

HAPPINESS IN KANT AND ROUSSEAU

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I Theories of happiness. I begin by sketching three types of theories about happiness.

First, *hedonism* is the view that happiness fundamentally consists in a feeling of pleasure and/or the absence of pain. The word “pleasure” tends to bring to mind a sort of episodic, physical “buzz”. But I include among hedonists those who identify happiness with a prolonged, pleasurable mental state. I interpret Rousseau to be this type of sophisticated hedonist².

Second, *desire theory* is the view, held by Kant, that happiness consists fundamentally in satisfying one’s desires³. It is important to see that, although hedonism and desire theory may appear similar and they both define happiness in terms of subjective states, they are nevertheless different accounts of what happiness consists in. According to hedonism, it may be possible to live a happy life in which some of your most important desires remain unsatisfied, for example because satisfying these desires would actually be less pleasurable or lead to more pain than their remaining unsatisfied. By contrast, according to desire theory a happy life may be quite unpleasant or even painful, provided that one’s important desires are satisfied.

Third, *objective goods theory* is the view that happiness consists in possessing certain objective goods or engaging in objectively worthwhile activities. Aristotle is an objective goods theorist because he holds that happiness consists primarily in the full development and exercise of the essentially human rational capacities, both practical and theoretical⁴. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle characterizes “the human good” as “activity of the soul in accord with virtue”, where virtue is understood as what enables something to exercise its function well⁵. Since, for

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² For sophisticated, contemporary discussion of hedonism, see FELDMAN, Fred: *Pleasure and the Good Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; and *What is This Thing Called Happiness?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

³ For sophisticated, contemporary discussion of desire theory, see GRIFFIN, James: *Well-Being*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. See also Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984, p. 493 ff.

⁴ NE, I.7-10. For sophisticated, contemporary discussion of objective goods theory, see KRAUT, Richard: *What is Good and Why?* Harvard, 2007.

⁵ NE, I.7 (1098a17-18). All quotations from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* are from the Irwin translation.

Aristotle, the human function is “activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason”, it follows that the human good or happiness consists in activity that requires reason and is done well – that is, in accord with virtue or excellence⁶ –. This requires developing and exercising both practical virtues of character such as bravery and temperance, and theoretical virtues of thought such as wisdom and prudence⁷. Given human nature, possessing and exercising these virtues – thus, the full development and exercise of practical and theoretical reason – is objectively good for us and essential to human happiness. And Aristotle also adds that happiness requires adequate external goods like friendship and wealth in a complete life⁸.

To distinguish objective goods theory from both hedonism and desire theory, consider again some cases in which these theories yield different verdicts. An objective goods theorist could hold that a happy life does not necessarily contain the most pleasure or desire satisfaction. Moreover, hedonists and desire theorists can maintain that happiness is possible even without some set of objectively good states or activities. But even in cases about which these theories yield the same verdict, they do so for different reasons. Aristotle, for example, holds that philosophy is the most pleasant activity and that a virtuous person fortunate enough to be able to spend much of his life doing philosophy will live a most pleasant life⁹. But what makes this person’s life happy, according to Aristotle, is not primarily the pleasure he takes in it, but the objective value of the activity in which he takes pleasure¹⁰. By contrast, if a hedonist were to agree that the philosophical life is the happiest, then this would be primarily on the grounds that it is the most pleasant life and would not depend on claims about the objective worth of doing philosophy, independently of its tendency to produce pleasure.

Again, Aristotle may hold that a happy person will not have any (significant) unsatisfied desires, since he believes that exercising virtue is most important and desires this more than anything; and because he has adequate external goods to satisfy whatever moderate desires he has for these¹¹. By contrast, a desire theorist would agree that this person is happy but could also hold that someone who desires only objectively worthless things, and satisfies these desires, is equally happy – because what contributes to one’s happiness, for the desire theorist, is not the objective worth of what one desires, but rather only the satisfaction of one’s desires, regardless of what they are desires for. So, for a desire theorist, philosophy would contribute to your happiness only if and because you desire to do philosophy, or you have some other desire that philosophy satisfies, independently of claims about the objective worth of philosophy.

III. Happiness in Rousseau. With these distinctions on the table, I turn now to Rousseau. It may seem controversial that I have characterized Rousseau as a kind of hedonist. In fact

⁶ NE, I.7 (1098a7-8).

⁷ NE, I.13; II-V; and VI.1-7, 13.

⁸ See especially 1101a15-17: “[...] the happy person is the one whose activities accord with complete virtue, with an adequate supply of external goods, [...] for a complete life”.

⁹ NE, X.7 (1177a24-27).

¹⁰ Not every kind of pleasure is good, for Aristotle, but only pleasure in objectively valuable activities (or pleasure that completes those activities) – that is, activities that accord with reason and exercise some virtue(s) (NE, X.3-5).

¹¹ This interpretation of Aristotle is defended by KRAUT, Richard: “Two Conceptions of Happiness”, *The Philosophical Review*, LXXXVIII, No. 2 (April 1979), 170-171.

Rousseau's view of happiness is very complex and has elements that resemble the other two theories of happiness in some respects. Let me begin by looking at some of these elements.

Near the beginning of Book II of *Emile*, Rousseau explicitly offers an account of what happiness consists in. He initially employs hedonistic language to distinguish between what he calls "absolute happiness", which is not possible in this life but only in an afterlife, and "man's felicity on earth":

We do not know what absolute happiness or unhappiness is. Everything is mixed in this life; in it one tastes no pure sentiment [...]. The affections of our souls, as well as the states of our bodies, are in a continual flux. [...] The happiest is he who suffers the least pain; the unhappiest is he who feels the least pleasure. Always more suffering than enjoyment; this relation between the two is common to all men. Man's felicity on earth is, hence, only a negative condition; the smallest number of ills he can suffer ought to constitute its measure.¹²

This passage seems to imply that absolute happiness would be a pure sentiment of pleasure, although in this life minimizing pain is the closest we can come to this. In both cases, happiness is understood in terms of pleasure and pain – that is, hedonistically.

But immediately after this, Rousseau appears, briefly, to translate this account into the language of desire theory. Pleasures and pains correlate with desires, he says: "Every feeling of pain is inseparable from the desire to be delivered from it; every idea of pleasure is inseparable from the desire to enjoy it; every desire supposes privation, and all sensed privations are painful". Therefore, Rousseau infers, the same substantive view of happiness can be expressed by saying that absolute happiness (in a "being endowed with senses") consists in equality between one's desires and faculties, while unhappiness is a disproportion between desires and faculties. In other words, happiness consists, if not exactly in desire satisfaction, then in the feeling that one is strong enough to satisfy one's desires; while unhappiness consists in the feeling that one is too weak to satisfy one's needs and desires¹³.

The next paragraph adds one further element to Rousseau's account, however, which makes it quite clear that he is not a desire theorist. "[T]he road of true happiness", Rousseau now says, lies

not precisely in diminishing our desires, for if they were beneath our power, a part of our faculties would remain idle, and we would not enjoy our whole being. Neither is it in extending our whole faculties, for if, proportionate to them, our desires were more extended, we would as a result only become unhappier. But it is in diminishing the excess of the desires over the faculties and putting power and will in perfect equality. It is only then that, with all the powers in action, the soul will nevertheless remain peaceful and that man will be well-ordered.¹⁴

In other words, Rousseau now claims that "the road to true happiness" has two components: 1) achieving equality between our desires and faculties, and 2) putting all of our faculties into action. A desire theorist could make the first claim but not the second. Rousseau

¹² ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques: *Emile or On Education [Emile]*, trans. Allan Bloom, Basic Books, 1979, 80.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

does not say that leaving faculties undeveloped would make us unhappy only if we felt it as a privation and desired to put these faculties into action. Rather, he says that this would make us unhappy because, with idle faculties, “we would not enjoy our whole being” – and this would be the case even if we were entirely ignorant of the fact that we have undeveloped faculties and lacked any desire to develop them. For example, Rousseau’s savage in the state of nature has no idea of the rational powers that lie dormant in his nature, and no desire to develop them; but on this account, the savage lacks true happiness because his undeveloped faculties render him unable to “enjoy his whole being”¹⁵. So Rousseau cannot be a desire theorist. He must be either a hedonist or an objective goods theorist, depending on whether putting all of one’s faculties into action, or enjoying one’s whole being, is more fundamental to his account of happiness.

It is not clear that *Emile*, considered apart from Rousseau’s other works, provides enough textual evidence to attribute one but not the other of these two views to Rousseau. The passage I quoted earlier supports treating him as a hedonist in *Emile*, but there are other passages in which he sounds instead like an objective goods theorist, some of which I will address in a moment. In a later work, however, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Rousseau clearly commits himself to a version of hedonism. Although this may reflect the development of his views about happiness, I suggest that his account in the *Reveries* not only is broadly compatible with *Emile* but also helps to impose coherence on the account of happiness in *Emile*.

In the Fifth Walk of the *Reveries*, Rousseau repeats the claim, familiar from *Emile*, that “supreme felicity” is not possible “here-below”, on earth, where “[e]verything is in continual flux”¹⁶. In *Emile* Rousseau took the ubiquity of flux in this life to imply that happiness on earth is only a negative condition in which pain is minimized but we do not experience pure pleasure. In the *Reveries*, however, Rousseau infers from the ubiquity of flux on earth, not that we can experience no positive pleasure in this life, but rather that we cannot achieve a permanent state of pleasure. The pleasures of this life, some of which are sweet and intense, are all transitory and fleeting. But “the happiness for which my heart longs”, Rousseau says, “is in no way made up of fleeting instants, but rather [is] a simple and permanent state which has nothing intense in itself, but whose duration increases its charm to the point that I finally find supreme felicity in it”¹⁷. In this permanent state of happiness, Rousseau continues, one would enjoy nothing other than what he calls the “sentiment of existence”, which would fill the soul completely, “without any other sentiment of deprivation or enjoyment, pleasure or pain, desire or fear”¹⁸. We can achieve this permanent state of happiness only in the afterlife. But Rousseau claims that it is

¹⁵ “This transition from the state of nature to the civil state produces a most remarkable change in man by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and endowing his actions with the morality they previously lacked. Only then, when the voice of duty succeeds physical impulsion and right succeeds appetite, does man, who until then had looked only to himself, see himself forced to act on other principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations. Although in this state he deprives himself of several advantages he has from nature, he gains such great advantages in return, his faculties are exercised and developed, his ideas enlarged, his sentiments ennobled, his entire soul is elevated to such an extent, that if the abuses of this new condition did not often degrade him to beneath the condition he has left, he should ceaselessly bless the happy moment which wrested him from it forever, and out of a stupid and bounded animal made an intelligent being and a man” (*Of the Social Contract*, Book I, Chapter 8. In *Rousseau: The Social Contract and other late political writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, Cambridge: 1997, p. 53.

¹⁶ ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques: *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker [Reveries]*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth, Hackett: 1992, p. 68. See also p. 122.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Reveries*, p. 68-69.

possible to enjoy the same sentiment of existence even in this life, albeit not permanently, if one manages “to spurn all the sensual and earthly impressions which incessantly come to distract us from it and to trouble its sweetness here-below”¹⁹. So, according to the *Reveries*, happiness in this life (or the closest we can come to it) has both positive and negative components: the positive component is enjoying the sentiment of existence, and the negative component is spurning the fleeting, sensual pleasures that distract us from the sentiment of existence.

Rousseau therefore distinguishes between two kinds of pleasures: sensual pleasures that are fleeting and do not fulfill us because they are always outweighed by pains; and pleasure in the sentiment of existence, which does fulfill us because it is positive and can be permanent (at least in the afterlife). The *Reveries* leaves no room for doubt that Rousseau understands the sentiment of existence as a kind of pleasurable feeling. A sentiment is a feeling, and Rousseau repeatedly characterizes the sentiment of existence as a pleasurable feeling – at one point glossing it as “feel[ing one’s] existence with pleasure”²⁰. But to understand how Rousseau intends to distinguish this fulfilling kind of pleasure in the sentiment of existence from the other, unfulfilling kind of pleasure, we must turn back to *Emile*. The sentiment of existence, Rousseau says in Book I of *Emile*, comes from the active use of our powers and faculties: “To live is not to breathe; it is to act; it is to make use of our organs, our senses, our faculties, of all the parts of ourselves which give us the sentiment of our existence. The man who has lived the most is not he who has counted the most years but he who has most felt life”²¹. By contrast, the sensual kind of pleasures that do not fulfill us come from the passive satisfaction of desires and passions²². I will return to these passive, sensual pleasures shortly. First let me note some connections with Aristotle that are suggested by Rousseau’s view that the active use of our powers gives us a sentiment of existence.

Both Rousseau and Aristotle hold that the kind of pleasure that characterizes the happy life is pleasure in the active use of our powers. But Rousseau’s account may be described as more subjectivist than Aristotle’s in two respects. First, pleasurable feelings are subjective states, and Rousseau’s hedonist framework treats them as fundamental, while Aristotle does not. But this is a purely theoretical distinction without any substantive difference, because Rousseau and Aristotle agree that happiness requires this pleasurable subjective state: for Rousseau happiness consists (positively) in the feeling of pleasure that is caused by exercising our powers, whereas for Aristotle it consists in the exercise of our powers which causes this feeling of pleasure.

¹⁹ *Reveries*, p. 69.

²⁰ *Reveries*, p. 67. On p. 69-71 alone Rousseau describes the sentiment of existence eight times as a form of pleasure or enjoyment, not including his repeated praise of its charm.

²¹ *Emile*, p. 42.

²² Rousseau has the Savoyard vicar say: “In meditating on the nature of man, I believed I discovered in it two distinct principles; one of which raised him to the study of eternal truths, to the love of justice and moral beauty, and to the regions of the intellectual world whose contemplation is the wise man’s delight; while the other took him basely into himself, subjected him to the empire of the senses and to the passions which are their ministers, and by means of these hindered all that the sentiment of the former inspired in him. In sensing myself carried away and caught up in the combat of these two contrary notions, I said to myself, ‘No, man is not one. I want and I do not want; I sense myself enslaved and free at the same time. I see the good, I love it, and I do the bad. I am active when I listen to reason, passive when my passions carry me away; and my worst torment, when I succumb, is to sense that I could have resisted’ (*Emile*, p. 278-279).

A second difference between them is more substantive, however. There is more flexibility in the kinds of lives that can be happy for Rousseau than there is for Aristotle. Aristotle holds that only one kind of ideal life is happy: the philosophical life, led by a virtuous man blessed with adequate external goods, including living in and participating in the governance of a well-run city-state. But Rousseau does not recognize only one ideal life, because he denies that human development has any (known) natural limits²³. For him, happiness in this life comes in degrees: we are happy to the extent that we enjoy the sentiment of existence, but it may be possible for us to be happier by living in a different way that enables us to enjoy the sentiment of existence more. The closest Rousseau comes to proposing an ideal life is to offer several ideals, each of which is tailored to a specific social context (or lack thereof): the savage in a state of nature is happy in one way, the Roman citizen in another, and Rousseau the solitary outcast in yet another way. Each of these is an ideal of sorts that portrays the kind of life that best enables one to enjoy the sentiment of existence within a given social context. But none of these ideals is appropriate for us in modern society. Rather, Rousseau the social critic refers to these ideals to suggest ways that modern society could be reformed so that we can enjoy the sentiment of existence more fully. But to those of us living in modern society, as it is presently constituted, Rousseau offers a different ideal of the natural man in civil society, represented by *Emile*²⁴. So it turns out that Rousseau is like Aristotle after all in offering *us* a single ideal of the happy life.

But Rousseau's ideal does not give philosophy the central role in *Emile*'s education that Aristotle gives it in the happy life. When in *Emile* Rousseau discusses what he calls objective goods – by which he presumably means states or activities that enable one to enjoy the sentiment of existence, and perhaps that are necessary for it – he mentions strength, health, good witness of oneself, the (moral) virtues, love, and especially freedom, which he calls “the first of all goods”²⁵. But he does not mention philosophy or theoretical reasoning in this context. Indeed, in the *Reveries* Rousseau says of himself that “reflection tires and saddens me; thinking always was a painful and charmless occupation for me”²⁶. But it would be a mistake to conclude from this that Rousseau fails to give philosophical thought a key role in the ideal of the happy life that he offers for us. *Emile* does not give prominence to theoretical reasoning as a source of happiness because it is a book about educating children, and Rousseau believes that “purely speculative knowledge is hardly suitable for children”²⁷. It does not follow, however, that Rousseau disdains purely speculative knowledge as a source of happiness for adults. Indeed, when *Emile* strays from the topic of education, as in the Savoyard vicar's confession of faith, Rousseau calls “the study of eternal truths, [...] the love of justice and moral beauty, and [contemplation of] the regions of the intellectual world [...] the wise man's delight”²⁸. Rousseau's autobiographical reflection in the *Reveries* that he himself did not delight much in thinking is consistent with

²³ *Emile*, p. 62. See also the *Second Discourse*, in *The Discourses and other early political writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, 1997), 141.

²⁴ For discussion of these ideals, see REISERT, Joseph R.: *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: A Friend of Virtue* (Cornell, 2003), chapter 5, especially p. 134-140.

²⁵ *Emile*, p. 84. See also p. 81 and p. 324.

²⁶ *Reveries*, p. 91.

²⁷ *Emile*, p. 177.

²⁸ *Emile*, p. 278. See also p. 283 f.

this view if we interpret it as a confession that Rousseau is not a wise man, which in turn would be consistent with his confession earlier in the same work that he is not a virtuous man and is too weak to live together with others in society²⁹. But Rousseau denies that his own life provides an appropriate ideal for those of us who can and do live in modern society. The ideal he offers for us of the natural man in civil society, represented by Emile, is consistent with Aristotle's ideal in giving centrality to theoretical study as a positive source of happiness; although Rousseau does not go so far as to privilege knowledge over action³⁰.

Rousseau's main difference with Aristotle is his special emphasis on and account of sources of unhappiness that are unique to modern society, on account of which we have a greater need to remove sources of unhappiness than to seek out positive sources of happiness such as philosophy. Positive sources of the sentiment of existence are plentiful for us because the competitive rigors of modern society tend to develop our faculties to such a high degree. But the same conditions that promote the advanced development of our higher faculties also breed unnatural passions that enslave us and distract us from truly fulfilling pleasures. On Rousseau's account this problem originates in an unavoidable conflict that everyone in modern society experiences between our natural sentiments and the demands of society³¹. We have a natural passion of self-love (*amour-propre*), which drives us to compare ourselves with others in society and to see ourselves, through the eyes of others, as equal or superior to them³². But in modern society, prevailing social standards have come to place value on things that are not natural needs – such as wealth, status, and technology. We internalize these prevailing standards of comparison because of self-love, which through imagination transforms our passions and gives us new needs to meet or exceed these artificial standards. We thus come to identify happiness with the fleeting pleasure of satisfying unnatural needs. But this sort of “happiness” is almost entirely illusory. The desire for such happiness is better described as a need to avoid the unhappiness of seeing oneself as inferior to others. There is no stable and positive state of fulfillment to be found through comparing oneself to others according to shifting social standards that are not based on natural needs. Desires to compare favorably with others in this way, when satisfied, yield at best transitory pleasures that are quickly followed by new, stronger desires to maintain or improve that status, which are increasingly more difficult to satisfy, especially in a competitive social environment in which one person's success at being seen as superior to others motivates those others to redouble their efforts and come out on top next time.

²⁹ *Reveries*, p. 77, 83.

³⁰ Aristotle arrives at his view that the happy life is the philosophical life by initially defining happiness as the highest good and then arguing that theoretical study of what is eternal and unchanging (i.e., philosophical activity in that sense) has all the characteristics of the highest good, because it is the most complete end, choiceworthy for its own sake, self-sufficient, and uniquely human (NE, 1.7 and 10.7). Rousseau does not follow this procedure, perhaps in part because he does not hold that happiness is the highest good – he thinks that virtue is the highest good, or some combination of virtue and happiness, where these are treated as conceptually distinct from one another. (See COOPER, Laurence D.: *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life*, Penn State: 1999, 26 ff.). But he does hold that happiness is a pleasurable psychological state that has many of the very same characteristics that Aristotle requires of the highest good: the sentiment of existence is complete since we desire nothing more and want to remain in that state permanently, it is desirable for its own sake, it is self-sufficient in the sense that it does not depend too much on external goods, and we must engage our uniquely human capacities (if not only these capacities) in order to experience it.

³¹ *Emile*, p. 40 f., 213, 288, 291 ff., 317.

³² For discussion of the desire to be the best, see NEUHOUSER, Frederick: *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love* (Oxford, 2008), p. 59 ff.

This is why Rousseau holds that the path to true happiness requires concentrating above all on the negative task of avoiding the unnatural passions formed through social comparison under the influence of self-love, and spurning the false pleasures of satisfying such passions. But the same social conditions that make these unnatural passions so difficult for us to avoid also force us to develop other natural powers, sentiments, and passions that can be positive sources of true happiness for us. These include reason, moral sentiments (conscience), and the passion of love. I have discussed how Rousseau regards theoretical reasoning as a positive source of happiness. He also holds that moral goodness and love are essential to our happiness. Moral goodness is essential because, without it, we will feel pangs of conscience and be incapable of self-respect; and because satisfaction with ourselves for acting morally is also a positive source of pleasure. Virtue is essential to our happiness for the same reason that Rousseau describes freedom as “the first of all goods”: because virtue involves the freedom of self-governance, which is necessary to control and satisfy our desires, as well as being a positive source of pleasure in the practical use of our rational powers³³.

What virtue and love have in common is that both are essential to the happiness of weak beings like us. But they differ in that virtue is the strength to overcome our weaknesses, to govern our needs, and to be self-sufficient; while love involves irreducible dependence on others³⁴. Rousseau calls love “the supreme happiness of life” because, at least in modern societies, human beings unavoidably depend on one another and share “common needs” that “unite us by interest”, as well as “common miseries” that “unite us by affection”³⁵. The ultimate reason why absolute happiness is not possible for us in modern society – even with the advanced development of our powers, and even if we manage to avoid unnatural passions and their illusory pleasures – is that “the source of true happiness is within us”; but in modern society it is impossible to avoid depending on others³⁶. Even Emile, with his exemplary education, develops a strong passion of love for Sophie and fails to avoid forming attachments that make his happiness depend on others. I take this to mean that, on Rousseau’s view, we have no choice but to live outside ourselves or to depend on others to some extent for our happiness in this life, but we do have a choice about the form our dependence on others takes. Either we live outside ourselves by chasing an illusory happiness defined by unfulfilling social comparisons; or we live outside ourselves by forming attachments based on the moral sentiments and the

³³ *Emile*, p. 84. See also 81 and 324. In the *Reveries*, Rousseau says that “virtue consists in overcoming [our inclinations] when duty commands in order to do what duty prescribes” (77). And in *Emile*, he says that “the virtuous man [...] knows how to conquer his affections; for then he follows his reason and his conscience; he does his duty; he keeps himself in order, and [he alone is] really free” (444 f.).

³⁴ *Emile*, p. 444.

³⁵ *Emile*, p. 327, 221. Even in the *Reveries*, Rousseau the solitary outcast indicates that love is necessary to complete his own happiness by recalling in the final, unfinished Tenth Walk – written shortly before he died – his youthful love affair with Mme de Warens.

³⁶ *Reveries*, p. 13. This is also how Rousseau distinguishes between us and the savage in a state of nature: “the Savage lives within himself” – although this is not enough to qualify him for true happiness, on account of his undeveloped faculties – but the “sociable man, always outside himself, is capable of living only in the opinion of others and, so to speak, derives the sentiment of existence solely from their judgment” (*Discourse on Inequality*, p. 187).

natural passion of love, both of which enable us to feel the sentiment of our existence *in* others, by identifying our interests and uniting our affections³⁷.

So Rousseau is a kind of hedonist who holds that virtue, the development of rational powers, and love of others are necessary for becoming happy, insofar as it is possible to become happy in this life. Having established this, I turn now to Kant, who – I will argue – holds similar views but expresses them in terms of a different subjectivist conception of happiness.

IV. Happiness in Kant. It is not controversial to claim that Kant holds a desire theory of happiness. He says repeatedly and consistently in different works that happiness, on his view, is the idea of a state in which all of one's inclinations are satisfied, over the entire course of one's life – where an inclination for Kant is a habitual desire³⁸.

If this much is uncontroversial, however, it is more controversial to claim that, on Kant's view, certain objective goods, especially virtue, promote one's own happiness. This may seem surprising in part because Kant repeats nothing more frequently in his texts on moral philosophy than that both the moral law itself and the motive to act morally cannot be derived (directly or indirectly) from an interest in one's own happiness; rather, they have an a priori basis in pure reason, which must be distinguished with the utmost precision from the satisfaction of sensible inclinations and desires. Nevertheless, it would be entirely consistent with that view to hold that acting from a purely moral motive, without taking account of any interest in one's own happiness, can shape one's sensible nature in a way that tends to enhance one's prospects of becoming happy. The key to Kant's version of this view, I will argue, is the Rousseauian idea that the content of our desires and what we take pleasure in is not entirely fixed by our nature, but rather can be shaped both through social comparison and by moral ideas. Becoming virtuous for Kant has the effect

³⁷ “[W]hen the strength of an expansive soul makes me identify myself with my fellow, and I feel that I am, so to speak, in him, it is in order not to suffer that I do not want him to suffer. I am interested in him for love of myself, and the reason for the precept [of doing to others as we would have them do unto us] is in nature itself, which inspires in me the desire of my well-being in whatever place I feel my existence. [...] Love of men derived from love of self is the principle of human justice” (*Emile*, 235n). This is also how Rousseau characterizes the sweet, natural sentiment of pity, which transports us out of ourselves and into the suffering of others (221 ff.). The reason that forming attachments based on love or moral sentiment does not bring absolute happiness is that it makes our happiness depend in part on factors outside of our control, and in this life – where everything is in flux – this amounts to courting disappointment. Moreover, it is possible for duty and happiness to conflict, and in that case duty takes precedence. In *Emile*, this conflict takes the form of the adult *Emile*'s duties to his fatherland that may call him away from his rustic, family life with Sophie (*Emile*, 473). Since even the truest happiness possible for us in modern society thus depends in part on fortune and may be taken away from us by factors beyond our control, Rousseau has two final recommendations regarding the sort of attitudes that should accompany our pursuit of happiness. To avoid disappointment, we should practice a kind of psychological detachment when misfortune strikes. Realizing that happiness depends on attachments to people and things that are not in our control, when fortune takes these (and thus part of our happiness) from us, we can minimize our loss by eventually moving on (*Emile*, 472). But Rousseau tempers this stoic recommendation with another one that he puts in the mouth of the Savoyard vicar, who asks: “what felicity is sweeter than sensing that one is ordered in a system in which everything is good?” (292). Note that (266) the point of the vicar's speech, he says, is to explain why he's happy and the true value of life). In other words, for Rousseau this limited detachment is advisable only if it is accompanied by faith that – in the end, at least in the afterlife – everything necessary for our happiness that we cannot secure for ourselves will be provided.

³⁸ MS AA 06: 212. For example, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant says: “Happiness is the satisfaction of all of our inclinations (*extensively*, with regard to their manifoldness, as well as *intensively*, with regard to degree, and also *protempore*, with regard to duration)” (A 806/B 834). In the *Groundwork*, he calls happiness “complete well-being and satisfaction with one's condition” and says that the idea of happiness sums up the entire satisfaction of all of our needs and inclinations (AA 04: 393, 399, 405). The *Critique of Practical Reason* defines happiness as “the state of a rational being in the world in the whole of whose existence *everything goes according to his wish and will*” (AA 05: 124. See also 5:22). See also, for example, *Critique of Practical Reason*, AA 05: 22; and KU AA 05: 208, 430 f., 434. For a different interpretation, according to which Kant is instead a hedonist about the nature of happiness, see MORRISSON, Iain P. D.: *Kant and the Role of Pleasure in Moral Action*. Ohio University Press, 2008, 114.

of shaping our desires so that more and more they become desires for developing our rational capacities and promoting the happiness of others. Shaping our desires in this way enhances our own prospects of becoming happy because it puts our happiness more (but never entirely) within our own control; and because, insofar as our happiness remains dependent on factors outside of our control, it makes our happiness compatible with the happiness of others and so removes one of the chief obstacles to our happiness.

Consider first the evidence that Kant agrees with Rousseau that social comparison can shape our desires. In the *Idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan aim*, Kant claims that nature's aim for the human species is not our happiness but the development of our reason, which – following Rousseau – he defines as the essentially limitless ability to extend our powers beyond natural instinct³⁹. The means nature employs for achieving this end, Kant says, is social antagonism or “the *unsociable sociability* of human beings”, which he characterizes as a combination of two opposing natural tendencies: first, the natural inclination to enter into society and to become socialized; and, second, “the unsociable property of willing to direct everything so as to get [our] own way”⁴⁰. The combination of these two opposed forces in human nature “awakens all the powers of the human being, brings him to overcome his propensity to indolence, and, driven by ambition, tyranny, and greed, to obtain for himself a rank among his fellows, whom he cannot *stand*, but also cannot *leave alone*”⁴¹. Kant again defines reason as the ability to extend our powers beyond instinct in the *Conjectural beginning of human history*, which mentions Rousseau explicitly; but in this essay he adds that “it is a property of reason that with the assistance of the power of imagination it can concoct desires not only *without* a natural drive directed to them but even *contrary to it*”⁴². The way reason creates new desires is by making comparisons between objects of existing desires and other, similar objects, for which we then develop new desires. From here it is but a short step to using reason to make social comparisons that produce new desires in us, and then to deliberately manipulating the desires of both oneself and others in order “to influence others to respect [...] us (through the concealment of that which could incite low esteem)”⁴³. The result in our current state of development is that now “restless reason [...] drives [us] irresistibly toward the development of the capacities placed in [us...] to take upon [ourselves] the toil [we hate] and run after the bauble [we despise...], on account of all those trivialities [we are] even more afraid to lose”⁴⁴.

So when Kant defines happiness as the idea of a state in which all of our inclinations are satisfied, he is talking at least in part about desires that are formed through social comparison – hence desires that may not reflect, and may even conflict with, our natural needs. The nature of human reason itself (i.e., our unsociable sociability) drives us to understand our happiness in this way, which has the effect of making happiness essentially impossible for us, at least in this life. This is what Kant means by calling happiness an idea: on his view ideas can never be

³⁹ IaG AA 08: 18 f.

⁴⁰ IaG AA 08: 20 f.

⁴¹ IaG AA 08: 21.

⁴² MAM AA 08: 111.

⁴³ MAM AA 08: 113.

⁴⁴ MAM AA 08: 115.

fully instantiated in the sensible world⁴⁵. It would be impossible to satisfy all of our desires if any of them conflicted with one another, and Kant holds that desires formed through social comparison sometimes conflict with our natural drives⁴⁶. Moreover, we do not even have a determinate idea of what would satisfy all of our desires, because our desires change and we could not know everything we will ever desire over the course of our entire lives, and because our finite minds could never calculate what would satisfy all of these desires even if we knew them and even if they were all mutually consistent⁴⁷. But despite this, our nature drives us all the same to chase after this illusory idea of happiness, because it stimulates the development of our rational capacities, and nature's aim is not our happiness but the development of reason in the human species as a whole.

This sounds very similar to what Rousseau says about seeking happiness through unfulfilling pleasures based on social comparisons. But for Rousseau that is only one conception of happiness – and a false one – which he urges us to replace with another, true conception of happiness based on fulfilling pleasure in the sentiment of existence. Rousseau understands both of these conceptions of happiness hedonistically, but he distinguishes the kinds and sources of pleasure at the root of each. I suggest that, although Kant uses a desire theory instead of hedonism, he too distinguishes two chief sources of the desires in whose satisfaction we may place our happiness. Besides desires based on natural drives, for Kant our default condition is to understand our happiness mainly in terms of satisfying desires formed through social comparison, as just described. But it is also possible to shape our desires by moral ideas; and becoming virtuous, which is not our default condition, has the effect that our desires become shaped progressively less by social comparisons and more by moral ideas.

In the earlier moral writings of Kant's critical period, such as the *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, he assumes that people think first about their own happiness and only later about morality. In the *Groundwork* he says that maxims arise from desires and inclinations with the cooperation of reason, by which he means that we initially formulate maxims in order to satisfy our desires, where a maxim is a subjective principle of action that says how we propose to act and why⁴⁸. Only later, after we have formulated maxims in this way, do we consider whether they are morally permissible⁴⁹. However, later, in the *Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant no longer assumes that people think about morality only after their own happiness. Instead, he claims that we have an ethical duty to set certain ends: specifically, the ends of perfecting oneself and promoting the happiness of others⁵⁰. Kant's claim that we have a duty to set these

⁴⁵ A 367/B 310 f. See Michael Rohlf, "The Ideas of Pure Reason", in: *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge: Paul Guyer, ed., 2010, 190-209.

⁴⁶ KU AA 05: 430. See also KpV AA 05: 118, where Kant says that happiness is impossible because satisfying desires only produces new desires.

⁴⁷ GMS AA 04: 399, 417 ff. ; *Critique of Practical Reason*, AA 05: 26.

⁴⁸ GMS AA 04: 427. See also *Critique of Practical Reason*, AA 05: 73 and 74. On maxims, see AA 04: 401n.

⁴⁹ We (should) decide by asking ourselves whether we can will those maxims as universal laws. In Kant's favorite example, a man "finds himself urged by need to borrow money" that he cannot repay; but since he knows that nobody will lend him money unless he promises to repay it, he formulates a maxim to tell a lying promise to repay money that he knows he will not repay (GMS AA 04: 402 f., 421 ff.). He formulates this maxim to satisfy his needs and only later stops to consider that it is not morally permissible because it cannot be willed as a universal law.

⁵⁰ TL AA 06: 385 ff.

two general ends means that we can and ought to formulate maxims to act in ways that aim at achieving these ends⁵¹. So now maxims do not necessarily arise from desires and inclinations, but can arise directly from the idea of an ethical duty⁵².

This difference between the *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, on the one hand, and the *Doctrine of Virtue*, on the other, may either reflect development in Kant's views on moral psychology in the interim, or it may instead reflect a change of emphasis on Kant's part from an agent's earlier to later stages of moral development⁵³. Either way, the *Doctrine of Virtue* is unique in focusing on Kant's conception of virtue and what he calls duties of virtue. A duty of virtue is a duty to set oneself an end; all specific duties of virtue fall under the general duties to set the ends of perfecting oneself and promoting others' happiness. Because setting an end is essentially an act of freedom, duties of virtue are not subject to external enforcement – that is, others can constrain my external actions (i.e., the movements of my body) but only I can make something my end⁵⁴. (Most)⁵⁵ duties of virtue are also imperfect or wide duties, which require us to set ends but give us “playroom” or latitude in deciding how and when to pursue these ends⁵⁶. Finally, duties of virtue are quite permissive: it is possible to discharge them minimally simply by having the relevant ends without doing anything to pursue them or pursuing them minimally. For example, I may choose to fulfill the duty to promote others' happiness by teaching a child to read or by writing a paper about happiness; and I can genuinely have these ends without helping the child to read on any particular occasion, because I spend so much time writing about happiness. But ethics for Kant is not just about discharging duties. It is also about developing virtue, understood as the strength of will to govern oneself and to overcome internal obstacles to fulfilling one's duties⁵⁷. Complete virtue, or what Kant sometimes calls holiness, is an unattainable ideal for human beings⁵⁸. Our goal should be to progress continually toward this ideal by bringing “closer to *narrow* duty [...] the maxim of complying with wide duty (in [one's] disposition)”⁵⁹. In other words, to become virtuous we should not be content to comply minimally with our duties; instead, we should strive to treat the wide duties to perfect ourselves and to promote others' happiness more and more as if they

⁵¹ See TL AA 06: 389: “the end that is also a duty can make it a law to have such a maxim”.

⁵² For example, I may originally formulate the maxim to help a child learn to read simply because I believe that I have a duty to promote others' happiness and that helping this child learn to read will promote her happiness. I may genuinely take no account of my own happiness in formulating this maxim at any stage.

⁵³ I do not wish to take a position here on which of these two explanations of differences between these texts is to be preferred. Note that on the latter explanation, according to which the differences reflect only a change of emphasis, Kant himself may have believed when he wrote the *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason* that maxims can arise directly from the idea of an ethical duty. But he does not say this in those works. Instead, he says that maxims arise directly from desires and inclinations, but he leaves room between proposing a maxim and acting on it for duty to motivate us to act only on morally permissible maxims, as if duty does not inspire us to propose maxims in the first place. I thank an anonymous reviewer from *Estudos Kantianos* for pressing me to clarify this point.

⁵⁴ TL AA 06: 381 ff.

⁵⁵ What Kant calls duties of respect (AA 06: 449 f., 462 ff.) seem to be an exception, as well as the duty to increase one's moral perfection (AA 06: 446).

⁵⁶ TL AA 06:390 ff.

⁵⁷ See, for example, TL AA 06: 380, 383 f., 390, 394f., 405 ff.

⁵⁸ KpV AA 05: 83 ff.; *Doctrine of Virtue*, AA 06: 409.

⁵⁹ TL AA 06: 390.

were narrow duties that require us to perfect ourselves as much as possible, and to promote the happiness of as many others as much as we can⁶⁰. Progressing toward the ideal of virtue involves taking these ends progressively more seriously, so that our maxims arise more and more from them instead of (solely) from our desires⁶¹.

Kant holds that progressing toward virtue in this way shapes our sensible nature so that we come more and more to desire our own perfection and the happiness of others. Virtue does not consist, for Kant, in shaping desires so that they follow reason; it consists in the strength of will to act morally by representing moral ideas to ourselves in a way that overpowers internal obstacles to doing our duty⁶². But one effect of developing virtue is that we come to desire the ends of duty and to take pleasure in signs of their achievement. Kant is committed to this view because he holds that reason creates new desires whenever we set ourselves an end and represent that end as something we can achieve. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant says that either the experience or the expectation of pleasure is what causes us to form desires: we come to desire an object whenever we expect obtaining it to give us pleasure⁶³. But he defines “pleasure” as “the representation of the agreement of an object or of an action with the subjective conditions of life”, and he includes the will among what he calls subjective conditions of life⁶⁴. According to this definition, to represent an end that we have set ourselves as achievable, as possible through our will, is pleasurable and thus causes us to desire the achievement of that end. Kant’s somewhat different definition of pleasure in the *Critique of Judgment* also supports this view. There he says that pleasure is a representation of the feeling of life or the promotion of the powers of life, while displeasure represents the inhibition of life⁶⁵. This definition of pleasure is similar to Rousseau’s characterization of the sentiment of existence as pleasure in the active use of one’s powers. Together with Kant’s assumption that desires arise from the expectation of pleasure, this definition implies that using reason to set oneself an end, and actively pursuing it, produces pleasure and thus causes us to desire that end.

So Kant holds that progressing toward the ideal of virtue, by taking the ends of perfecting oneself and promoting others’ happiness more and more seriously, has the effect

⁶⁰ Kant also says that to become virtuous we should strive to fulfill duties of right (which are narrow or perfect duties) from the motive of duty, which those duties themselves do not require (*Doctrine of Virtue*, AA 06: 390 f., 392 f.).

⁶¹ See Kant’s language at GMS AA 04: 430, where he is discussing the duty to promote others’ happiness: “the ends of a subject who is an end in itself must as far as possible be also *my* ends, if that representation is to have its *full* effect on me” (Kant’s emphasis).

⁶² This is why the *Groundwork* provides multiple formulations of the categorical imperative that aim to “bring an idea of reason [i.e., the moral law] closer to intuition (by a certain analogy) and thereby to feeling” (AA 04: 436).

⁶³ KpV AA 05: 23. See also *Groundwork*, AA 04: 427; and MS AA 06: 211 f. This is related to Kant’s claim in the *Idea* and *Conjectural Beginning* essays that reason forms desires by making comparisons with objects we already desire. If I desire ice cream, then I expect (perhaps from past experience) that ice cream will give me pleasure. Reasoning that frozen yoghurt is similar to ice cream may then lead me to expect that it too will give me pleasure, which causes me to form a new desire for it.

⁶⁴ KpV AA 05: 9n. Kant’s text here is complicated. The full passage reads: “**Life** is the faculty of a being to act in accordance with laws of the faculty of desire. The **faculty of desire** is a being’s *faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations*. Pleasure is the *representation of the agreement of an object or of an action with the subjective conditions of life*, i.e., with the faculty of the *causality of a representation with respect to the reality of its object* (or with respect to the determination of the powers of the subject to action in order to produce the object)”. Later in the same text, Kant defines “the will” as “a faculty either of producing objects corresponding to representations or of determining itself to effect such objects” (AA 05: 15). So, while he does not simply identify the will with “the subjective conditions of life”, clearly Kant means to include the will among the subjective conditions of life to which he refers here.

⁶⁵ KU AA 05: 204, 278. See also AA 05: 220; EEKU AA 20: 230 f.; and the editor’s note 3 on p. 366.

of shaping our sensible nature so that we progressively desire – and thus place our happiness in – the achievement of these ends more and more, while social comparison shapes our desires proportionately less⁶⁶. The fact that Kant holds this view, however, can be obscured by his tendency to emphasize that moral motivation does not reduce directly or indirectly to any sort of desire for pleasure, not even pleasure in acting morally⁶⁷. Kant insists that the only feeling that arises directly as an effect of determining one's will by the moral law is a feeling of pure respect for the moral law, which is not pleasurable but painful because the moral law “*infringes upon self-love*” and “*strikes down self-conceit*”, while revealing how far we fall short of the ideal of virtue⁶⁸. But this does not imply that in exercising our rational powers to set ends that are duties, and in pursuing or achieving these ends, we experience no pleasure. Kant draws a distinction here between acting from pure respect for the moral law, and acting for the sake of some end. Acting from pure respect for the moral law does not itself involve or produce pleasure; but pursuing ends does cause us to desire and take pleasure in the achievement of those ends. The key point is that progressing toward virtue by setting and pursuing the ends that are also duties – i.e., one's own perfection and the happiness of others – involves *both* acting from pure respect for the moral law *and* pursuing these ends. As a result, our sensible nature is shaped by moral ideas, as we come to desire the achievement of ends that we set from a purely moral motive.

Because Kant is at pains to distinguish the satisfaction of these and all other desires from moral motivation – i.e., to distinguish moral motivation from the desire for one's own happiness – he is very careful to describe happiness as the passive satisfaction of desires, and to contrast happiness with what we actively do. Passages in which he draws this contrast typically also claim that the worth of our existence comes only from what we actively do and not from what we passively enjoy, i.e., not from happiness. For example, in the third *Critique* he says: “It is easy to decide what sort of value life has for us if it is assessed merely by **what one enjoys** (the natural end of the sum of all inclinations, happiness). Less than zero”⁶⁹. Later he adds that the value of a human being's existence “consists in what he does, in how and in accordance with which principles he acts, not as a link in nature but in the **freedom** of his faculty of desire, i.e., a good will is that alone by means of which his existence can have an absolute value”⁷⁰. I take Kant to mean that even when we desire ends that are also duties – for example, if you desire to perfect your theoretical reasoning capacity by pursuing a philosophy degree – the satisfaction of these desires is conceptually distinguishable from the activity of pursuing and achieving those ends. Even though the activities of thinking, studying, writing papers, etc., are causally responsible for your achieving the end of receiving a degree, these activities can be

⁶⁶ In addition to the texts I focus on here, Kant also makes a strong case for the virtuous habitation of desires in the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. I discuss this text in ROHLF, Michael: “Emotion and Evil in Kant”, in: *Review of Metaphysics* 66 (June 2013), pp. 3-26.

⁶⁷ “In a practical law [i.e., of duty] reason determines the will immediately, not by means of an intervening feeling of pleasure or displeasure, not even in this law” (KpV AA 05: 25).

⁶⁸ KU AA 05: 73.

⁶⁹ KU AA 05: 434n.

⁷⁰ KU AA 05: 443. See also *Conjectural Beginning*, AA 08: 122; *Groundwork*, AA 04: 395 f.; *Critique of Practical Reason*, AA 05: 88; *Critique of Judgment*, AA 05: 208 f.; *Theory and Practice*, AA 08: 283n; *Doctrine of Virtue*, AA 06: 387 f.

distinguished from the passive satisfaction of your desire for this end. All satisfaction of desires is passive in this sense, even when it results from our own activity; and happiness consists strictly in the satisfaction of desires and thus is to be distinguished from what we actively do. Moreover, satisfying desires does not give our lives value, even when those desires are for morally necessary ends; only a morally good will, which hopefully will manifest itself in the free activity of setting and pursuing these ends, can give our lives value.

This aspect of Kant's conception of happiness puts him at odds with Rousseau on the surface but masks a deeper agreement between them. For Rousseau, true happiness consists in taking pleasure in the active use of one's powers, which requires spurning the unfulfilling pleasures of satisfying desires formed through social comparison. But for Kant all happiness consists in the passive satisfaction of desires and is to be distinguished from the active use of our rational powers. So Rousseau and Kant disagree about whether happiness should be understood as active or passive. But underlying this disagreement is a deeper agreement on at least two points: first, that passively satisfying desires has no value in comparison with actively exercising our rational powers; and, second, that actively exercising our rational powers helps us to become happy. For Rousseau it is necessary for happiness, since pleasure in the sentiment of existence is pleasure in the active use of one's powers. But for Kant pursuing the ends of one's own perfection and the happiness of others is not strictly necessary for one's own happiness, since Kant does not wish to rule out the possibility that fortune may smile on the vicious and make them happier than the virtuous – at least in this life, where it is impossible to satisfy all of one's desires in any case and so judgments about happiness must be comparative. Nevertheless, Kant has Rousseauian reasons for holding that developing our rational powers, along with virtue and love of others, at least tend to promote one's own happiness. Insofar as progressing towards virtue involves perfecting oneself by developing one's rational powers and shapes us to desire this end, it places our happiness (i.e., the satisfaction of these desires) more within our control and thus makes us less dependent on others for our happiness. And insofar as progressing toward virtue involves promoting others' happiness by identifying one's own ends with the ends of others, it makes one's happiness more compatible with the happiness of others. Kant calls the general duty to promote others' happiness the duty of love to other human beings⁷¹. Love so understood, not as a feeling but “as the maxim of *benevolence* (practical love), which results in beneficence”, plays the negative role of mitigating the harmful effects of social antagonism as well as the positive role of promoting ends that one shares with others⁷².

But Kant's admission that vicious people may be happier than the virtuous indicates a sense in which his conception of happiness is more subjectivist than both Aristotle's and Rousseau's, because it allows still more flexibility in what kinds of lives can be happy. This is also true to an extent of Kant's conception of virtue and imperfect or wide duties. The duty to perfect oneself, in particular, requires us to cultivate all of our faculties, which Kant divides into natural powers that include understanding, memory, imagination, learning, taste, and powers of the body; and the moral powers of practical reason and a good will⁷³. Kant allows,

⁷¹ TL 448 ff.

⁷² TL AA 06: 449.

⁷³ TL AA 06: 386 f., 444 ff.

however, that each person may choose the order of precedence among the natural powers he cultivates, “in accordance with his own rational reflection about what sort of life he would like to lead [...] (e.g., whether it should be a trade, commerce, or a learned profession)”⁷⁴. So I may choose a life that gives the cultivation of understanding lower priority than all other natural powers; and that life can be as virtuous as others. Kant does not allow us the same flexibility in cultivating our moral powers, though: the duty to perfect ourselves requires that we strive to progress as far as we can toward a virtuous disposition. As far as happiness is concerned, the happiness of those who choose to give high priority to theoretical reasoning will depend on and be greatly enhanced by satisfying their desires for cultivating and exercising theoretical reason. But Kant seems to hold that a life that gives the cultivation of theoretical reason lower priority than other natural powers can be just as happy. So developing our practically rational powers plays a more central role in becoming happy, for Kant, than developing theoretical reason does. Developing theoretical reason is still an objective good, however – along with practical reason, virtue, and love of others – because we have a duty to cultivate it, even if only an imperfect or wide duty. Any end that we have a duty to promote is an objective end, hence an objective good, whose value derives from the absolute value of our capacity for a morally good will⁷⁵. What makes all of these objective goods is not that they contribute to our happiness, but rather that we are morally required to pursue them as ends. Kant holds that these objective goods do help us to become happy, although they are not necessary for happiness, and that happiness does not consist – as it did for Aristotle – in possession of these goods.

ABSTRACT. Most modern philosophers understand happiness fundamentally in terms of the subjective states of pleasure or desire satisfaction; while pre-modern philosophers tend to understand happiness fundamentally in terms of possessing certain objective goods like virtue, which do not reduce to pleasure or desire satisfaction, or engaging in objectively worthwhile activities like doing philosophy⁷⁶. This paper investigates two modern conceptions of happiness: namely, Kant’s and Rousseau’s. I argue that their subjectivist conceptions of happiness do not prevent them from recognizing certain objective goods that help us to become happy. In fact, I argue that they both hold that some of the same objective goods that Aristotle thinks happiness consists in – including virtue, the development of our rational powers, and love of others – are either necessary for or at least tend to promote one’s own happiness.

KEY WORDS: Kant, Rousseau, happiness, hedonism, desire theory, objective goods.

⁷⁴ TL AA 06: 445.

⁷⁵ GMS AA 04: 428, 435 f.; TL AA 06: 380, 385.

⁷⁶ There are of course exceptions to these generalizations, such as Epicureans and modern natural law theorists.

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