBC 2006).

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

Of the five criteria for a practicable moral guide considered here, 'hedonic happiness' scores better than 'eudaimonic happiness'. Hence, it is better not to go 'beyond' hedonic happiness and substitute 'eudaimonic' happiness for 'hedonic'. The best thing to do is still to aim at greater life-satisfaction for a greater number.

This is not to say that we should abandon 'eudaimonic' happiness. The capabilities denoted with this term are typically functional for achieving a satisfying life and have value in and of themselves. Hence the best moral lead would seem to be 'hedonic happiness plus'; that is, aim at greater hedonic happiness in the first place and additionally foster elements of 'eudaimonic happiness' when possible.

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